



The Voice Sanctuary | Sunshine Coast

RESTORATIVE RESPITE

For psychosis, mania and non-ordinary states of
consciousness

4th – 8th April 2025



*An opportunity to make sense of your
experiences, build life skills and connect
with others who understand*

OVERVIEW

The Voice Sanctuary is pleased to offer a bespoke respite program for people who have experienced psychosis, mania or non-ordinary states of consciousness.

These experiences can be extremely challenging, deeply impacting a person's life, worldview and confidence. Yet there can be gifts and positive outcomes from the experience too. This respite provides a unique opportunity for people to explore their experiences and learn practical skills, in a peaceful, trauma-informed space, with people who have lived experience as well as mental health training.



PROGRAM

Our program is held on a 400 acre private property on the beautiful Sunshine Coast of Queensland.

The respite is held in two parts:

1. **MAIN PROGRAM:** Three nights of accommodation with 1:2 support ratios (24/7) and a capacity-building program.
2. **OPTIONAL RESPITE DAY:** Fourth optional night available without a structured program and with a 1:2 support ratio (24/7).

In a small group of up to 6 participants, this respite allows time for individual rest-and-replenishment, and group activities of sharing, learning and connection.

Each respite has a bespoke itinerary to suit the needs and preferences of our participants, broadly including:

- ∞ Group connection time with discussion, teaching and activities
- ∞ Private rest and reflection time
- ∞ Individual mentoring sessions with our facilitators/guides
- ∞ Shared meals
- ∞ Campfire chats
- ∞ Music/sound therapy
- ∞ Yoga and/or other movement therapy
- ∞ Art and craft-making
- ∞ Story-telling
- ∞ Nature immersions (e.g. rainforest walks, ocean swims)

*Coming together through the bond of common
experience, we feel safe and we feel seen. Through the
power of compassionate connection, we help each other
heal and thrive.*

WHO IS THIS RESPITE FOR?

We have designed our program for people who have experienced psychosis or mania and who:

- ∞ Are currently stable in their mental health and are able to practice self-care;
- ∞ Need a break from their ordinary lives to enhance wellbeing;
- ∞ Would like to provide a break for their carers or loved ones that support them;
- ∞ Are ready to explore and integrate what psychosis or mania means for them;
- ∞ Would like to learn skills to stay grounded and well;
- ∞ Are willing to share this journey with a small group of peers and lived experience practitioners in a communal homestead



Connection is a grounding force. It keeps us in the “here and now”. It locates us in time and space, and brings a sense of belonging and comfort

OUTCOMES

This respite is an opportunity to:

- ∞ Explore your experiences through group learning and peer support
- ∞ Learn about non-ordinary states of consciousness, with knowledge drawn from neuroscience, psychology, spirituality and indigenous cultures;
- ∞ Enhance your self-awareness and develop your own meaning, story and language which helps you to integrate your experiences;
- ∞ Learn to ground and balance your energy, and enhance your self-care;
- ∞ Learn skills to help stay well if you re-experience psychosis
- ∞ Enhance social and community participation

LOCATION & ACCOMMODATION

The Sunshine Coast in Queensland is about 1.5 hours north of Brisbane, and is home to a wonderland of beaches, mountains and forests which provide a deeply therapeutic environment.

Our respite is held at a stunning 400-acre property called Bellthorpe Stays (see <https://www.bellstays.com.au/>), near Maleny on the Sunshine Coast hinterland. Surrounded by rainforest and completely private, the property includes:

- ∞ Established walking tracks
- ∞ A running creek with waterfalls and waterholes
- ∞ Firepit

You will have your own private bedroom within a 2-bedroom self-contained cabin, shared with another person. Each cabin has these features:

- ∞ Reverse cycle air conditioning and ceiling fans.
- ∞ Slow combustion log fireplaces
- ∞ Separate lounge room
- ∞ Linen provided
- ∞ Bathroom and laundry
- ∞ Kitchen
- ∞ Gas BBQ and outdoor setting



Weather

Bellthorpe is on a hinterland mountain range and is therefore significantly cooler than the Sunshine Coast. The town of Maleny has a similar weather pattern, and April is a moderate and pleasant time of year to visit. The average temperature range for March in Maleny is between 19 - 23 degrees. The average humidity is 78%, with an average of 9 days of rain.



