

Transforming Lives Together

OUR FUTURE DIRECTION




Specialising in Personality Disorder
and Complex Trauma


Eastern
Health

Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners



Spectrum acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the lands on which we work and live and pays respects to their Elders past and present. We acknowledge their significant cultural heritage, their fundamental spiritual connection to Country, and value their unique contribution to our diverse community.

We are proud to embrace the spirit of reconciliation and learn from local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities about how to best to work with them to advance their health, social and economic outcomes.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are advised that this publication may contain names and/or images of deceased persons.

Honouring of diverse backgrounds



Spectrum is committed to ensuring that the needs of all consumers, families and carers as well as our staff, students and volunteers are identified and met in an appropriate and respectful manner.

Working in partnership with our communities, Spectrum will ensure it provides a culturally safe environment that recognises, responds to and supports the diverse needs of its consumers and workforce.

Spectrum recognises that many LGBTIQ+ people experience stigma, discrimination and violence because of their identity. We work in partnership to learn and grow so that we can support and respond appropriately to the needs of our LGBTIQ+ colleagues, our consumers and their families.

Recognising lived experience

Spectrum recognises and appreciates the diverse lived and living experiences of our workforce and those accessing our services. These experiences enrich our understanding, foster empathy, and guide us in creating an inclusive and supportive environment for all.

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Why we are here

OUR PROMISE

Healthier Together

OUR VISION

Transforming Lives Together

OUR MISSION

Leaders in personality disorder and complex trauma through treatment, research, training, and advocacy.

OUR PURPOSE

Empowering all people living with personality disorder and complex trauma to flourish.

What we do

TREATMENT

Enabling access to evidence-based treatment and support in Victoria and nationally for personality disorder and complex trauma.

RESEARCH

Engaging in high impact research to inform innovative treatment options and develop guidelines and best practices that drive system wide improvements.

TRAINING

Building the skills and confidence of health and social sector professionals so they can better support individuals.

ADVOCACY

Championing equitable access to psychological care and support. Working to dismantle the stigma associated with personality disorder and complex trauma.



Our extensive network of local, national and global partnerships with health services, universities, organisations, and consumer groups keeps us well-informed about the latest challenges.

This broad collaboration allows us to stay ahead in identifying and addressing current issues effectively. Moreover, these relationships empower us to not only advocate for necessary changes but also to implement and drive transformative solutions. Our position at the intersection of these diverse sectors equips us to lead impactful initiatives, advocate and shape meaningful progress.



As part of Eastern Health, one of Australia's largest healthcare organisations, we operate at the highest level of clinical governance and excellence, and clearly understand the challenges faced by the health system and can influence from within.



From our Executive

As a highly valued part of Eastern Health, Spectrum has continued to transform its services to treat complex presentations of personality disorder Australia-wide. Spectrum also provides secondary consultations, builds workforce capability, and conducts research and evaluations.

“Spectrum’s work as part of Eastern Health has been pivotal in advancing our shared vision for mental health reform.”

Their support and expertise are invaluable in driving new initiatives and ensuring that we are well positioned to deliver on the Royal Commission’s recommendations.

Together with people with lived experience and our partners, we work tirelessly to enhance mental health services, integrate care, and expand our resources while maintaining a commitment to excellence and innovation.

The Royal Commission’s findings created a wave of changes and substantial progress. By investing in research and innovative practices, Spectrum remains at the forefront of mental health care, continually setting new benchmarks for excellence.

An essential element in this transformation is the incorporation of lived experience leadership and peer workers. They contribute to the design and implementation of trauma-informed practices, ensuring that services are more responsive and attuned to the needs of those affected.

Spectrum also plays a crucial role in education and training, reshaping how educators and professionals work with those impacted by borderline personality disorder to drive effective and compassionate client outcomes.

These strategic directions reaffirm Eastern Health and Spectrum’s shared commitment to providing excellent mental health services. Spectrum, together with Eastern Health’s area mental health and wellbeing services, will continue to make a meaningful impact on the lives of the people we support.



David Plunkett

Chief Executive
Eastern Health

A blue ink signature of David Plunkett, written in a cursive style.



Toni Gutschlag

Executive Director
Mental Health & Clinical Support
Eastern Health

A blue ink signature of Toni Gutschlag, written in a cursive style.

