

# Supporting the workforce to manage mental health conditions

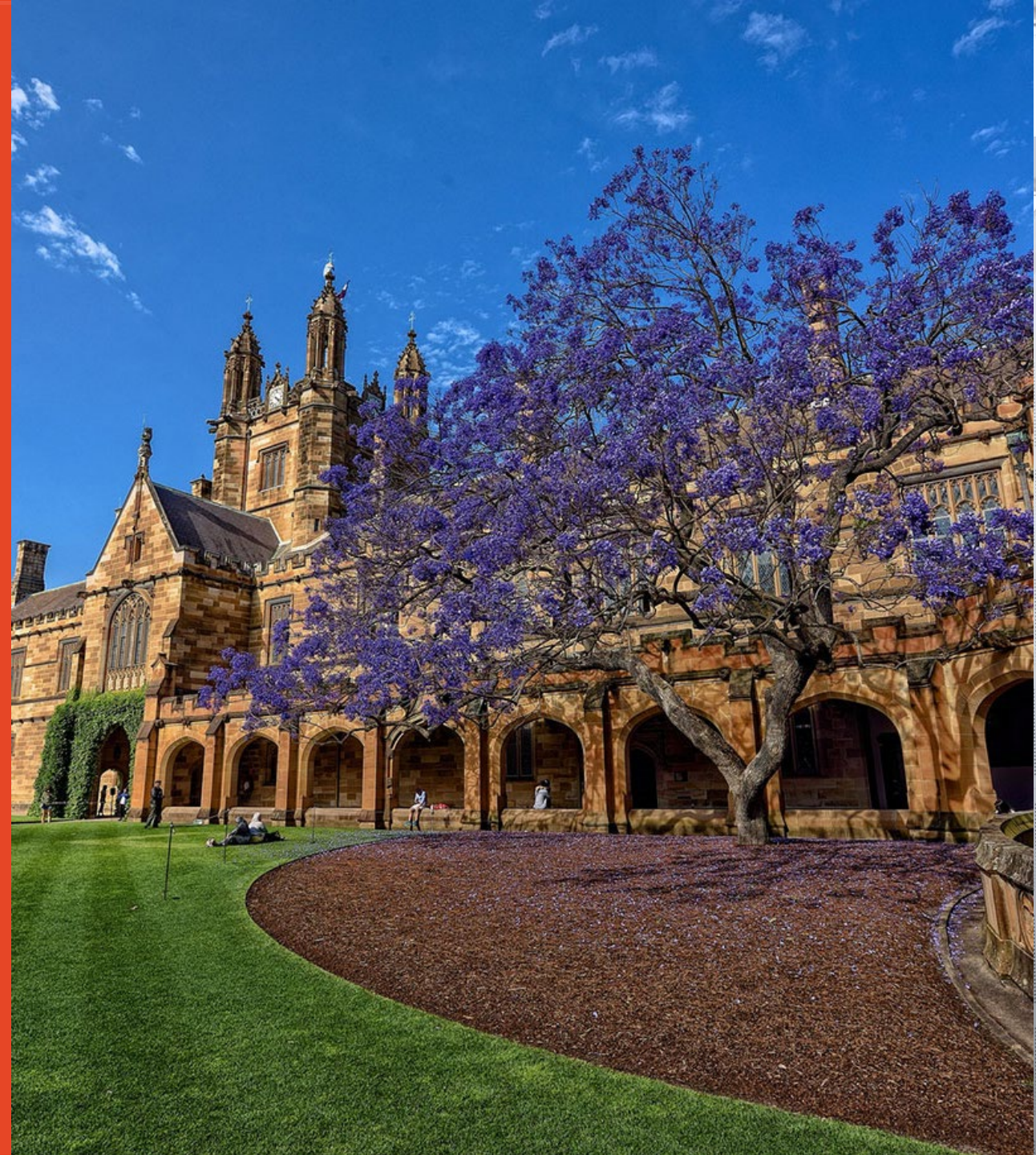
Sally Boardman, Christina Marel, Alexandra Azzi, Erin Madden, Kathleen Palmer, Katherine Mills

*The Matilda Centre for Research in Mental Health and Substance Use, University of Sydney*



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**SYDNEY**

—  
Matilda Centre



# 'Comorbidity' or 'co-occurring conditions'

- Broad definition – the co-occurrence of two or more disorders in a person within a specified timeframe (i.e., lifetime, current)
- Our focus here: the co-occurrence of an AOD use disorder/condition with one or more mental health disorders/conditions

