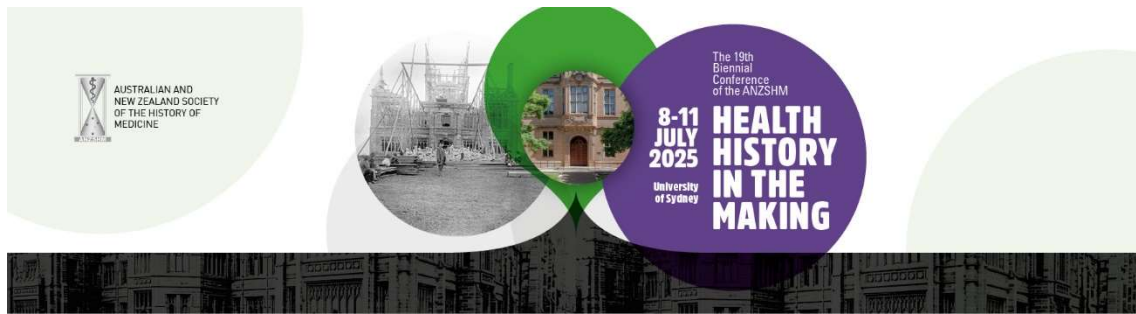




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Big Feelings as Methodological Justice: Addressing Epistemic Inequities in Medical Oral Histories

The Re;Minding Histories research project documented Australia's community mental health history through oral histories, archival research and collaborative analysis with service users. Our team - comprising clinical psychologists, psychiatrists, historians, students and four peer researchers with lived experience as mental health consumers - followed the disability movement's principle "Nothing about Us Without Us." This paper examines how we incorporated 'Big Feelings' as central to our research methodology. The project mapped the evolution of community-based care from deinstitutionalisation to present-day recovery models, capturing overlooked voices in Australian mental health care. By collecting narratives from service users, family members, practitioners and advocates, we developed a multi-perspective account of how community mental health services evolved in response to changing social attitudes, policy frameworks and lived experiences across Australia.

Our methodology positioned 'Big Feelings' such as anger, grief, hope and solidarity as valuable knowledge sources rather than research impediments. This paper details how we established specific practices to address power differentials and acknowledge emotional labour: dedicated peer-only spaces for processing dual identities, regular emotional check-ins during meetings and narrative interview approaches that recognised affective dimensions of historical experiences. These methods created environments where emotional vulnerability strengthened rather than compromised the research process. Despite institutional constraints and funding limitations, we

demonstrate how qualitative researchers can implement meaningful coproduction beyond token inclusion. Through systematic incorporation of emotional authenticity and lived experience into research design, we produced knowledge that is not only more equitable but also more nuanced, relational and transformative -ultimately enhancing our understanding of Australian community mental health through diverse and embodied perspectives.