From our Leaders

Our journey began with a clear vision, to offer compassionate care and impactful solutions for individuals grappling with personality disorder and complex trauma. Over the years, we have seen this vision evolve as we deepened our commitment, refining our approach and expanding our expertise. As time has passed, our dedication to excellence has only strengthened.

From our modest beginnings, over the past 25 years we have grown into a trusted resource, continuously adapting to meet the needs of those we serve with empathy and innovation. Today, we stand at a pivotal moment in our evolution. Our experience has equipped us with valuable insights and proven strategies, positioning us to take on a more expansive role in Victoria and beyond.

We're proud of our close working relationships with key stakeholders, including public mental health services, the Office of the Chief Psychiatrist of Victoria, and national organisations such as the Australian Borderline Personality Disorder Foundation. These collaborations have enabled us to drive standards in clinical practice and policy, establishing Spectrum as an indispensable partner in the mental health ecosystem.

As we look to the future, we are eager to continue growing, evolving, and enhancing our services. We are actively developing high-impact clinical research and scalable models of care that will transform the treatment landscape.

Our ambition is to take the insights and expertise we have honed over the past two and a half decades and apply them across Australia and internationally, ensuring that our innovative, evidence-based approaches benefit even more individuals in need.

Spectrum's culture of innovation, deep expertise, and unwavering commitment to improving mental health outcomes make Spectrum the leader in personality disorder and complex trauma treatment. As we continue to expand our contributions to the field, we are confident that Spectrum will remain at the forefront of clinical excellence, research, and capacity building—setting new benchmarks for mental health care across the world.

As we embark on this next chapter, we invite our stakeholders and partners to join us in this transformative journey. Your support is crucial as we strive to create a more inclusive and effective network of care, driven by our shared commitment to excellence and compassion.



Sathya Rao, OAM

Associate Professor
Executive Clinical Director,
Spectrum, Eastern Health

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'S. Rao'.



Denis Hovic

Program Director,
Statewide Services

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Denis Hovic'.

Humble beginnings

Reflecting on Spectrum's 25-year legacy, it is with immense pride and confidence that we assert our position as the undisputed clinical leader in the treatment of personality disorder and complex trauma, in Australia. From our origins as a modest bed-based psychiatric facility at Maroondah Hospital in Victoria, we have grown into an internationally recognised clinical centre of excellence, with a reputation built on clinical innovation, capacity building, pragmatic research, and unparalleled care.

Today, Spectrum is not only a beacon of expertise but also a driving force shaping the future of mental health treatment, in Australia.



REDEFINING BEST PRACTICES

Our credibility stems from a history of pioneering milestones that have redefined best practices in mental health. The launch of the Australian Mentalisation-Based Treatment Institute and our adaptation of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) to treat Borderline Personality Disorder stand as prime examples of Spectrum's contributions.

Our Randomised Control Trials (RCTs) and manualisation of treatments under the "Wise Choices" framework were world firsts, reinforcing our role as a leader in this space. Wise Choices was developed in accordance with the first Acceptance and Commitment Therapy RCT completed with people diagnosed with a personality disorder.

The Wise Choices manual has been the most sought after resource. It has been implemented in mental health services across Australia. Since its first iteration, the model has been revised to allow a greater staged model of care. We have consistently delivered high-impact research that informs clinical practice. Our collaborations with leading institutions such as the Anna Freud Centre, UK and the Gunderson Personality Disorders Institute at McLean Hospital (Harvard Medical School) underscore our commitment to advancing treatment methodologies on a global scale. These partnerships, along with our status as the go-to authority for complex clinical cases and low suicide rates (0.3% for patients in our care compared to the 10% community average), have cemented our legitimacy as the clinical leader in managing personality disorders and complex trauma.

Spectrum provides a world-class Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) treatment program with good outcomes for complex clients with personality disorder. DBT is useful for significantly reducing anger, self-injurious and suicidal behaviours as well as increasing a person's capacity to manage distress, regulate their emotions and improve the quality of their relationships. DBT Spectrum staff are supervised by an internationally recognised researcher, teacher, and supervisor in DBT from the USA, Professor Alan Fruzzetti.

We are dedicated to being able to offer high quality DBT therapy within the Victorian public mental health context.