# 'Comorbidity' or 'co-occurring conditions'

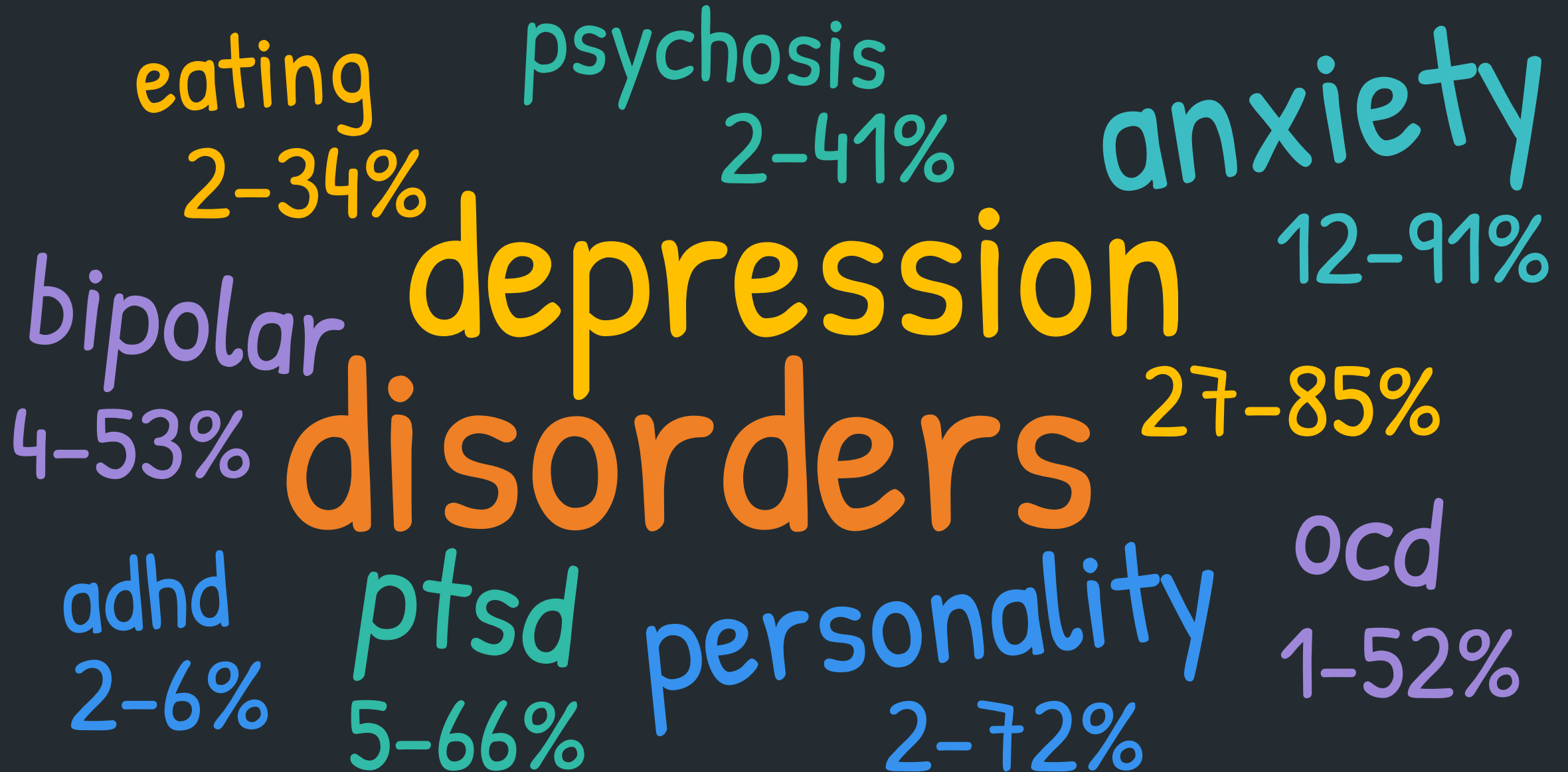
- Other types of comorbid/co-occurring conditions:
  - AOD use disorders (including smoking/vaping)
  - Physical health conditions (e.g., cirrhosis, hepatitis, heart disease, diabetes)
  - Intellectual and learning disabilities
  - Cognitive impairment
  - Chronic pain
- Often referred to as 'dual diagnosis' - misnomer

# Co-occurring disorders are common

- Mental and substance use disorders are two of Australia's most common and burdensome health conditions, affecting 1 in 5 each year
- They frequently co-occur
- Estimated that **at least one in two** entrants to AOD treatment have a co-occurring mental health condition



How common are co-occurring disorders?