Nature is our most trustworthy teacher and guide; when we attune to natural rhythms and we sync our heartbeat with Mother Earth, we find the eternal truth of our Being.



COMMUNAL LIVING

This respite is an opportunity to live with others, help each other, and make friendships. There are group activities and other chances to come together to talk, laugh and learn.

We ask you to respect others in the shared space, and to consider what is best for the group, especially if your personal actions may impact others. This includes:

- ∞ Being mindful of noise levels in common areas
- ∞ Refrain from wearing perfumes or heavily scented deodorants
- ∞ Taking care of your own safety
- ∞ Asking for help when you need it
- ∞ Communicating with respect and kindness
- ∞ Abstaining from alcohol or non-prescription drugs
- ∞ Keeping your cabin areas clean

In the spirit of the peer values of equality and sharing, participants may be asked to help out with basic household chores, such as food preparation and cleaning up duties.

YOUR GUIDES & MENTORS

Our small team (Louisa, Natasha and Dee) all bring unique expertise to this respite, including lived experience of psychosis, mania or non-ordinary states of consciousness. Having grown through own personal struggles, the wisdom we share is embodied through practice. We are also trained in various mental health disciplines and we have worked with people in a therapeutic capacity for many years.

Louisa D Pearce

Louisa is a social worker, peer specialist and author. She has recovered from multiple diagnoses, including schizophrenia, gaining direct insight into psycho-spiritual distress and healing.

In 2011 she began work as a researcher, peer worker and trainer for a consumer-led organisation, Voices Vic, helping people who heard voices. Louisa has since worked in community mental health and in private hospitals; at

Healthscope, she became the National Consumer Consultant. More recently, she was the Peer Practice Supervisor and trainer for Peer 4 Peer on the Sunshine Coast.



Louisa now works in private practice as a mental health counsellor and teacher. She has a Masters of Social Work and is also trained in Embodied Processing and Energy Medicine. She is the author of *Spirit-Gnosis: Hearing Voices* (2020) and *The Little Girl that Nobody Wanted* (2013), a memoir about recovery from childhood trauma.

Natasha Symmonds

From a very young age Natasha had a connection with the land around her; growing up in the desert, she was attuned to the cycles of nature and would spend time looking at the stars. Later she found her way to the waters, both fresh and salty, as a way to lift her spirits.

Natasha has worked in community services with displaced people and families, as a holistic counsellor at Solothurn Wellness Retreat, and as support worker in community-based mental health programs. She has facilitated workshops, retreats and women's circles in Gympie and the Sunshine Coast for over 15 years.



Natasha has a Diploma in Counselling, Graduate Diploma in Relationship Counselling, a Masters of Crystal Light Healing and a Masters of Essence of Angels.

As well as her years of working experience, Natasha has lived experience of recovery from psychosis. She is a nurturing, grounded and wise woman, with a passion for holistic healing modalities, including crystals, sound therapy and ceremony.

Dee Duffy

Dee is a social worker and peer work supervisor/trainer. She began her career as a Registered Nurse in Scotland in 2003 and then in 2010 she re-trained in social work, with a special interest in mental health.

Dee has worked in community mental health and AOD services, hospitals, and not-for-profit; designing and delivering training, and working with clients.

Dee has a Diploma in Community Services, a Bachelor of Nursing (Adult), and a Bachelor (Hons) of Social Work. She currently works as a Peer Practice Trainer/Supervisor and Program Development Coordinator for Peer 4 Peer on the Sunshine Coast.



Dee has lived experience of CPTSD, depression, and anxiety and also has lived experience of being a carer. Dee hails from Scotland, and brings the wisdom of her lived experience to her work, as well as her bubbly personality and sense of humour.



TESTIMONIALS

"The retreat was an inspired oasis for people to come together and share stories of survival, generate healing, create connection, all with the added benefits of nurturing food and beautiful surrounds. For me, it was transformative and truly felt like a giant step forward in my recovery journey. Although I am still processing, I now feel a sense of hope for my future again. I am so grateful to the facilitators, all of whom have their own lived experience — the sense of compassion, care and acceptance was like nothing else. We need more such places of healing around the world."

