



The Person Behind The LX Lens

Why I do this work. How I think. What you can expect.

Gareth Edwards | The LX Lens | 2026

A little about the person behind the lens

There are many people who can review a project or write a report.

What I hope is distinctive about my work is not only what I know, but how I notice, connect and make sense of things.



The LX Lens grew from more than twenty-five years of LX leadership, research, service design, evaluation and organisational change and practical work across Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand.

It also grew from being on more than one side of systems:

as someone with my own and loved-ones' experiences of alcohol and drug use, mental illness, suicide and homelessness challenges along with the the systems intended to provide support;

as a peer, advocate, researcher and evaluator;

as a government advisor, service and systems architect, organisation CEO and national director, program leader and published academic;

and as an independent consultant invited into complex projects and evolving organisations where good intentions, institutional pressures and people's real lives do not always line up neatly.

That combination matters. I understand the human experience of systems, and I understand the machinery of projects, organisations, evidence, services, programs, governance, funding and decision-making.

My role is to help bring those worlds closer together.

I am interested in the space between what a project intends to do and what people actually experience.

Why The LX Lens exists

Most organisations I work with genuinely want to involve people well. They want services, policies, research and reforms to be useful, respectful and grounded in real life.

Yet good intentions can be diluted by deadlines, inherited processes, unclear decision rights, competing expectations and understandable uncertainty about what meaningful involvement actually requires.

A project may invite people in but be unclear what they can influence. It may gather powerful stories but leave interpretation to others. It may promise co-design when the key decisions have already been made. It may ask people to revisit painful experiences without enough preparation, support or follow-through.

The LX Lens exists to make these patterns easier to see and change.

The central promise of The LX Lens

The LX Lens helps lived and living experience and expertise become more meaningful, supported and influential in the projects that shape people's lives.

A brief professional story

Across my career I have:

- advised governments, commissions, national programmes and service organisations in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand
- helped design and implement national digital mental health, AOD and peer-support services
- led and contributed to lived experience strategies, workforce development, co-production, evaluation and organisational reform
- worked across mental health and wellbeing, alcohol and other drugs, suicide prevention, housing, homelessness, human rights and counter-discrimination in community, public, primary, secondary and tertiary and government departments and agencies
- led grassroots initiatives to celebrate diversity and enhance social inclusion through MadPride and human rights education and advocacy programs
- published and presented on lived experience, co-production, suicide prevention, service design and participation and established the first international lived experience led academic conference
- held executive, academic, research, service-design, facilitation and independent consulting roles

Credentials at a glance

BSc Hons Psychology | MSc Applied Artificial Intelligence | 25+ years across lived experience leadership, research, service design, strategy, evaluation and organisational change.

My contribution to the work comes from combining personal experience with decades of reflection, peer work, research, leadership, service design and consultancy.

I try to use that knowledge with humility: not to speak for everybody, but to help create conditions in which the right people can shape the work.

I also recognise that my perspective is shaped by being a white, British, heterosexual man with access to education, professional status and institutional influence.

These positions can affect what I notice, whose knowledge feels familiar, and what I interpret as credible, practical or safe.

I try to make those assumptions visible, seek challenges and perspectives from people whose experiences differ from mine and avoid treating my perspective as neutral or universal.

I know that awareness does not remove bias.

It requires ongoing reflection, cultural humility, accountability and a willingness to change my view.

Principles that guide my work

1. People before process

Processes matter, but they exist to support people and good decisions. When the process becomes the purpose, something has drifted.

2. Influence over attendance

A seat at the table is not the same as meaningful influence. I look at what people can genuinely shape, change or decide.

3. Honest participation

Informing, consulting, involving, co-designing, co-producing and LX-led work can all be valid. The important thing is to name the level honestly.

4. Curiosity before certainty

I begin with questions rather than conclusions. Strong review work creates enough safety to examine assumptions, tensions and uncertainty.

5. Evidence includes experience

Quantitative data, research, operational knowledge and lived experience illuminate different parts of reality. Strong decisions use them together.

6. Meaning is made together

People with LX should help interpret what evidence means, not only provide material for others to interpret.

7. Support is part of the method

Preparation, access, choice, safety, consent, payment and emotional support are not optional extras. They shape the quality of participation.

8. Accountability completes the loop

People should hear what happened to their input, what changed, what did not and why.

9. Build capability, not dependency

The goal is not to make organisations reliant on me. It is to leave people clearer, more confident and better equipped for the next piece of work.

10. Progress over performance

I am less interested in whether a project can use the right language than whether it can take an honest and useful next step.