# How common are co-occurring disorders?

- Many people present to treatment experiencing *symptoms* of disorders while not meeting criteria for a *diagnosis* of a disorder
- So what?
  - May not meet full diagnostic criteria according to the classification systems, their symptoms may impact significantly on functioning and treatment outcomes



# Complex presentations



Complex trauma  
histories



Poorer physical &  
mental health



Poorer social, occupational  
& interpersonal functioning



More severe & extensive  
drug use histories



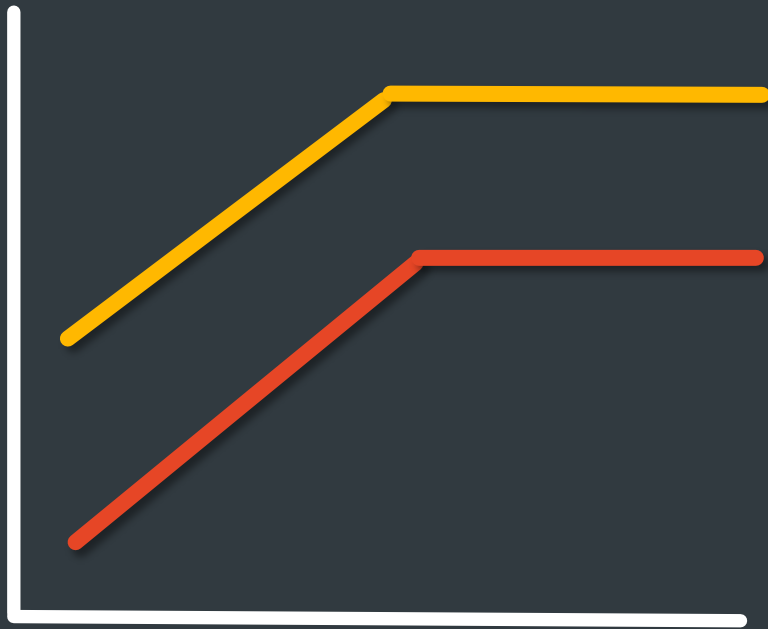
Increased risk of self-  
harm & suicide



Reduced life  
expectancy

*People with mental or substance use disorders die an astonishing 20 to 30 years earlier than the general population, and spend the last ten years of life living with disabling chronic illnesses*





- With co-occurring conditions
- Without co-occurring conditions

*Research has shown that people with co-occurring mental health conditions can benefit just as much as those without from usual AOD treatment*

# Strengthening workforce capacity

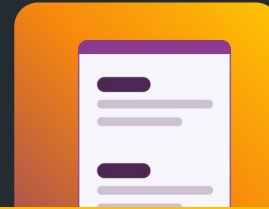
- Lack of resources for AOD workers
- AOD workers reported feeling overwhelmed and fearful of treating mental health conditions
- Educational resources for AOD workers identified as a priority, by numerous reviews, policy documents and by AOD workers themselves
- In terms of AOD workforce development, the management of co-occurring mental health conditions been described as:

“the single most important issue...a matter akin to blood-borne viruses in the 1980s”



# Program of work

## AOD Sector



National practice standards

## Organisations/services

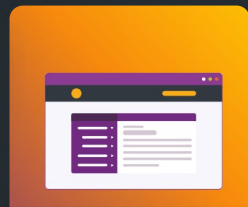


Implementation toolkit

## Workforce



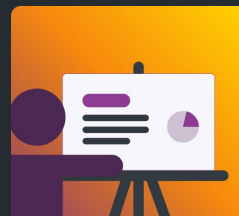
Guidelines



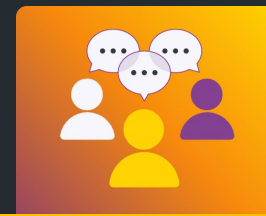
Website



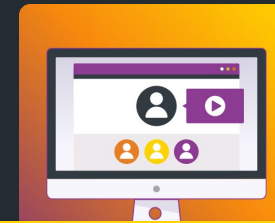
Online training



Train the trainer



Skills-based training



Webinar library



Community of Practice

# Development of an online platform

## COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

For professionals in Australia who work with people experiencing co-occurring alcohol and other drug (AOD) use and mental health conditions.

Register now

## Features



Accessing resources



Sharing ideas and knowledge



Making connections

# Community of practice

- Funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care
- Designed for professionals in Australia who work with people experiencing co-occurring AOD use and mental health conditions
- Overall goal is to positively impact the health outcomes of people who experience co-occurring AOD use and mental health conditions

# Development and aims



## ○ Development based on:

- Evidence
- Focus group consultations with stakeholders (involving clinicians, people with lived and living experience, family and loved ones, researchers)

## ○ Aims:

- Provide a platform where members can connect
  - Access evidence-based resources
  - Engage and collaborate with other professionals in this field
  - Enhance practice
- Ultimately positively impact health outcomes of people who experience co-occurring conditions

# Intended audience

- Working or affiliated with an AOD service or organisation or work in another capacity with people who use AOD
  - E.g., addiction medicine specialist, AOD worker, counsellor, general practitioner, nurse, other allied health professional, peer worker, people in identified lived experience roles, pharmacist, psychiatrist, psychologist, residential support worker, social worker

