



2019 – 2024 ACT Regional Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan

Reflective review

July 2026



ACT
Government



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Executive Summary

The joint 2019-2024 ACT Regional Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan (the 2019 Regional Plan) was a five-year plan that aimed to identify local mental health and suicide prevention program, service planning, and system priorities and actions. It was informed by local community input and developed in partnership between the then ACT Health Directorate, Capital Health Network, Canberra Health Services, the Office for Mental Health and Wellbeing, the ACT Mental Health Consumer Network, Carers ACT Mental Health Carers Voice, and the Mental Health Community Coalition of the ACT.

Towards the end of the 2019 Regional Plan's lifespan, stakeholders recognised the importance of reflecting on this core local driver to help inform future work, including development of the then upcoming *2025-2030 ACT Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Regional Plan* (the 2025 Regional Plan). To achieve this, the *2019-2024 ACT Regional Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan Reflective Review* (the Reflective Review) was created following the end of the 2019 Regional Plan. This work aimed to provide an overview of how the 2019 Regional Plan influenced the local mental health and suicide prevention sectors over its lifespan by candidly documenting both the successes that were achieved in alignment with the 2019 Regional Plan, and the challenges that emerged across the local mental health and suicide prevention sectors throughout its implementation lifespan. Development of the Reflective Review was led by Capital Health Network, with contributions from all 2019 Regional Plan partner organisations to ensure a wide span of activities were incorporated.

This Reflective Review documents 40 major activities within the ACT mental health and suicide prevention sectors that were informed by or supported the 2019 Regional Plan over its lifetime. Activities that were highlighted by community members for their local impact included the Safe Haven Belconnen, the Child and Youth Mental Health Sector Alliance, the Eating Disorders Residential Treatment Centre, and the Canberra Medicare Mental Health Centre. These activities have been mapped against the 2019 Regional Plan's strategic priorities and outcomes, allowing for easier review of achievements between 2019 and 2024.

Finally, the Reflective Review draws on stakeholder feedback to identify 6 prominent challenges related to the implementation of the 2019 Regional Plan. These included unpredictable changes to community needs, poor accessibility of key materials, and limited integration of suicide prevention across the 2019 Regional Plan. To enable continuous quality improvement, each challenge was also analysed to identify lessons learned and changes that could be made in future work to improve implementation.





“Sunrise to Sunset” artwork by Sarah Richards was created to reflect CHN’s cultural journey to date and their Cultural Competency Framework (CCF). See CHN’s [website](#) for more information.

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Ngunnawal people as traditional custodians of the ACT and recognise any other people or families with connection to the lands of the ACT and region. We acknowledge and thank them for the ongoing contribution they make to the life of this city and this region, and pay respects to their continuing culture and their Elders, past and present.



Recognition of Lived Experience

We recognise the individual and collective experience of those with lived or living experience of mental ill-health and suicide, and the experience of their carers, families, and supporters. We value and respect the generous and vital contributions of those who share their unique perspectives to help us shape an effective and connected primary healthcare system that supports better outcomes for all.

Contributions

Capital Health Network thanks ACT Health and Community Services Directorate, Canberra Health Services, Mental Health Community Coalition, Carers ACT (Mental Health Carers Voice) and the Mental Health Consumer Network for their contributions to this Reflective Review.

Accessibility

If English is not your first language and you need the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS), please call 13 14 50 or visit <https://www.tisnational.gov.au/>.

Contact

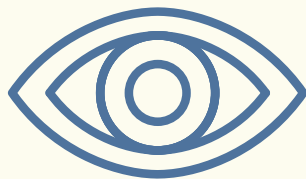
For more information regarding this document, please contact Capital Health Network.

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Background 

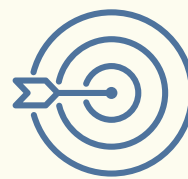
CHN





Vision

A kind, connected and informed community working together to promote and protect the mental health and wellbeing of all.



Mission

The ACT Plan will support an organised territory-wide response that delivers high quality mental health programs and services and responds to the mental health needs and goals of people in the ACT community.



Values

- Hope
- Respect
- Safety
- Recovery
- Equity
- Quality

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

PERSON CENTRED

Programs and services are flexible and responsive to people's unique needs and the context in which they live their lives, including family, carers, and social supports.

INTEGRATION

Effective mental health care integrates policy, funding and services that deliver holistic care including the clinical and social aspects of promoting better mental health.

COLLABORATION AND CO-DESIGN

Engage diverse perspectives in shaping change, ensuring responsiveness and innovation through authentic and respectful partnerships that are cross sectoral, multi-agency and multi-disciplinary.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Accountability, monitoring and reporting are embedded in the implementation of the ACT Plan and give the ACT community visibility of the performance, reliability and impact of mental health programs and services.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Improved mental health outcomes for everyone

Services that are responsive and integrated

A highly skilled and sustainable mental health workforce

Early intervention in life, illness and episode

Whole of person care

Reduced self-harm and increased suicide prevention

Improving the social and economic conditions of people's lives

CONTEXT

The joint 2019-2024 ACT Regional Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan (the 2019 Regional Plan) was a five-year plan that aimed to identify local mental health and suicide prevention program, service planning, and system priorities and actions. It was developed in partnership between the then ACT Health Directorate (ACT Health), Capital Health Network (CHN), Canberra Health Services (CHS), the Office for Mental Health and Wellbeing (OMHW), the ACT Mental Health Consumer Network (MHCN), Carers ACT Mental Health Carers Voice (MHCV), and the Mental Health Community Coalition of the ACT (MHCC). Development of the 2019 Regional Plan was also informed by widespread consultations with the ACT community.

The National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement (the National Agreement) and the associated *Bilateral Agreement between the Commonwealth and the ACT* were signed in 2022. The National Agreement aims to deliver a comprehensive, coordinated, and consumer-focused mental health and suicide prevention system with joint accountability and clear funding arrangements across all governments. These Agreements influenced the implementation of the 2019 Regional Plan for the remainder of its lifespan, and committed to updating, strengthening and the ongoing implementation of joint regional planning and commissioning arrangements in the ACT.

With the 2019 Regional Plan due to expire in 2024, in 2023 the ACT Government and CHN commenced development of a new 2025-2030 ACT Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Regional Plan (the 2025 Regional Plan). The 2025 Regional Plan aims to improve mental health and suicide prevention in the ACT and region by identifying specific areas of community need, as well as opportunities to address these needs. It envisions a local region where people and communities are supported by compassionate, safe and respectful systems, with a shared commitment to mental health and suicide prevention, that respond to the whole picture of their unique experiences, needs and goals.