Thoughtful challenge without theatre

My work is usually calm, direct and collaborative. I am not there to perform expertise or manufacture certainty. I am there to help the work become clearer and stronger.

I read before I recommend.

I like to understand the brief, history, language, evidence, relationships and decision context before offering solutions.

I look for strengths as well as gaps.

A useful review should show what is already working and worth protecting, not only what needs repair.

I make assumptions visible.

Many project difficulties live inside unspoken beliefs about people, risk, evidence, scope, power or what is realistically changeable.

I connect strategy with lived reality.

I move between big-picture purpose and practical details such as invitation language, meeting design, payment, analysis and feedback.

I write in plain language.

Complexity sometimes requires nuance but the communication should always remain clear.

I offer challenge without making people feel diminished.

People are more able to learn when they do not feel placed in the dock. I try to create enough honesty for defensiveness to soften.

I name limits.

Sometimes the evidence is incomplete, the timetable too tight or the promised influence not real. Naming that can be more useful than polishing the appearance of certainty.

A good lens does not tell you what to see. It helps you see more clearly.

Why email review can work remarkably well

Meetings are useful for relationships, shared decisions and live exploration. They are not always the best setting for deep thinking.

Some of my strongest work happens when I can spend uninterrupted time with a project: reading the brief, tracing the logic, noticing contradictions, comparing documents, considering what is absent and allowing a response to develop rather than forcing one on the spot.

An asynchronous review gives me time to immerse myself in your materials and gives you a considered written resource that can be shared, discussed and revisited.

It can also reduce the cost and scheduling burden of traditional consulting, particularly when the main need is an experienced external perspective rather than another series of meetings.

Asynchronous does not mean impersonal

You receive structured, specific and context-aware feedback. Where useful, written review can be followed by a focused conversation, workshop or mentoring session.

What you can send

- project briefs, proposals and business cases
- strategies, frameworks and implementation plans
- participation, co-design or engagement plans
- survey, interview or workshop materials
- draft reports, findings and recommendations
- service-review or evaluation plans
- policies, role descriptions and governance documents
- a question you are stuck on, with the relevant context

What I may return

- an annotated document or structured written review
- what appears strong, unclear, missing or potentially risky
- questions to resolve before progressing
- practical recommendations ordered by priority
- suggested language, structures, prompts or templates
- options with benefits, limitations and trade-offs

When conversation adds value

Some work needs the energy of dialogue: testing ideas, handling diverse views, making decisions together or building confidence in the people who will carry the work forward.

- a focused advice or sense-making session
- project or strategy development support
- facilitation of co-design, review or decision-making workshops
- mentoring and reflective support for LX leaders, managers and practitioners
- executive or board briefings
- team learning and capability development
- ongoing project advice by an agreed mix of email and meetings

A practical blend

A common pathway may be: send the documents, receive an initial review, then use one focused session to make decisions. This protects meeting time for the parts that genuinely need people together.

What working together should feel like

You should experience	You should not experience
clarity about scope, outputs and limitations	pressure to buy more work than you need
respectful challenge and honest feedback	jargon, drama or inflated certainty
care with sensitive material and disclosure	an assumption that LX means sharing everything
practical recommendations that fit your context	a generic framework pasted onto your project
a stronger internal capability after the work	dependency on an external consultant

Depth behind the simplicity

The LX Lens is intentionally accessible. That simplicity is supported by substantial experience across systems, services, evidence and lived experience practice.

Selected experience

Organisation / context	Contribution
Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System	Review and testing to strengthen lived experience input into major reforms; advisory and supervisory roles.
SHARC and Victorian Department of Health	Lead consultancy supporting development of a pan-sector Lived Experience Leadership Strategy.
headspace Australia	Service architecture and implementation of eheadspace.
Health Quality & Safety Commission New Zealand	Primary investigator using survivor stories to inform suicide mortality review.
Mental Health Victoria and Eastern Melbourne PHN	NDIS workforce development, literature review, consultation and regional strategy.
Lifeline New Zealand	National Director leading strategy, restructuring and a unified practice framework.
National and state organisations	Consultancy across service review, co-production, policy, workforce, organisational reform and digital mental health.

Areas of expertise

- lived and living experience leadership and strategy
- co-production, co-planning, co-design, co-delivery, co-evaluation, participation and influence
- service review, evaluation and evidence synthesis
- service architecture and organisational transformation
- qualitative research, consultation and shared sense-making
- peer workforce development, supervision and capability
- human rights, stigma, discrimination and social inclusion
- mental health, AOD, suicide prevention, housing and public services
- plain-language writing, facilitation and strategic communication

Questions you may have

Do I need a fully formed project?