# Community of Practice: home

The screenshot shows the home page of the 'Community of Practice' website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for 'About', 'How-to', 'Contact', and 'Help'. Below this is a purple header section with the title 'COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE' and a subtitle: 'For professionals in Australia who work with people experiencing co-occurring alcohol and other drug (AOD) use and mental health conditions.' A 'Register now' button is located in the header, with a blue callout box pointing to it that says 'Register/login to training'. Below the header is a white section with a 'Login' heading. It contains two input fields: 'Email' (with a 'Required' label) and 'Password' (with a 'Required' label and a toggle icon). A purple 'Login' button is positioned below the fields, and a link for 'Forgot password' is at the bottom of the login section. The bottom section is titled 'Features' and contains three cards: 'Accessing resources' (with a network icon), 'Sharing ideas and knowledge' (with a hand holding a speech bubble icon), and 'Making connections' (with a group of people icon).

? About How-to Contact Help

## COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

For professionals in Australia who work with people experiencing co-occurring alcohol and other drug (AOD) use and mental health conditions.

Register now

Register/login to training

### Login

Email Required

Enter email

Password Required

Enter password 👁️

Login

[Forgot password](#)

### Features

- Accessing resources
- Sharing ideas and knowledge
- Making connections



# Feed

## Feed

Search feed Take a tour All My topics

Christina

Share your thoughts...

Select a community

Select a topic

General

Image Poll Post

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**Kathleen**  
03 Feb 2025 01:29 pm

**AOD workforce in Victoria**

Hi everyone! I just wanted to share a resource I have come across recently which is the Drug and Alcohol Clinical Advisory Service (DACAS) free 24/7 telephone advisory service available to health and welfare professionals in Victoria, Tasmania, and the Northern Territory. DACAS provides guidance to help professionals respond effectively to individuals experiencing alcohol or other drug use challenges. In addition to their advisory service, DACAS offers:

Practical factsheets on managing AOD-related presentations, including:

- Management of alcohol use disorders, including withdrawal care
- Naltrexone and Acamprosate in alcohol dependence
- Heroin withdrawal and Naltrexone in heroin dependence
- Benzodiazepine withdrawal
- Management of stimulant use and cannabis use

These resources are designed to enhance client care and support informed clinical decision-making. Learn more and access these resources through DACAS: <https://www.dacas.org.au/clinical-resources/gp-factsheets>

I'd love to hear from you—what websites or platforms do you rely on to find useful resources?

1 1 Show comments (1)

Search feed

## Feed

[View all topics](#)

All My topics

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**AOD workforce in Victoria**  
**Kathleen**  
03 Feb 01:29 PM

**Topic**  
General

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# Feed

## Feed

[Take a tour](#)[All](#)[My topics](#)

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1



1



1

Show comments (1)

# Feed

The screenshot displays a social media interface with a navigation bar at the top. The navigation bar includes icons and labels for 'Feed', 'Topics', 'Communities', 'Connections', 'Events', and 'Info'. The 'Communities' tab is highlighted with a purple circle. Below the navigation bar, a post by 'Christina' is visible. The post content includes a text input field with the placeholder 'Share your thoughts...', an emoji picker icon, a dropdown menu for selecting a community, and a search bar. The search results list several community options: 'Online community of practice', 'Practitioners in NSW', 'AOD & mental health researchers', 'Working with young people', and 'Rural and remote workforce'.