The 2025 Regional Plan also aims to build off the 2019 Regional Plan, increasing efficiency by leveraging existing work. It also aims to support continuous improvement in the local mental health and suicide prevention sectors through ongoing actions, scaffolded reform initiatives, and utilising prior learnings. As such, it was agreed that development of the 2025 Regional Plan needed to reflect on the 2019 Regional Plan, including considering its successes, limitations, learnings, and future opportunities.



The 2019-2024 ACT Regional Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan Reflective Review (the Reflective Review) was developed to conclude the 2019 Regional Plan and support these ongoing regional planning activities. The Reflective Review pinpoints a number of key activities across the mental health and suicide prevention sectors between 2019 and 2024 that were facilitated, supported, and informed by the 2019 Regional Plan. The 2019 Regional Plan, and these activities, were then critically analysed. This incorporated reflections from the 2019 Regional Plan partner organisations and other organisations supporting the development and implementation of the 2025 Regional Plan. The analysis also considered feedback received from wider sources throughout the life of the 2019 Regional Plan, including program evaluations, service-level data, and consultations conducted for other projects.



Safe Haven Belconnen

The 2019 Regional Plan partner organisations supported the co-design and establishment of the ACT's Safe Haven service, which was initially jointly funded and commissioned by ACT Health and CHN in 2021. The collaborative commissioning process of Safe Haven Belconnen was considered a significant success of the 2019 Regional Plan, enabling efficient establishment and strengthening service integration. Safe Haven Belconnen offers a free, walk-in, and non-clinical safe space for people experiencing emotional distress or suicidal thoughts. It is staffed by peer workers with lived experience of mental health challenges, who help people to navigate their distress in a supportive environment.

Eating Disorders Residential Treatment Centre (EDRTC)

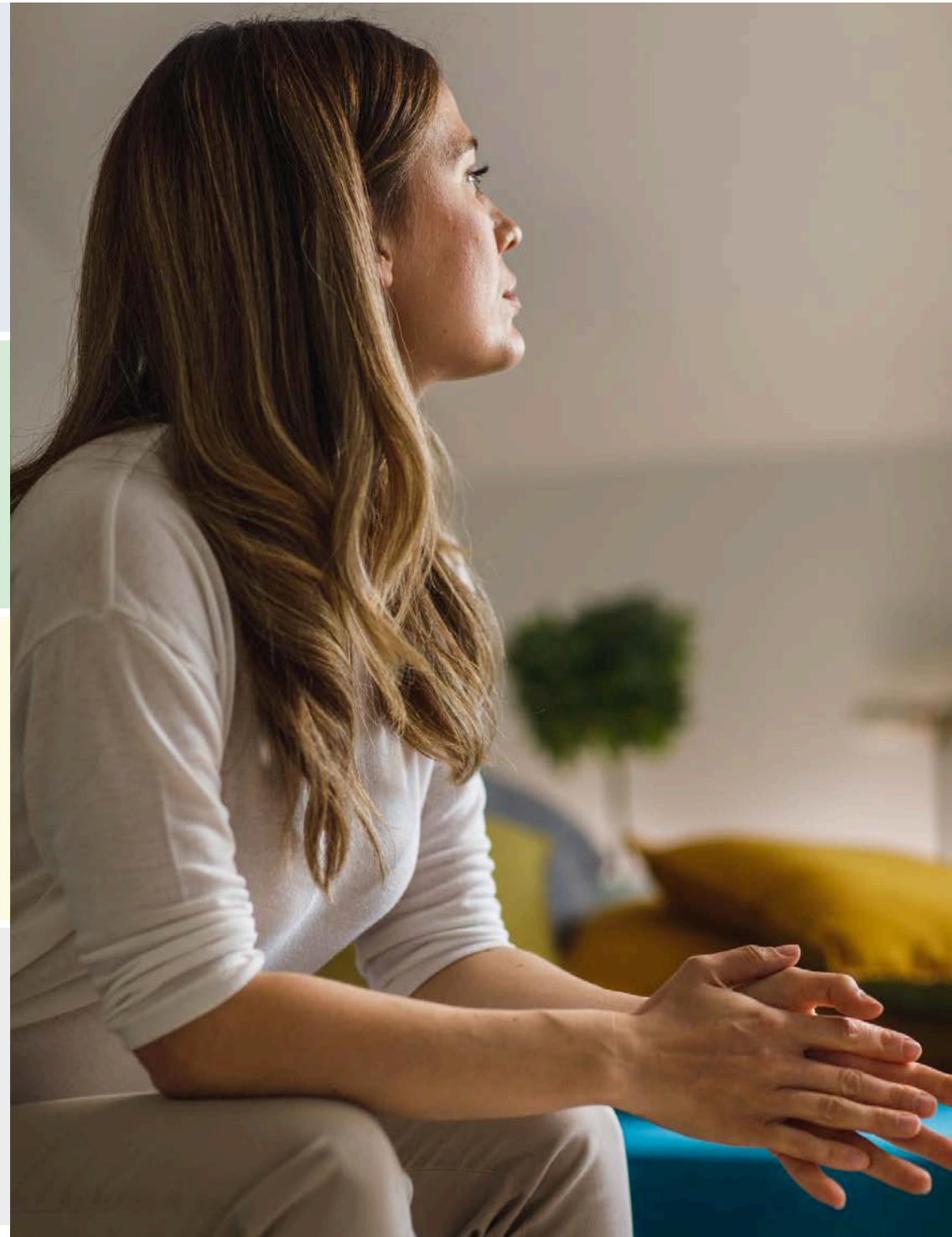
The EDRTC is operated by CHS and provides specialist, intensive treatment and support for the psychological and physical recovery of people experiencing eating disorders. Opened in 2024, the service was modelled after residential home spaces to help participants and their families, carers, and/or supporters continue their recovery journey when back in their own homes. The design, establishment, and ongoing operations of the service were also supported and informed by lived experience input.

Child and Youth Mental Health Sector Alliance (CYMHSA)

The ACT CYMHSA was established in 2023 as a joint initiative of the Youth Coalition of the ACT, the OMHW and CHN. CYMHSA brings together key local stakeholders, enabling collaborative and coordinated action to improve the mental health of children and young people. CYMHSA activities have included bi-annual forums, working groups to progress specific projects and identified priorities, information-sharing, and the establishment of a youth reference group comprising young people with lived experience who support the work of CYMHSA and the broader youth mental health sector.