OUR STORY SO FAR



IMPACT AT SCALE

One of the key elements that distinguishes Spectrum is our holistic approach to capacity building within the mental health sector. We have trained over 25,000 clinicians, developed core competency frameworks, and launched the Personality Disorders Initiative to ensure sustainable improvements in clinical care. However, we recognise that training clinicians alone does not consistently translate to a change in clinical practice. By embedding capacity within public mental health services and working closely with primary health networks, Spectrum has created systemic improvements in the identification, treatment, and referral of individuals with personality disorder, ensuring that our influence extends far beyond the walls of our clinics.



ESTABLISHED REPUTATION

In addition to our clinical and academic achievements, Spectrum has received numerous accolades, including the Meritorious Service Award from the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP) in 2023, and, notably, two Order of Australia Medals awarded to senior clinical leaders within Spectrum in 2021 and 2022. These recognitions are a testament to our longstanding commitment to excellence. Our reputation is built not only on the quality of our research and training but also on the tangible outcomes we deliver for patients. The significant reduction in suicide rates for clients under our care is a powerful testament to the effectiveness of our interventions and our ability to manage high-risk, complex cases with precision.



25 years of impact

In the evolving landscape of mental health care, Spectrum has significantly impacted the needs of individuals with borderline personality disorder (BPD) and complex trauma.

Our work extends across Victoria, throughout Australia, and internationally, reflecting our commitment to advancing mental health support on a global scale.

To date, we have directly provided services to over 5,000 individuals, offering tailored support and interventions designed to meet the unique challenges faced by those with BPD and complex trauma. Our approach integrates a deep understanding of these conditions with evidence-based practices, ensuring that our clients receive the most effective care possible.

This commitment is further demonstrated by the extensive network of over 10,000 secondary consultations we have conducted in total over the past 25 years.



These consultations play a crucial role in equipping other mental health professionals with the insights and strategies needed to better support their own clients, thereby amplifying the reach and efficacy of our services.

Training is a cornerstone of our mission, and we have successfully trained more than 15,000 mental health clinicians to recognise and address the complexities of BPD and trauma. This extensive training program not only enhances the skills of these professionals but also helps to standardise high-quality care across various settings, ensuring a consistent and compassionate approach to treatment.

Our contributions to the field are also evident through our research and educational resources. With 60+ research papers and 4 books published, we continue to advance knowledge and share innovative practices that inform and inspire both current and future mental health interventions. Additionally, our 200+ workshops for families and carers have provided essential support and education, helping loved ones understand and manage the challenges associated with BPD and complex trauma.



Why we act

REDUCING THE IMPACT OF BORDERLINE PERSONALITY DISORDER (BPD) AND COMPLEX TRAUMA

Spectrum is committed to improving the lives of individuals affected by Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) and complex trauma. With 5% of Australians impacted by personality disorder and 1% experiencing severe conditions like BPD, Spectrum provides life-changing services focused on empowerment, resilience, and well-being.

EMPOWERMENT THROUGH SKILL-BUILDING

BPD presents significant challenges, including heightened emotional distress and self-harm risk. Spectrum's interventions—focusing on emotional regulation, interpersonal effectiveness, and distress tolerance—equip individuals to better manage their mental health. This is critical, as those with BPD face a suicide risk 45 times higher than the general population. Spectrum provides crisis management, therapeutic programs, and community support to help reduce these risks, contributing to lower suicide rates and long-term emotional resilience.

REDUCING THE IMPACT ON HEALTHCARE SYSTEMS

Spectrum's services reduce pressure on emergency and inpatient mental health care, where 26% and 25% of cases, respectively, involve personality disorder. By offering early intervention and ongoing support, Spectrum enables individuals to manage crises independently, leading to more sustainable healthcare outcomes.

TACKLING STIGMA AND RAISING AWARENESS

Personality disorder accounts for 10% of all suicides in Australia, and stigma often delays treatment. Spectrum's advocacy and education efforts raise awareness and reduce stigma, encouraging earlier intervention. This leads to better recovery outcomes and crisis prevention.