Feed Topics Communities Connections Events Info

Christina

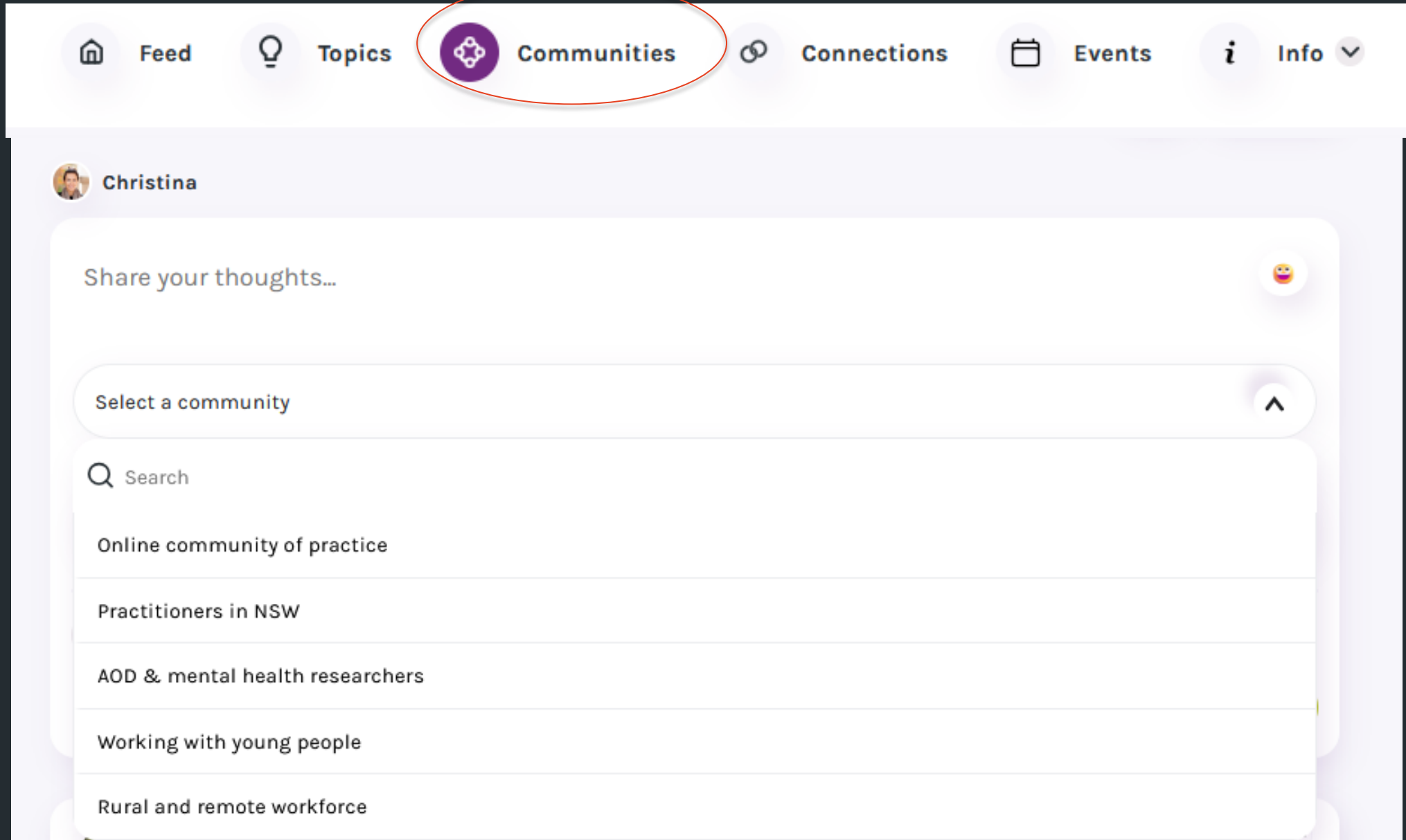
Share your thoughts...

Select a community

Search

- Online community of practice
- Practitioners in NSW
- AOD & mental health researchers
- Working with young people
- Rural and remote workforce

# Feed



The screenshot displays a social media interface with a top navigation bar. The 'Communities' tab is highlighted with a red circle. Below the navigation bar, the user's name 'Christina' is visible. The main content area features a text input field with the placeholder 'Share your thoughts...' and an emoji icon. Below this is a dropdown menu labeled 'Select a community' with an upward arrow icon. A search bar with a magnifying glass icon and the text 'Search' is positioned below the dropdown. The search results list several community options: 'Online community of practice', 'Practitioners in NSW', 'AOD & mental health researchers', 'Working with young people', and 'Rural and remote workforce'.

Feed Topics **Communities** Connections Events Info

Christina

Share your thoughts...

Select a community

Search

- Online community of practice
- Practitioners in NSW
- AOD & mental health researchers
- Working with young people
- Rural and remote workforce

# Join communities

**Communities**

Join or suggest communities tailored to your interests creating focused spaces for connection and collaboration within our diverse membership.

Search communities

Requests My communities Suggestions

Suggest a community

**Suggested communities**

Public communities (8)

- Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples **Connect**
- Online community of practice **Connect**
- AOD & mental health researchers **Connect**
- Working with young people **Connect**
- Rural and remote workforce **Connect**

12:54

Search communities

**Communities**


Suggest a community


Requests My communities Suggestions

- Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples **Connect**
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- AOD & mental health researchers **Connect**
- Working with young people **Connect**
- Rural and remote workforce **Connect**
- Practitioners in NSW **Connect**
- AOD workforce in Victoria **Connect**

# Subscribe to topics







## My topics



 Subscribe to topics that interest you to provide a more focused and personalised experience.

Search topics 

All topics My topics

### Topics

-  **Holistic health care**  
Posts: 3 Unsubscribe >
-  **Youth focused engagement strategies**  
Posts: 5 Unsubscribe >
-  **Trauma informed care**  
Posts: 1 Unsubscribe >
-  **Emerging treatments in AOD**  
Posts: 2 Unsubscribe >
-  **General**  
Posts: 25 Unsubscribe >
-  **Culturally appropriate and safe risk assessments**  
Posts: 0 Subscribe >