Canberra Medicare Mental Health Centre (MMHC)

Canberra MMHC was first established in 2021, and provides accessible, person-centred and high-quality mental health support. It offers an entry point to the wider mental health and suicide prevention systems by providing assessment and referral services, and can deliver in-house interventions to those with moderate to high needs. Canberra MMHC has been able to provide responsive and integrated care to thousands of Canberrans, with its development, localisation, and operations informed by the 2019 Regional Plan and supported by the partner organisations.



Outcomes and achievements of the 2019 Regional Plan ➤

CHN



OUTCOMES AND ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE 2019 REGIONAL PLAN

The 2019 Regional Plan identified 7 key Strategic Priorities, each including several broad outcomes and actions to be progressed across the life of the plan. This Reflective Review considers the activities that took place between 2019 and 2024 in line with each of these broad outcomes.

All efforts have been made to map the activities listed below to the most suitable single action. However, activities may have met multiple actions across the 2019 Regional Plan's Strategic Priorities, and single actions may have aligned with multiple activities. In addition, each activity listed may not address all aspects of a single action, as a 'majority fit' was prioritised.

It has also been noted where certain actions were not widely implemented or achieved within the life of the 2019 Regional Plan. This includes cases where some progress may have been made but was limited in scope or unable to be actioned to full potential. Opportunities to address or build upon all actions from the 2019 Regional Plan will continue to be explored as part of ongoing mental health and suicide prevention work in the ACT, including through the 2025 Regional Plan.



Outcomes:

- All members of the ACT community experience optimal mental health and wellbeing.
- All mental health and wellbeing programs and services are safe, responsive, and culturally appropriate

This Strategic Priority focused on opportunities to reduce barriers to accessing services and provide culturally inclusive and responsive services for specific groups. It also prioritised information and data-gathering, through activities such as standardised outcome measures, collecting consumer and carer feedback, and investigating the engagement and experience of target groups.

Action	Status	Activity
Identify specific needs of target groups and the barriers and enablers for access to services and programs.	Action progressed	Understanding the ‘Missing Middle’ In 2020, the OMHW, CHN, and the Youth Coalition of the ACT partnered to examine supports for children and young people with moderate to severe mental health concerns – the ‘Understanding the Missing Middle’ project. This process included widespread community consultation. The resulting report published in 2022 found that this ‘Missing Middle’ cohort struggle to access mental health supports, due to being perceived as too ‘complex’ or high-risk for primary care services but without severe enough needs to access tertiary care. The framework set by the 2019 Regional Plan supported implementation of many of the project’s recommendations, including through the establishment of the Child and Youth Mental Health Sector Alliance in 2023.
Use outcome and experience data and research for informing ongoing service improvements, identifying emerging needs, and planning system development.	Action progressed	Re-envisioning Older Persons Mental Health and Wellbeing in the ACT Strategy 2022-2026 The <i>Re-envisioning Older Persons Mental Health and Wellbeing in the ACT Strategy 2022-2026</i> (the Strategy) provides guidance to the ACT Government on enhancing the mental health and wellbeing outcomes of older Canberrans. The Strategy draws on data, research, and consultations to explore community needs, highlight barriers experienced by older Canberrans, and identify priority areas for action that can benefit from targeted initiatives. Underpinned by the principles of person-centred care, equity, and recovery, the Strategy aligned with the 2019 Regional Plan’s emphasis on a local approach to planning and service design.
Commission and co-commission programs and services that are safe and responsive, trauma-informed, culturally sensitive and recovery focused.	Action progressed	Safe Haven Belconnen The 2019 Regional Plan partner organisations supported the co-design and establishment of the ACT’s Safe Haven service, which was initially jointly funded and commissioned by ACT Health and CHN in 2021. The collaborative commissioning process of Safe Haven Belconnen was considered a significant success of the 2019 Regional Plan, enabling efficient establishment and strengthening service integration. Safe Haven Belconnen offers a free, walk-in, and non-clinical safe space for people experiencing emotional distress or suicidal thoughts. It is staffed by peer workers with lived experience of mental health challenges, who help people to navigate their distress in a supportive environment.

Action	Status	Activity
Co-design service improvements that address barriers to access and are tailored to meet the needs of target groups.	Action progressed	Guidance to Support Gender Affirming Care for Mental Health In 2021 the OMHW released the <i>Guidance to Support Gender Affirming Care for Mental Health</i>. Developed by the OMHW, the Office of LGBTIQA+ Affairs, ACT Health, A Gender Agenda, and Meridian, this guidance was designed to support organisations and mental health care providers to deliver their services in a gender affirming way. This work aligned closely with the 2019 Regional Plan's key priorities of improving mental health for all and providing responsive, targeted support through culturally sensitive and inclusive care. In addition, the creation and implementation of the guidance through a collaborative co-design process embeds lived experience voices within the system.
Establish a local approach to data sharing to inform planning and implementation.	Work ongoing	Achievements under this action were limited during the implementation of the 2019 Regional Plan. It will be considered as part of ongoing mental health and suicide prevention work in the ACT, including the 2025 Regional Plan.
Establish a set of shared outcome and experience measures across primary, secondary and tertiary care.	Work ongoing	While some progress was made against this action during the implementation of the 2019 Regional Plan, it was not fully met. It will be considered as part of ongoing mental health and suicide prevention work in the ACT, including the 2025 Regional Plan.
Collect and share data to inform reporting, monitor performance and inform further improvement	Broadly actioned	Several activities in the ACT mental health and suicide prevention sectors align with this action, including activities described elsewhere in the Reflective Review.
Invest in effective services and programs that decrease barriers to access and promote equitable outcomes for identified target groups.	Action progressed	Carer Navigator Carer Navigator is an online tool hosted and maintained by MHCV, the peak body for mental health carers in the ACT. With the aim of helping families and carers understand and navigate local mental health systems, Carer Navigator provides a comprehensive overview of key mental health concepts and definitions, the ACT system, healthcare rights, and carer support services. Carer Navigator addresses several key elements of the 2019 Regional Plan, including offering a person-centred response via its accessible format and tailored information.

Outcomes

- People can find and access the help they need easily, and when they need it.
- Programs and services are comprehensive and connected so that they work together to meet people's needs.

This Strategic Priority focused on opportunities to co-locate services, leverage interdisciplinary skills, share accountability for outcomes, and partner in the planning, funding and delivery of services. It also identified opportunities for quality improvement, such as addressing gaps and barriers in systems, using technology and digital solutions, creating pathways between programs and services, and holding forums to enable cross-sector engagement.