OUTCOMES AND STRATEGIC IMPACT

Through its integrated approach, Spectrum addresses both immediate and long-term challenges faced by those with BPD. By building skills and confidence, individuals progress from emotional instability to resilience and hope. Spectrum's commitment to reducing suicide risk, easing healthcare utilisation, and tackling stigma ensures lasting, positive change for individuals and the broader community.



Our strategic directions

1

DEEPENING OUR IMPACT

Providing leadership in clinical excellence, developing transformative care models that revolutionise treatment and support.

- Lead in clinical excellence and transformative models of care
- Continue delivering high-quality, innovative clinical care
- Use research to guide best practice implementation
- Integrate Good Psychiatric Management (GPM) into model of care
- Embed digital health
- Increase training solutions
- Develop and enhance strategic partnerships
- Increase the number of peer support roles and include lived experience perspectives in all work

2

INCREASING OUR INFLUENCE

Expanding our sector leadership role by shaping the policy agenda through innovative world-class research in personality disorder and suicide prevention.

- Champion a high-impact research agenda in complexity in personality disorder, suicide prevention, psychedelics, health economics, and peer-led programs
- Lead the application of research to achieve the best outcomes in personality disorder and complex trauma Deepen partnerships with universities through new academic appointments.
- Build on our trusted position as clinical risk experts and thought leaders
- Enhance the role of lived experience expertise
- Engage actively in new sectors through networking, conferences, and partnerships to expand service delivery
- Advocate and work closely with health and social sectors, government, and community groups
- Promote leadership and innovation through increased media and digital presence

3

WIDENING OUR REACH

Expand our services to reach more people and sectors allowing us to reinvest in our work.

- Enhance the funding base to support our multi-faceted mission
- Establish 'Spectrum National' private consultation and training business for national and international capability building
- Leverage capability to deliver services to more consumers and sectors
- Grow the reach and impact of workforce training solutions and research outputs
- Create marketing strategies to connect with people who have personality disorder and complex trauma, providing information that suits different audiences

4

TRANSFORMING OUR PROGRAM

Supporting Spectrum's people, culture, processes and systems to grow our impact and reputation.

- Integrate lived experience into decision-making and focus on expanding the team
- Increase capability with targeted training and mentorship
- Promote collaboration among Research and Training teams and confidence to share work with a wider audience
Enable a work culture with our mission at its heart, sustaining a resilient workforce, fostering pride, innovation and ownership
- Embrace digital transformation, investing in supporting capabilities
- Use formative feedback to empower authentic and data-driven growth

How we work

1. Respect for all

Upholding Dignity and Inclusion

We create a safe and welcoming environment for all, ensuring our services are inclusive and non-judgemental.

2. Safe Always

Ensuring Psychological and Physical Safety

We ensure that the person's needs are front and centre in any therapeutic decisions. Our expert team of clinicians are passionate to support people living with a high risk of suicide by building trust and connection and walking alongside to help them achieve remission.

3. Partnering in Care

Authentic Collaboration

We work collaboratively to foster self-agency and support decision-making for people living with BPD and complex trauma, their families and friends. We strive to always maintain partnerships.

4. Learning and Improving every day

Championing Innovation

We are dedicated to continuous improvement and foster innovation through curiosity, listening, reflection and research. We value thoughtfulness and a willingness to learn from challenging situations. Our work is informed by lived experience.



APPENDICES

Our sincere thanks go to all of those who so generously shared their time, ideas and insights in the development of this plan. Your contributions, both in the development, and no doubt in supporting the collaborative delivery of this plan, are greatly valued and appreciated.

- Australian BPD Foundation
- Borderline Personality Disorder Collaborative, South Australia
- Department of Health, Victoria
- Eastern Health
- Eastern Health Institute
- Gunderson Personality Disorders Institute
- Lived Experience workforce
- Office of the Chief Psychiatrist, Victoria
- Safer Care Victoria
- Statewide Services – Hamilton Centre, Spectrum and Turning Point
- Victorian Area Mental Health and Wellbeing Services
- Victorian Collaborative Centre for Mental Health and Wellbeing

This document has been developed to ensure alignment with various strategy documents and actions, both internal and external to Eastern Health. As we work to implement our Future Directions, we will regularly measure our progress and performance and seek feedback from our people, including consumers, staff, community and partners.

We will keep you updated through our:

- Quality reports
- Annual reports
- Social media channels

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