Search   EF

## Topics

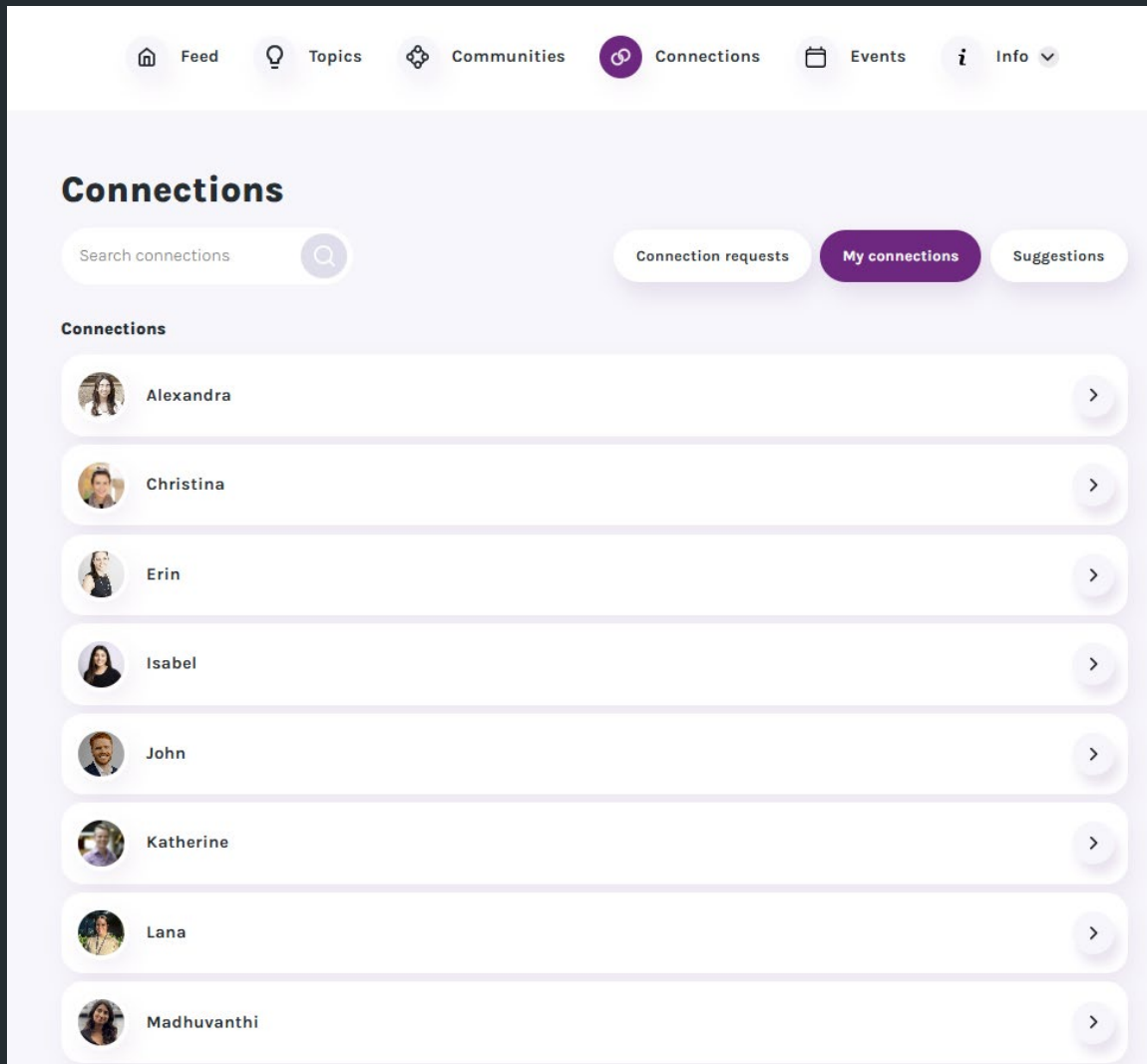
My topics All topics

Suggested topics

- How do you effectively work with people with complex PTSD**  
Posts 2,751 Subscribed >
- How to identify appropriate referral pathways**  
Posts 234 Subscribed >
- How to effectively engage clients**  
Posts 3,078 Subscribe >