Action	Status	Activity
Identify the processes, agreements, resources and contractual arrangements needed to implement changes.	Broadly actioned	Several activities in the ACT mental health and suicide prevention sectors align with this action, including activities described elsewhere in the Reflective Review.
Implement effective partnerships, referral pathways and digital health tools that support communication and collaboration across a range of service providers.	Action progressed	MindMap ACT Youth Portal The MindMap ACT Youth Portal (MindMap) is an online tool, provided by Marymead CatholicCare and funded by then ACT Health, to help children, young people, and their carers navigate Canberra's mental health system and find the right services. It also offers an Active Hold service, ensuring that people can connect with interim supports while on a waiting list for other care. By partnering with community organisations and offering an accessible digital platform, MindMap aligned with the 2019 Regional Plan's key priorities and was able to enhance system responsiveness and integration. As a service addressing barriers to timely care for children and young people, it also continues to provide vital early intervention support.
Establish and implement an integrated intake, assessment and treatment model of service delivery for funded community services.	Action progressed	Canberra Medicare Mental Health Centre (formerly Head to Health) Canberra Medicare Mental Health Centre (MMHC) was first established in 2021 (as Canberra Head to Health), and provides accessible, person-centred and high-quality mental health support. It offers an entry point to the wider mental health and suicide prevention systems by providing assessment and referral services, and can deliver in-house interventions for those with moderate to high needs. Since 2021, Canberra MMHC has been able to provide responsive and integrated care to thousands of Canberrans. The 2019 Regional Plan was a key consideration for the partner organisations in supporting the localisation of the national MMHC model of care. Effective delivery of the service also requires a thorough understanding of other key challenges, priorities, and opportunities within the region, for which the 2019 Regional Plan was able to provide guidance.
Continue monitoring and evaluation to ensure investment in effective, evidence-informed services, tools and strategies.	Broadly actioned	Several activities in the ACT mental health and suicide prevention sectors align with this action, including activities described elsewhere in the Reflective Review.

Action	Status	Activity
Explore opportunities to integrate treatment and support; for example, shared intake and triage for funded community mental health programs, team-based care, co-location, and digital health tools across providers.	Action progressed	Eating Disorders Residential Treatment Centre The Eating Disorders Residential Treatment Centre (EDRTC) opened in 2024 with the Commonwealth Government providing funding for the construction and fit out of the new centre and the ACT Government providing funding for ongoing operations. The centre, operated by CHS, provides specialist, intensive treatment and support for the psychological and physical recovery of people experiencing eating disorders. The service was modelled after residential home spaces to help participants and their families, carers, and/or supporters continue their recovery journey when back in their own homes. The design, establishment, and ongoing operations of the service were also supported and informed by lived experience input, including close collaboration with the MHCN and MHCV. This multidisciplinary, person-centred, and community-informed approach allows the EDRTC to provide high-quality care to Canberrans and contribute to several key outcomes of the 2019 Regional Plan.
Co-design integrated models of service delivery that include clear referral pathways and coordination across a range of services.	Broadly actioned	Several activities in the ACT mental health and suicide prevention sectors align with this action, including activities described elsewhere in the Reflective Review.
Evaluate the impact of service redesign to ensure gaps and barriers are addressed and services are meeting the needs of consumers, carers and the workforce while providing value for investment.	Work ongoing	While numerous service evaluations were undertaken during the implementation of the 2019 Regional Plan, opportunities to undertake and evaluate the redesign of services were limited. This action will be further considered as part of ongoing mental health and suicide prevention work in the ACT, including the 2025 Regional Plan.
Continue to build effective partnerships and referral pathways between health and social services through cross-sector and multi-agency forums, interdisciplinary training and use of technology.	Action progressed	Child & Youth Mental Health Sector Alliance The ACT Child & Youth Mental Health Sector Alliance (CYMHSA) was established in 2023 as a joint initiative of the Youth Coalition of the ACT, the OMHW and CHN. CYMHSA brings together key local stakeholders, enabling collaborative and coordinated action to improve the mental health of children and young people. CYMHSA activities have included bi-annual forums, working groups to progress specific projects and identified priorities, information-sharing through a community of practice and monthly e-bulletins, and the establishment of a youth reference group comprising young people with lived experience who support the work of CYMHSA and the broader youth mental health sector. The CYMHSA emerged from a recommendation of the 'Understanding the Missing Middle' report, embodying the 2019 Regional Plan's principles of continuous improvement and collaboration. It also offers a structured framework for improving early intervention and responsive, integrated care in the ACT.

Outcomes

- The ACT’s mental health workforce feel safe, supported, valued and fulfilled in their work.
- The ACT has the highly skilled, multidisciplinary workforce that is required to meet the needs of the population, now and into the future.

This Strategic Priority focused on opportunities to foster a skilled and experienced workforce, support workers to deliver sensitive and culturally safe services, involve staff in workplace improvements, and improve safety through evidence-informed initiatives. It also considered approaches for bolstering the local workforce through innovative solutions to workforce gaps, developing targeted career pathways, and partnering with education and training organisations.

Action	Status	Activity
Identify needs, strategies and shared principles across primary, secondary and tertiary care to inform the co-design of workforce initiatives.	Action progressed	ACT Mental Health Workforce Strategy The <i>ACT Mental Health Workforce Strategy</i> was released by the then ACT Health Directorate in 2022. It provides a framework for workforce development across the ACT mental health sector, including approaches to recruitment, training, and retention. By promoting collaboration, capacity building, and culturally appropriate care, it aligned closely with the 2019 Regional Plan’s guiding principles and key priorities. It also addresses the topic of service sustainability by exploring workforce planning and evaluation mechanisms.
Develop and implement career pathways and flexible workforce models.	Action progressed	Creation of identified lived experience positions in the ACT Government The Lived Experience Team within the OMHW was established in September 2023, including a Lived Experience Director, a Policy and Project Officer, and a Youth Project Officer. A Lived Experience Director and Project Support Officer were also recruited within CHS, with the teams partnering closely in their activities. Key activities under this initiative included co-design, governance establishment, the development of a peer workforce model of service, and community development. These efforts resulted in practical and cultural change towards flexible workforce models and creating career pathways for peer workers and people with lived experience. This work aligned with the key principles and priorities of the 2019 Regional Plan by embedding lived experience in governance and service design.
Continue to explore and develop evidence-informed responses to shortages in workforce capacity, training and education needs, workforce safety, the use of technology to support the workforce, and opportunities to enhance capacity of other healthcare workers to care for people with mental health issues.	Action progressed	Education about mental ill-health and services provided to local GPs and other health practitioners From 2019-2024, CHN delivered a wide-ranging education program to increase knowledge, develop clinical skills, and enhance primary healthcare delivery in the ACT. Over 6,000 practitioners attended these educational events, with topics including mental health in general practice, PTSD, neurodiversity, eating disorders, and grief and bereavement. This education program aimed to improve primary supports for people experiencing mental ill-health and suicidality, which complemented other priorities and objectives within the 2019 Regional Plan.