- Emma (March 2024)

"The respite was a significant milestone on my recovery journey. The joy, sensitivity, and integrity of the peer facilitators meant that it was the perfect combination of authentic relationships, skilled therapy, and a restful holiday. There were challenges, which I was expertly supported through. Having the opportunity to tell my story with kindred spirits as witnesses was very meaningful, and the educational aspects were also important. Thank you, Louisa, for providing such a profound and needed service.

- Chris (March 2024)

"I feel very fortunate to have gone on the voice sanctuary respite to the Sunshine Coast hinterlands. (Absolute beauty in the choice of location, an absolute treasure in itself) From the anticipation, support and organisation, to arrival and journey on the sanctuary and in the company of such beautiful people, everything just flowed magically. I can't express enough, my gratitude to Louisa, the team and all participants for such a wonderful spiritual adventure."

- Justin (March 2024)

PRICING

The prices are as follows:

1. **\$3,200/person** for 3 nights
2. **\$3,900/person** for 4 nights

Our prices are based on the NDIS recommended daily rate for Short Term Accommodation (see [NDIS price guide](#)) and are calculated by support ratio of 1:2 (24/7).

The program provides respite as well as skill-building activities, hence we also provide an option for using a mix of core and capacity-building funds.

For more information, please ask us for our Service Agreement.

Our respite price includes:

- ∞ Transport to and from your home or from Sunshine Coast Airport (Maroochydore)
- ∞ Meals (breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks), with vegetarian, vegan and gluten-free options
- ∞ Accommodation
- ∞ Individual mentoring sessions
- ∞ Group activities

FUNDING & PAYMENT

NDIS PARTICIPANTS

This respite may be fully funded by your NDIS plan. We will provide a service agreement, and you will be charged after the respite is complete.

PRIVATE FUNDED CLIENTS

Privately funded clients can pay in two ways:

UPFRONT PAYMENT PLAN (10% DISCOUNTED FEE)

Secure your spot with a 25% payment and pay the remainder by **11th March 2024**.

Receive a 10% discount if you pay this way.

PAYMENT PLAN

Secure your spot with \$500 upfront and then pay a negotiated weekly amount with a nominated credit card (admin fees apply)

For more details, please see our Service Agreement.

ELIGIBILITY

Recovery from psychosis, mania and non-ordinary states of consciousness can involve different stages of vulnerability. Attending this respite can also present challenges for people, such as travelling interstate, meeting new people, and participating in group activities. It is important that we ensure that participants are:

- ∞ ready for exploration and integration of their experiences
- ∞ feeling stable in their mental health and self-care practices
- ∞ have supportive environments to return to after this experience

POSTPONEMENT

If we feel you are not suitable for this respite, it is most likely because we are concerned that your mental health may be compromised by this respite *at this time*. We may also have to select people based on age and gender, to ensure a balanced community.

We take the view that if this happens, then another respite at another time would be perfect for you, and we will work with you to make this happen.

If we do postpone your attendance, we will let you know the reasons why, and we will endeavour to invite you to a suitable respite in the near future.

APPLICATIONS

Our application process is as follows:

1. Confirm your interest with us by email, phone or website
2. Complete the registration form we send you (online)
3. We will send you a formal Service Agreement
4. We will then arrange an informal online meeting with you, so we can talk about your expectations and needs, and make sure that this respite is a good fit for you at this time.
5. We will notify you of acceptance or postponement in a timely manner.

CANCELLATION POLICY

We have a strict cancellation policy to allow us to pre-pay for accommodation, and to cover overheads and staff.

Once you have been accepted and you have signed the service agreement, you are agreeing to pay for this service and committing to attend. If circumstances change for you, the following cancellation terms apply, unless we can find someone to come in your place:

- ∞ Cancellations **after the 4th March**, NDIS clients may incur a 50% fee, and private clients will forfeit any deposits or payments made.
- ∞ Cancellations **after the 11th March**. NDIS clients may be charged the full fee

IMPORTANT DATES

The dates below can provide a guide as to the application process. Please note that we review applications as we receive them to allow time for people to plan their trips. This means that spots may fill before the closing date, and we therefore recommend that you apply as soon as you can.

Applications open:	Monday 18 th November 2023
Intake interviews:	Ongoing until all spots are filled
Cancellations until:	4 th March 2025
Respite Dates	4th – 8th April 2025

WHAT NEXT?

For more information and to start the application process, please contact:

Louisa D Pearce

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