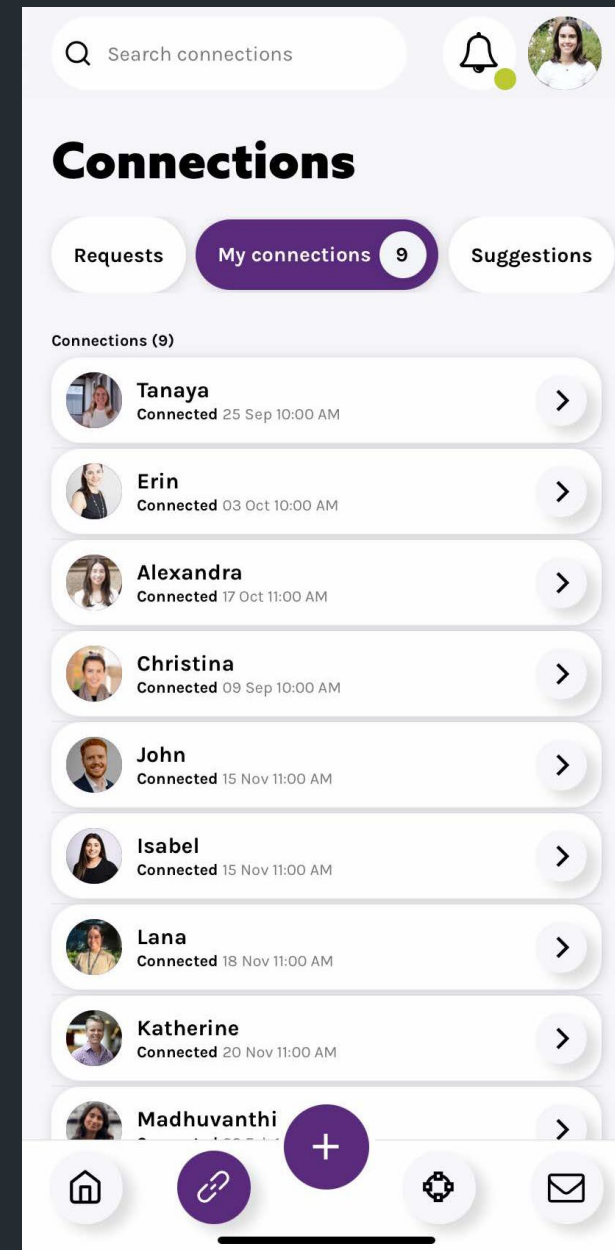
    

# Build connections



The desktop view of the Connections page features a top navigation bar with icons for Feed, Topics, Communities, Connections (active), Events, and Info. Below the navigation is a search bar labeled "Search connections" and three tabs: "Connection requests", "My connections" (active), and "Suggestions". The main content area is titled "Connections" and lists nine users in a vertical list. Each user entry includes a profile picture, the user's name, and a right-pointing chevron icon.