Action	Status	Activity
Develop formal partnerships with education providers, programs and workforce support initiatives at all levels and across all disciplines that promote pathways into mental health work, including specific training, support and pathways for peer workers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workers, strategies for attracting and maintaining a multidisciplinary mental health workforce, and trialling new ideas and workforce strategies including partnerships with universities and other training and education organisations.	Action progressed	The WOKE Program The WOKE model was designed by the University of Canberra to foster workforce development by training and supervising Provisional Psychologists to deliver the program. The WOKE program was initially commissioned by CHN to fill an identified gap in the local system, delivering early intervention supports to young people at high risk of being diagnosed with borderline personality disorder. In line with the 2019 Regional Plan, joint service planning between CHN and ACT Health supported a management transition of the program commissioning and funding arrangements to the ACT Government in 2023, which remains the current arrangement.
Undertake joint planning and codesign of workforce initiatives that focus on: • Expectations around collaboration, workforce partnerships and networking arrangements. • Joint strategies to address supply shortages, recruitment and retention across common workforce streams and workplace culture. • Capacity building and interdisciplinary training including in culturally appropriate care and trauma informed care.	Action progressed	Safewards initiative Within the life of the 2019 Regional Plan, CHS implemented the ‘Safewards’ model, an evidence-based model of care that aims to reduce conflict and containment in clinical environments. The implementation of Safewards in CHS’ Mental Health, Justice Health and Alcohol and other Drugs Services (MHJHADS) inpatient services supported the joint ACT Health and CHS strategy to address occupational violence by engaging consumers and multidisciplinary teams in shared practices that promote safety, recovery, and mutual respect. This initiative aligned with the 2019 Regional Plan throughout CHS services by enhancing workplace culture, promoting psychological safety for all, and embedding principles of collaboration between service users, carers, and providers.
Continue to develop and plan for the future through workforce modelling and needs analysis.	Work ongoing	Achievements under this action were unclear during the implementation of the 2019 Regional Plan. It will be considered as part of ongoing mental health and suicide prevention work in the ACT, including the 2025 Regional Plan.
Evaluate the impact of changes and initiatives implemented.	Work ongoing	Progress evaluating workforce changes or initiatives per this action was limited or unclear during the implementation of the 2019 Regional Plan. It will be considered as part of ongoing mental health and suicide prevention work in the ACT, including the 2025 Regional Plan.

Outcomes

- People receive the mental health support they need early in life, illness and episode.
- Programs and services are designed to and respond early in life, illness and episode

This Strategic Priority focused on opportunities to promote wellbeing, prevent mental illness, and respond early to the onset or relapse of illness, as well as supporting early identification of mental health concerns. This also included consideration of service activities, such as creating the right mix of programs, delivering mental health promotion in schools and workplaces, building resilience and coping skills, and increasing awareness of available supports.

Action	Status	Activity
Explore opportunities for mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention for children (aged 0-11 years) and young people (aged 12-25 years) including school-based intervention, early childhood education and community initiatives.	Action progressed	Youth Aware of Mental health Youth Aware of Mental health (YAM) is an ACT Government funded, school-based program delivered to year 9 students in the ACT, supporting them to learn about and explore the topic of mental health. Through discussion and role-play in classroom sessions, students reflect on difficult everyday situations and discuss how to handle challenges. YAM has been implemented in ACT schools since 2020 through a partnership between the OMHW, the ACT Education Directorate, and Mental Illness Education ACT, and aims to build resilience, encourage help-seeking, and equip young people with the skills and confidence to look after themselves and each other. Implementation of YAM was supported initially under the ACT Lifespan Trial and the partnerships and priorities aligned with the 2019 Regional Plan.
Commission programs and services that incorporate prevention and early intervention in their approach to treatment and support.	Action progressed	Youth at Risk project The Youth at Risk (YAR) project, co-funded by ACT and Commonwealth Governments, aims to improve support for young people with complex needs and moderate mental ill-health. Its initial activities included the development of the ACT Position Statement on Trauma Informed Practices and the rollout of a co-produced training program, which later expanded to embedding sector-wide training and evaluation. The YAR project supported the 2019 Regional Plan's goals by equipping the workforce to provide trauma-informed care. This impact will continue to expand through a future community-based youth trauma service, which has been informed by the needs of priority groups including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and LGBTQIA+ young people.
Promote and distribute available resources, including online resources, that improve mental health literacy, resilience and capacity for self-management.	Action progressed	Community support provided by the Mental Health Consumer Network and Carers ACT Mental Health Carers Voice As trusted and informed peer-led organisations, MHCV and the MHCN are able to connect with the community and share information in an equitable, safe, and collaborative manner. Some of the ways this was achieved over the life of the 2019 Regional Plan included hosting key mental health and suicide prevention resources on their websites for easy public access, providing advocacy training for consumers and carers, promoting and coordinating lived experience participation opportunities, and supporting practitioners and community members through in-service education. Through these resource-sharing efforts, MHCV and the MHCN play essential roles in improving mental health literacy and community resilience, as well as in actioning the broader priorities of the 2019 Regional Plan.

