

Frequently asked questions about Launching Pad – for Neami National consumers

Q. What is Launching Pad?

Launching Pad is a course for Neami National consumers.

Every consumer has the right to have a say about Neami National. This helps Neami National by improving the way it does things and it supports consumers to participate in decisions that are made within Neami National.

The course provides training so that consumers feel more confident to exercise their right to have a say (participate) in Neami National's planning and decision making processes. It also means learning about how to participate in different ways, such as on project committees, at consultations wanting your feedback, or in interview panels when Neami National recruits for new staff.

Launching Pad is about building the knowledge and confidence amongst consumers so they can influence the direction that Neami National takes into the future, and have genuine opportunities to share in decision making so that Neami improves its services.

Q. How long does the course run for?

The Launching Pad course runs for four days in total. In most States it runs one day a week for four weeks, (except for Western Australia where it runs for 2 days and then for another 2 days a fortnight later). The course starts at 9.30 and finishes at 4pm. Lunch is provided as well as morning and afternoon tea.

Q. Who teaches Launching Pad?

Launching Pad is facilitated by consumers who have extensive experience in consumer participation. The Launching Pad Training Officer (Sandy Watson) delivers most of the course content. Guest speakers come in for some sessions to talk about consumer participation opportunities.

Consumers who are employed by Neami National in a consumer participation role may also provide some training, and will spend some time explaining what is happening at Neami National in terms of consumer participation.

Neami managers and some staff visit during some parts of the course to introduce themselves, or to participate as a job applicant for the recruitment panel training practice on day four (where you learn to be on an interview panel at Neami National when someone applies for a job).

Q. What might I hope to get out of doing Launching Pad training?

Consumers get different things out of doing Launching Pad training. Everyone is different. Some people feel more self- confident at the end of the course. Some feel more assertive about their rights. Some people enjoy learning new things or having something to do during the day. Some

people enjoy discussing things with other course participants and listening to different views and new ideas. Others enjoy reading the course materials and doing more research about consumer participation at home, using course information as a guide for exploring what consumers are doing in other places, in Australia or overseas.

At the end of the course people are clearer about what consumer participation is about, and are in a better position to make informed decisions about whether or not they want to pursue consumer participation opportunities at Neami National.

Most of the training provided within Launching Pad is also useful for anyone who wants to get involved in consumer participation opportunities outside of Neami National; in a consumer organisation for example.

There is a lot of new information to learn about, and many consumers find the course interesting and of value to them personally.

There are opportunities at Neami National to participate in service development, and Launching Pad participants are often more confident to access these opportunities due to the training they receive.

Q. Is it true that consumers are paid for their participation in formal participation activities at Neami National?

Yes, consumers are paid for their participation in formal participation activities at Neami National. Consumers are paid for their time, for example, on an interview panel when staff are being recruited.

Launching Pad is designed to support consumers by providing training for any formal participation opportunities (such as interviewing job applicants) that might come up at Neami National. There is no guarantee of paid participation work after completing Launching Pad, but it does put consumers who have finished the course in a better position to take advantage of any opportunities that do arise at Neami National.

Please note that consumers who are current service users at Neami National are not paid to do the four day Launching Pad course.

Q. What topics are covered in the course?

There is a comprehensive list of topics covered in Launching Pad. Here is an outline of the topics that we cover:

Day One:

- Introductions and an overview of Launching Pad
- History and evolution of the consumer & survivor movement
- Understanding consumer participation
- Guest speakers to talk about participation at Neami National

Day Two:

- Understanding the concept of consumer perspective

- What is consumer representation?
- Familiarisation with common committee terms and processes
- Common committee situations, and strategies to address these
- Creativity and consumer work

Day Three:

- Understanding the mental health system using policy frameworks
- Understanding the mental health system using rights frameworks
- Consumer participation opportunities in your State – guest speaker
- Information about Neami interview panels training for next week

Day Four:

- Neami interview panels training (most of the day)
- Summing up and time for any questions
- Evaluations

Q. Is Launching Pad stressful for people who don't know a lot about consumer participation, or who haven't been in a classroom for a while?

Some consumers do find the first day stressful.

It takes time to settle in and get used to being in a classroom all day, with new people. People often feel more relaxed by the second day after they have got used to the venue, the people and the trainers. It can also take people a bit of time to get used to the Launching Pad course content, and to feel comfortable doing different activities for a whole day.

