Peer work is non-clinical, therapeutic work focused on supporting client recovery which requires an appropriate model to respond to the unique needs and circumstances of each client. A discussion document developed by Relationships Australia SA (RASA) demonstrated the effectiveness of peer support and the importance of people drawing upon their own lived experience as a way of empowerment.

There is currently no HIV peer support model for people from CALD backgrounds in Australia. HIV adds to the level of vulnerability people already experience; as a result, efforts to recruit peers have been unsuccessful in South Australia. In response to this, RASA initiated the development of a CALD-focused peer support model.

Consultations were conducted with different stakeholders to discuss the barriers and way forward to create a peer support structure. This involved people living with HIV (PLHIV) in South Australia, two HIV positive speakers from interstate and Blood Borne Virus Services (PEACE and MOSAIC). A draft model was developed based on the recommendations and feedback received through the consultation. The draft model was trialled and improvement made based on the practical outcome. The final draft will continue to be improved as needed through monitoring and evaluation.

A model has been developed which will be a living document. PLHIV are already contributing to the current practice. Currently three people are contributing to the peer model in South Australia. One of these three completed the Leadership training at the Positive Leadership Development Institute (PLDI).

This document highlights the development of a peer support model and the importance of involving people with lived experiences. Every client of the service is a peer contributor.