Action	Status	Activity
Invest in mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention services across the lifespan for children and young people, including specific opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people.	Action progressed	Medicare Mental Health Kids Hub The Medicare Mental Health Kids Hub (Kids Hub) project, co-funded by ACT and Commonwealth Governments with ongoing development being led by the ACT Government, commenced in 2022. This ongoing activity aims to deliver a multidisciplinary, community-based mental health service for children aged 0–12 experiencing mild to moderate and emerging mental health concerns. Initial project actions included widespread consultation with local stakeholders to inform the development of a service model fit for the ACT, as well as scoping to understand the most appropriate location for the service. The 2019 Regional Plan’s guiding principles of person-centred care, integration, and collaboration and co-design helped to guide the essential early establishment work for the Kids Hub project. This strong foundation will also see the future Kids Hub service carrying forward the priorities of early intervention and integrated, responsive care.
Equip the mental health and primary care sector to provide high quality mental health assessment and intervention.	Action progressed	Initial Assessment and Referral program The Initial Assessment and Referral (IAR) program aimed to support the primary care and mental health workforces to provide and improve access to tailored mental health care, in line with stepped care principles. CHN provided training to members of the primary care workforce to use the IAR Decision Support Tool (IAR-DST), an evidence-informed tool that can be used to support mental health referrals and recommendations. The 2019 Regional Plan assisted CHN to understand how the IAR might benefit consumers, carers, and the primary care workforce, with IAR-DST training customised to address specific local priorities and challenges. Additionally, the IAR-DST was foundational to the intake and assessment models of the Canberra MMHC and the Medicare Mental Health phone service.
Undertake mapping to understand the current mental health services, including access and referral pathways, and to identify gaps and opportunities to invest in the right mix of services across the lifespan and levels of need, with increased focus on intervening early in life, episode and illness.	Action progressed	Integrated Atlas of Mental Health Care of the Australian Capital Territory Integrated Atlases of Mental Health map services in a given area, accounting for local factors such as variations in care, access challenges, and system gaps. Two Atlases were published in the life of the 2019 Regional Plan – the 2020 Integrated Atlas of Mental Health Care of the Australian Capital Territory, and the 2020 Integrated Atlas of Youth Mental Health Care in the Australian Capital Territory. These resources contribute vital information to help other mental health and suicide prevention activities respond to local needs and effectively integrate with the wider system.

Action	Status	Activity
Promote access to care pathways and services provided by primary care and in the community.	Action progressed	Advocacy provided by the Mental Health Community Coalition MHCC ACT are the peak body for community organisations delivering mental health support in Canberra. Through mental health policy and advocacy, communication activities, workforce training, and sector coordination, MHCC support the local community sector to continue delivering holistic, recovery-focused, person-centred, and human-rights informed care. Over the life of the 2019 Regional Plan, some of MHCC's key initiatives included delivery of the ACT Recovery College, extensive work exploring loneliness in the ACT, and coordinating annual ACT Mental Health Week events including the ACT Mental Health Sector Awards. By using this platform to ensure that the voices of providers and consumers are heard by government, policy leaders, and service decision-makers, MHCC provided key ongoing support for the broader community and in actioning the 2019 Regional Plan.
Coordinate service provision across the journey of care, with focus on intervening as early as possible to address signs of deteriorating mental health.	Work ongoing	Efforts to improve coordination of service provision have been captured in other activities. There is still work to be done to embed seamless coordination of care that allows for early detection and intervention across the community, as this was not understood to have been meaningfully achieved during the implementation of the 2019 Regional Plan. It will be considered as part of ongoing mental health and suicide prevention work in the ACT, including the 2025 Regional Plan.
Explore opportunities to enhance mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention services.	Action progressed	Consumer and carer representation and participation Throughout the life of the 2019 Regional Plan, efforts were made across the mental health and suicide prevention systems to increase genuine engagement with consumers and carers. This reflected collaboration and co-design as one of the 2019 Regional Plan's guiding principles, as well as the importance of lived experience inclusion for improving mental health outcomes. Much of this work was led and supported by the MHCN and MHCV, with further input from many in the wider community. Through these efforts, lived experience knowledge was incorporated into many activities across the sector, including the creation and review of key service policies, program design and improvement, governance, research and data-gathering projects, and regional planning.

Outcomes

- People have access to holistic, wrap-around support, care and treatment to promote and protect their mental health and wellbeing.
- People feel that their mental, physical and social wellbeing is well understood and supported

This Strategic Priority focused on opportunities to respond to the needs of the whole person, including medical, psychological, functional, and social needs. This included addressing co-occurring challenges, engaging with agencies with influence on the broader social determinants of health, providing supports to address the physical health of people with mental illness, promoting healthy living, integrating different system levels, and collaborating with consumers and carers.

Action	Status	Activity
Pilot and evaluate innovative approaches to integrating primary care, community and hospital services including co-location, in-reach/outreach models, and e-health tools.	Action progressed	Police, Ambulance, and Clinician Early Response team The Police, Ambulance, and Clinician Early Response (PACER) team is an ACT Government funded multi-service mental health joint response program, operating as a partnership between CHS, ACT Policing, and the ACT Ambulance Service. The service responds to those experiencing a crisis in the community by offering coordinated, front-line support that sits across both community and hospital mental health care systems, as well as local emergency services. PACER capability was expanded during the life of the 2019 Regional Plan, and it continues to provide safe and consumer-focused emergency mental health care. By working together to deliver an innovative, coordinated, and trauma-informed service that can address whole-of-person needs during an acute crisis, PACER aligns closely with many of the core elements of the 2019 Regional Plan.
Support health and community services to collaborate on planning and service delivery.	Action progressed	Perinatal Mental Health Project The Perinatal Mental Health Project (PMHP) is a collaborative initiative aimed at improving mental health outcomes and reducing the high prevalence of mental health conditions for women and pregnant people during the perinatal period. Throughout the life of the 2019 Regional Plan the PMHP achieved several key milestones, including the completion of a draft <i>Stepped Continuum of Care and Service Model for a Perinatal and Infant Mental Health Residential Unit</i>, and awarding grants to enhance services and foster sector collaboration. By providing a platform for stakeholders to build relationships, share knowledge, and explore larger system challenges, the PMHP has been able to embed whole-of-person care for a key group within the ACT community and aligns with key goals of the 2019 Regional Plan.
Partner with stakeholders to undertake a needs analysis and scoping study exploring co-occurring health needs including chronic disease, alcohol and other drug related harm, and disability.	Action progressed	CHN Needs Assessments As the Primary Health Network (PHN) for the ACT, CHN regularly undertakes ‘Needs Assessments’ to better understand the health and wellbeing needs and priorities of people and communities in the region. Within the life of the 2019 Regional Plan, this included the 2021-2024 and 2024-2027 ACT-wide PHN Needs Assessments and several targeted Needs Assessments exploring ACT carers, specialist alcohol and other drug services, after-hours health services, and multicultural health needs. The 2019 Regional Plan helped to guide and inform these Needs Assessments by facilitating key partnerships across different areas of health needs and identifying key local priorities in mental health and suicide prevention. By analysing local data and providing a comprehensive overview of areas of community need, the Needs Assessments also helped to progress other areas of the 2019 Regional Plan.