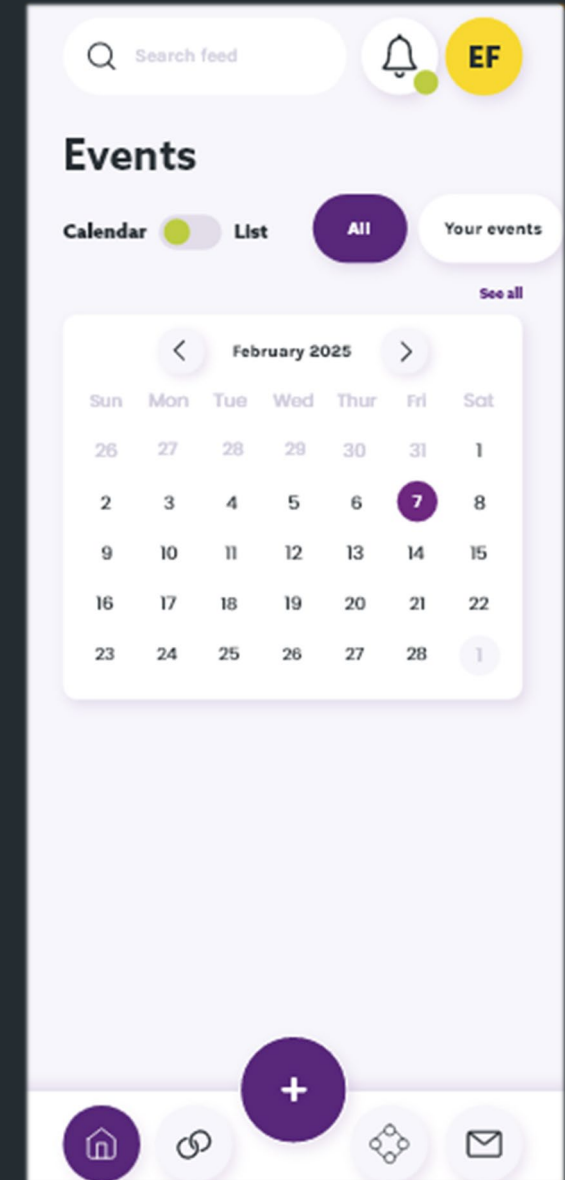
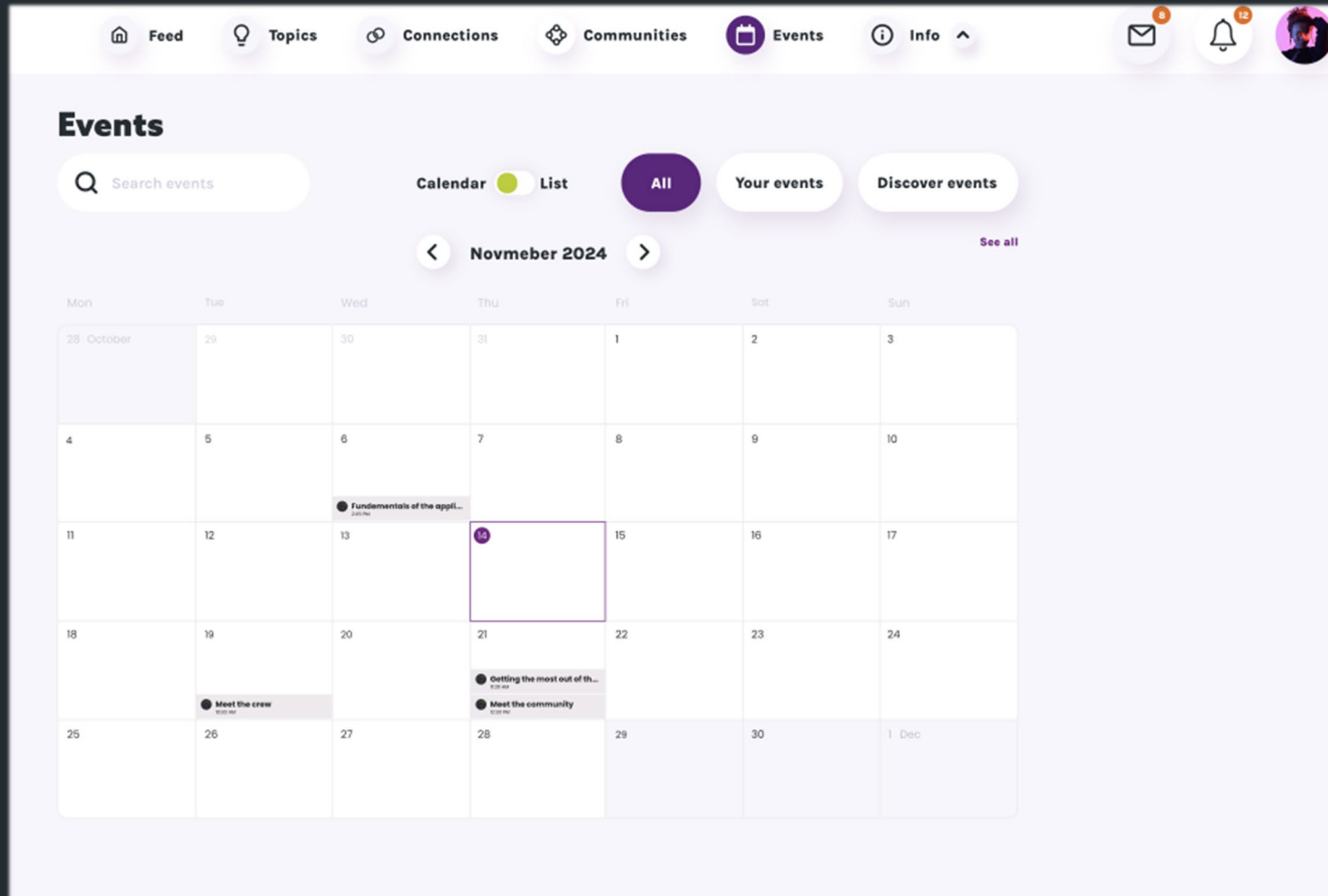
Name	Connection Date
Alexandra	
Christina	
Erin	
Isabel	
John	
Katherine	
Lana	
Madhuvanathi	



The mobile view of the Connections page features a top navigation bar with a search bar labeled "Search connections", a notification bell icon, and a profile picture. Below the navigation is a title "Connections" and three tabs: "Requests", "My connections" (active, with a count of 9), and "Suggestions". The main content area is titled "Connections (9)" and lists nine users in a vertical list. Each user entry includes a profile picture, the user's name, the connection date, and a right-pointing chevron icon. A large purple plus icon is positioned at the bottom right of the list. The bottom navigation bar includes icons for Home, Connections (active), a plus icon, Communities, and Messages.

Name	Connection Date
Tanaya	Connected 25 Sep 10:00 AM
Erin	Connected 03 Oct 10:00 AM
Alexandra	Connected 17 Oct 11:00 AM
Christina	Connected 09 Sep 10:00 AM
John	Connected 15 Nov 11:00 AM
Isabel	Connected 15 Nov 11:00 AM
Lana	Connected 18 Nov 11:00 AM
Katherine	Connected 20 Nov 11:00 AM
Madhuvanathi	

# Access a calendar of events





# To be notified when the Community is live

- Please scan the QR code or
- Follow this link below:  
<https://community.comorbidity.org.au/>



Thank you!

Questions?



[sally.boardman@sydney.edu.au](mailto:sally.boardman@sydney.edu.au)

[www.comorbidityguidelines.org.au](http://www.comorbidityguidelines.org.au)