No. Early-stage work can benefit from review before assumptions harden and participation begins. I can also review work already underway or help make sense of findings at the end.

Will you tell us whether our project is good or bad?

Not in those terms. I will identify strengths, gaps, risks and practical opportunities. The aim is learning and improvement rather than a blunt good or bad.

Can you work outside mental health, AOD, suicide prevention/postvention or homelessness?

Yes. The principles travel well wherever people affected by an issue should shape what is learned, designed, decided or changed. Sector-specific legal, clinical or cultural advice may still be needed.

How much material can we send?

This depends on the review package and purpose. A concise, well-chosen set of documents is often more useful than everything ever written about the project. We can agree on what is essential.

How do we get our material to you and will you keep it confidential?

Yes. Your materials will be accessed only by me. Before work begins, I will explain how documents should be shared, where they will be stored and when my working copies will be deleted.

Once we have agreed on the level of review, I will provide an appropriate way to share the documents. Depending on sensitivity, this may be a secure upload link, a restricted shared folder or an encrypted file with the password sent separately.

Can you work with sensitive or contested projects?

Yes. This is the norm for most of the work I do. I will be clear about scope, independence, risk, conflicts and whether additional cultural, legal, clinical, ethics or safeguarding expertise is needed.

Can the written review be followed by a meeting?

Yes. A focused conversation can help prioritise recommendations, work through diverse views or decide what happens next.

What does it cost?

A focused review is USD350, a deep review is USD750 and a strategic review is USD1450

It varies based on materials, volume, complexity, urgency and output. After you've completed the review application I'll tell you which level is needed.

Full details on the next page.

What is the turnaround time?

From one to ten working days usually, depending on the size of review. Full details on the next page.

Do you offer cancellations or refunds?

Once we agree on the level of review, I will confirm the booking and payment terms. If you cancel before work begins, any refund arrangements will be explained in those terms. Once work has begun, fees may be retained in proportion to the work completed.

Rates

1. Focused Review: USD \$350 - 1 to 3 working days

For one defined question or a short document.

Suitable for up to 15 pages in 1 document

Includes:

- a project brief, expression of interest
- engagement plan or workshop outline
- questionnaire or interview guide
- short strategy or proposal
- written feedback highlighting strengths, gaps and risks
- practical priorities and next steps
- about 2 to 4 pages of feedback

2. Deep Review: USD \$750 - 3 to 7 working days

For a project or connected set of documents requiring a fuller LX assessment.

Suitable for up to 40 pages in 3 documents

Includes:

- project and co-design plans
- strategies and implementation plans
- participation frameworks
- draft findings or reports
- service-development proposals
- everything in focused review plus
- review through the five LX Lens areas
- suggested wording or practical improvements where useful
- about 5 to 8 pages of written feedback

3. Strategic Review: USD \$1450 - 5 to 10 working days

For complex, substantive or higher-value work.

Suitable for up to 80 pages in 3+ documents

Includes:

- major strategies or frameworks
- service-review or evaluation plans
- organisational frameworks
- substantial reports
- programmes with multiple documents
- work preparing for funding, governance or executive decisions
- review through the five LX Lens areas
- strategic strengths, gaps, assumptions and risks
- detailed, prioritised recommendations
- suggested next-stage pathway
- about 10 to 15 pages of feedback

4. 60 minute sense making session - USD \$250

An online meeting to discuss the review findings and anything relating to the project.

5. Hourly rate - USD \$250

Any ongoing work is invoiced monthly at USD \$250/hour with 30 minutes minimum charged at USD \$125.

A gentle way to begin

You may not need a large consultancy project. You may simply need an experienced person to read carefully, think deeply and tell you what they notice.

If you are trying to make lived and living experience and expertise work more meaningful, supported and influential, I would be happy to hear about what you're doing.

Share a few details about your project, what you would like reviewed, and what you hope the review will help with. I will reply with a suggested scope, fee, timeframe and next steps.

This link will take you to a short form where you can share your project details:

[Enquire about an LX Lens Review](#)

Prefer email? Contact Gareth directly at mistergarethedwards@gmail.com

Please include:

- Your name, organisation and role
- The project name or working title and what kind of project it is
- What stage the project is at
- What you would like reviewed, including approximate page / document count
- What you hope the review will help you understand, improve or decide
- Any deadlines, sensitivities or risks I should know about

Please don't send confidential or sensitive documents until we've agreed on the review level and a secure way to share them.

The LX Lens

Stronger LX projects. Better outcomes.

Different experiences. Shared purpose. Better together.