Action	Status	Activity
Partner with consumers, carers and health professionals to design a shared care plan that takes a holistic approach, addressing the mental, physical, and social needs of people and supports a person-centred approach to care.	Action progressed	My Rights, My Decisions form kit My Rights, My Decisions (MRMD) is a peer-led, co-designed information, training and tools package. It supports consumers to express their views and preferences about mental health treatment, care and support, which helps treating teams achieve better outcomes for the people they are working with. MRMD was created by the ACT MHCN in consultation with mental health consumers, the then ACT Health Directorate, ACT Disability, Aged and Carer Advocacy Service (ADACAS), Carers ACT, Legal Aid ACT, and the ACT Human Rights Commission. By enabling people to make decisions about their own experiences, MRMD embeds a person-centred lens within care environments and promotes respectful collaboration between service users and providers to achieve better outcomes for all.
Explore innovative solutions, including new technologies, that support person-centred collaborative planning and integrated treatment and support.	Action progressed	Moderated Online Social Therapy Moderated Online Social Therapy (MOST) is a free digital mental health service for young people aged 12-25, funded by the ACT Government and provided by Orygen. To support continuous care between face-to-face and online settings, it offers access to self-directed therapeutic content, a moderated online community, peer support, and clinical assistance. MOST provided an innovative solution for meeting the 2019 Regional Plan's key priorities and principles, including whole-of-person care, responsive services, and improved mental health outcomes. By increasing accessibility of supports, MOST also helped to broaden the impact of the 2019 Regional Plan for the ACT community.
Commission a mix of services that meet the holistic needs of consumers and carers.	Broadly actioned	Several activities in the ACT mental health and suicide prevention sectors align with this action, including activities described elsewhere in the Reflective Review.
Pilot and evaluate a shared care plan that is holistic and facilitates a person-centred planning approach that can be adopted across the sector.	Work ongoing	Achievements under this action were limited during the implementation of the 2019 Regional Plan. It will be considered as part of ongoing mental health and suicide prevention work in the ACT, including the 2025 Regional Plan.
Monitor activity against the ACT's commitment to "Equally Well" and deliver activities that support the physical health of people with mental illness.	Work ongoing	The ACT remained committed to 'Equally Well' during the implementation of the 2019 Regional Plan and has engaged with Equally Well's resources and networks to monitor and promote activities in this area. However, specific activities designed to support the physical health of people with mental illness in the ACT remain limited. This will be considered as part of ongoing mental health and suicide prevention work in the ACT working towards whole of person approaches to care, including the 2025 Regional Plan.
Incorporate physical and mental health promotion outcomes in procurement criteria and funding agreements.	Broadly actioned	Several activities in the ACT mental health and suicide prevention sectors align with this action, including activities described elsewhere in the Reflective Review.

Outcomes

- People seek help when needed.
- There are fewer suicides and incidents of self-harm.

This Strategic Priority focused on opportunities to coordinate a system response to self-harm and suicide prevention, collaborate with communities and sectors to develop sustainable approaches, and raise awareness and promote help-seeking across the community. This also included opportunities to deliver suicide awareness training, establishing aftercare support services for those who have experienced a suicidal crisis and for communities following a death by suicide, and developing targeted approaches for key groups at higher risk.

Action	Status	Activity
Provide adequate support for people, families and communities following a suicide attempt or a death by suicide.	Action progressed	The Way Back Support Service The Way Back Support Service (TWBSS) was initially commissioned by CHN, expanding to partnership with the OMHW through additional ACT and Commonwealth Government co-funding to expand eligibility and capacity. This service provides follow-up psychosocial care to people in the first few months following a suicide attempt. This critical aftercare ensures people receive integrated and person-centred support during a high-risk period. Now funded by CHN, TWBSS’ integration of person-centred aftercare into an accessible, community-based environment helps people to transition out of acute healthcare settings. The program aligned closely with the 2019 Regional Plan by improving outcomes, reducing risk, and offering whole-of-person care that considers a person’s wider psychosocial needs.
Through implementation of LifeSpan, deliver coordinated, integrated, evidence-based suicide prevention activities, including options for lived experience peer workers. This includes follow-up support after a suicide attempt.	Action progressed	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention, Intervention, Postvention & Aftercare Service While LifeSpan implementation concluded in 2021, its principles of collaborative, community-led, evidence-based suicide prevention continued through the transition to an ACT Suicide Prevention Coordinating Committee (SPCC) coordinated by the OMHW. One such example of this ongoing work is the establishment of the ACT Government funded Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention, Intervention, Postvention & Aftercare Service in 2023, following a community co-design process and a model of care developed in partnership by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Working Group of the ACT SPCC. Operated by Thirrili, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention, Intervention, Postvention & Aftercare Service is underpinned by a commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination. The service meets people where they are and at a pace that respects their needs to provide support and address key suicide risk factors. By offering care through a culturally safe, person-centred lens, the service aligns with the 2019 Regional Plan’s focus on coordination, whole-of-person care, and increased suicide prevention.
Monitor evidence and data and develop a sustainability plan for integrated suicide prevention activities.	Work ongoing	Specific achievements under this action, particularly towards a sustainability plan for integrated suicide prevention, were limited or unclear during the implementation of the 2019 Regional Plan. It will be considered as part of ongoing mental health and suicide prevention work in the ACT, including the 2025 Regional Plan.

Action	Status	Activity
Continue to deliver programs that promote resilience building and help seeking.	Action progressed	Targeted Regional Initiatives for Suicide Prevention program The CHN-led Targeted Regional Initiatives for Suicide Prevention (TRISP) program aimed to strengthen community-led suicide prevention activities, with a focus on at-risk populations and reaching people who aren't connected to services. During the implementation of the 2019 Regional Plan, three initiatives were funded under the ACT TRISP program, providing support for men and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities. These initiatives aimed to reduce stigma, increase help-seeking, and promote protective factors for people at increased risk of suicide or suicidality. The TRISP program aligned with the 2019 Regional Plan by facilitating the delivery of tailored, person-centred support, embedded within and led by communities in need.
Collaborate with cross-sector partners to deliver system-wide suicide prevention activities where people live, work and learn, with targeted approaches for vulnerable groups.	Action progressed	ACT & Region Suicide Prevention Community Collaborative The ACT & Region Suicide Prevention Community Collaborative (the Collaborative) was established in 2023 and takes an integrative, community-led approach to suicide prevention in the ACT. Its membership includes people with lived and living experience of suicide or mental ill-health, as well as representatives from across community, government, academia, service delivery, and various other sectors with a role to play in suicide prevention. By leveraging community-wide expertise and a strengths-based lens, the Collaborative has contributed to local suicide prevention efforts and was strongly aligned with the 2019 Regional Plan's guiding principles. The 2019 Regional Plan also provided a valuable framework for understanding how the Collaborative could connect with multiple sectors and the wider community.
Jointly monitor, evaluate and undertake service improvement planning for existing services and programs aimed at self-harm and suicide prevention.	Action progressed	MHJHADS Suicide Prevention Framework Within the life of the 2019 Regional Plan, CHS' MHJHADS developed and implemented a new 'Suicide Prevention Framework'. Structured around the four key pillars of 'Connect, Ask, Care, and Link', the framework enables ongoing workforce development and promotes effective, evidence-based practices for supporting people affected by suicide. The framework includes training for staff on management, assessment, and intervention when caring for people who may be vulnerable to suicide, resources for staff, consumers, and carers, safety planning and crisis cards. These activities effectively aligned with the 2019 Regional Plan by establishing a coordinated, systemic approach to suicide prevention across CHS.