Several consumers who have finished Launching Pad didn't know a lot about consumer participation when they started, but by the last day they felt a lot more confident in their newly acquired knowledge and skills. Some have said they would like to do the course again.

Q. What learning activities do I participate in during the course?

There are several different activities that you will participate in during Launching Pad training. These include:

- Whole group discussions
- Having discussions in pairs
- Reading some documents, or parts of documents and then discussing them
- Small group activities such as working through a worksheet as a group, or doing activities using committee cards or Mind-garden cards
- Bringing examples of your creativity in relation to consumer participation to show or to talk about with other consumers (optional)
- Going through all of the stages of being on an interview panel for Neami National when people are applying for jobs: this includes reading job applications, sitting on an interview panel, as an interviewer, on Day Four, to practice asking interview questions and to become comfortable with the whole process

Q. Do I receive a certificate?

Yes, you get a certificate posted to you after the course that lists the days that you attended Launching Pad and the topics that were covered. If you miss a day you still get a certificate for the other days that you attended. For example, if you missed Day Four, you would still get a certificate for Days One, Two and Three.

Q. Is Launching Pad a qualification?

Launching Pad training is not a recognised qualification. However, the course certificate will be useful to include in your résumé if you choose to apply for a consumer participation related position in a mental health related organisation.

Q. Do I receive any handouts or course resources to take home with me?

Yes, you will receive a Launching Pad Guide that includes all of the resources that you need for the four days of training. The Guide contains extra information that isn't covered within the course that might be of interest to you, should you want to pursue further learning. You will need to bring this guide with you for each day of the training. The Launching Pad Guide contains a lot of information. At first glance it seems like a big guide: that is because it contains all of the slides, articles, information and resources that you need for all of the four days.

Q. Are there any follow up courses after Launching Pad that I can do if I am interested in learning and developing more skills?

There are plans to develop follow up training for people who have done a Launching Pad course.

Q. Is there much reading to do during the course?

There is reading to do during some sessions in the course. Participants do some small group activities where reading is required. They also read sample job applications on Day Four to prepare for training on how to participate in Neami staff recruitment panels. The reason for this is that consumer participation often involves reading information and providing feedback. It also involves doing some research to find information, such as on a policy.

For anyone who has difficulty reading for any reason, support is provided if that is what you want. Please let us or your CRSW know beforehand so we can provide you with assistance you feel that you need.

Q. Does Launching Pad provide any training in peer work?

No, Launching Pad is not a course that provides any training in peer work. Peer work at Neami National involves supporting consumers in their self-directed recovery. Peer workers do Flourish training.

Consumer participation training on the other hand involves how to work with services such as Neami National at a systems level, rather than at an individual level. Examples of systems level activities include being a consumer representative on a committee or a working party, attending a

consultation, writing an article for a consumer newsletter, going to consumer network meetings, representing Neami National at a conference, or a mental health month event and so on.

Q. Do I have to fill in any forms during the course?

At the end of each day you will be asked to fill in an Evaluation Form for the days training. This form is your chance to tell us what you think of Launching Pad as a course, and whether or not you think there needs to be any changes to the content or how it is delivered. You also fill in a sign in sheet at the beginning of every day so that Neami National knows what to put on your certificate.

Q. Who can I talk to if I need more information about Launching Pad?

You can talk to your Key Worker. You can contact Learning and Development on (02) 8347 0458, or email the Training Officer for Launching Pad (Sandy Watson) sandy.watson@neaminational.org.au

If you want to find out more about Neami National's Consumer Participation Strategy then please get in contact with Julie Anderson, Manager Consumer Participation Strategy on (03) 9481 3277 or by email julie.anderson@neaminational.org.au

Q. What support is offered to Launching Pad participants after they have completed the course?

Once participants have completed Launching Pad people will continue to be supported in their participation activities by their Neami worker. If participant's agreed on their enrolment form their name will put on a register of Graduates of Launching Pad and passed onto the State Manager so they can be contacted regarding further participation opportunities. Professional Development Sessions will be offered after the core four modules of Launching Pad. If there are any queries regarding participation opportunities please contact Julie Anderson, Manager Consumer Participation Strategy: 03 9481 3277 or 042855062. We are grateful for any feedback at feedback@neaminational.org.au