Action	Status	Activity
Engage stakeholders across communities and sectors to evaluate activities in suicide prevention and inform further investment in successful, evidence-based strategies and programs.	Action progressed	Transition to Universal Aftercare TWBSS started as a national aftercare model developed and led by Beyond Blue. Beyond Blue made the decision to transition out of this model in 2023, handing over management to CHN. Under the National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement, there was commitment to expand from TWBSS to a more flexible Universal Aftercare model with the expansion overseen by States and Territories. This was following a national evaluation of TWBSS and a strong partnership between the ACT Government, CHN, Beyond Blue, and Woden Community Services to inform this transition to a collaborative and localised model. Through regular and open communication between all stakeholders involved in TWBSS, including people accessing the service, the ACT Government and CHN identified key changes necessary to continue delivery of TWBSS in the ACT under a Universal Aftercare model. This led to increased access to the service for people at risk of suicide and allowed a transition period without disruption to the service, aligned with key priorities of the 2019 Regional Plan. Learnings from this transition will continue to inform Universal Aftercare as it evolves in the ACT.
Continue to provide frontline worker suicide prevention training that is evidence-based and culturally appropriate.	Action progressed	Connecting with People ‘Connecting with People’ (CwP) is a compassion-based and evidence-informed suicide prevention framework and training approach that equips professionals and community members with the tools to provide person-centred support for those experiencing suicidal distress. Comprising two training modules – ‘Compassion at Work’ and ‘Community Suicide Awareness’ – CwP was delivered by MHCC to members of the ACT community services sector during the life of the 2019 Regional Plan. CwP training effectively promoted quality care and improved suicide prevention efforts by providing continuous improvement opportunities, as well as contributing to several other key 2019 Regional Plan priorities and outcomes.
Use available evidence, including data and learnings from existing programs and consultations, to plan and inform further delivery of self-harm and suicide prevention activities.	Broadly actioned	Several activities in the ACT mental health and suicide prevention sectors align with this action, including activities described elsewhere in the Reflective Review.
Identify specific training needs and plan targeted and culturally appropriate suicide awareness and prevention training for groups within the ACT community, including general practitioners, police, mental health workers, and the broader community.	Action progressed	Question-Persuade-Refer Question-Persuade-Refer (QPR) is an evidence-based suicide gatekeeper training, which is designed to provide members of the community with the skills to recognise warning signs of suicide and intervene in a safe and respectful way. QPR was implemented through the ACT’s LifeSpan trial in 2019 and continued to be available to the ACT community throughout the duration of the 2019 Regional Plan. Through a partnership between the OMHW, CHN, the ACT Education Directorate, and SupportLink, QPR was also specifically targeted to schools and workplaces to meet identified training needs.

- Outcomes**
- People live in communities that support them to connect, participate and contribute meaningfully.
 - Sectors work in partnership to address the social, economic, cultural and environmental factors that contribute to mental health and wellbeing.

This Strategic Priority focused on opportunities to reduce the impact of social and economic disadvantage on mental health, through accessible programs and services, targeted supports for those engaged with the justice system, and prioritising housing-first approaches. This also included considering mental health and wellbeing across all policy and actions, exploring flexible funding and service models, and using forums to facilitate collaboration across sectors.

Action	Status	Activity
Monitor and evaluate the impact of the social and economic circumstances within which people live, work and learn to continue to address disadvantage and to improve mental health and wellbeing.	Action progressed	ACT Wellbeing Framework The ACT Wellbeing Framework was developed in 2019-20, informed by consultation with almost 3000 Canberrans. It reports on high-level indicators that Canberrans reported drive their wellbeing and quality of life. As a core tool of the ACT Government, it tracks what factors matter to people in the ACT, guides policy design and decision-making, and helps to evaluate activities based on outcomes. It is also a key part of official ACT Budget and Cabinet processes. The Wellbeing Framework sat alongside the 2019 Regional Plan, highlighting the role of different personal, social, and economic factors in understanding wellbeing – including mental health. It also aligns with the 2019 Regional Plan’s key priority of improving the social and economic conditions of people’s lives by promoting wellbeing as a consideration within other sectors and embedding ongoing monitoring of the wellbeing impacts of all ACT Government activities.
Invest in programs and services that respond to mental illness and trauma by addressing the social and economic conditions that influence mental health; including ‘housing first’ options, support for people within and exiting the justice system, and specific solutions for at-risk populations.	Action progressed	Social Workers in General Practice pilot The Social Workers in General Practice (SWiGP) pilot was funded by CHN with the aim of addressing barriers to health care access, including mental health care. Social workers were embedded within four General Practices across the ACT and provided emotional and psychological support, delivered brief interventions, assisted in navigating health care systems, contributed to care plans, and helped patients and primary care providers to manage complex social circumstances and chronic conditions. By addressing the social and economic factors that might be impacting a person’s ability to access support, the SWiGP program aligned closely with the 2019 Regional Plan’s key priorities and principles of person-centred care and integration.
Drive cross-sector and multiagency collaboration through establishing mechanisms such as forums, communities of practice, and training and co-design processes.	Action progressed	ACT Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug and Mental Health Alliance The ACT Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug (ATOD) and Mental Health Alliance (the ATOD Alliance) was established in 2023 by the Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Association and MHCC and was funded and supported by the OMHW. The ATOD Alliance aims to address fragmentation and gaps in ATOD and mental health services within the ACT, with the goal of creating a well-coordinated system that fosters innovation, ensures trauma-informed and culturally safe practices, and improves outcomes for consumers and carers. It achieves these goals through working groups, a community of practice, and professional development opportunities. By working together in multidisciplinary ways to meet community needs, the Alliance prioritises collaboration, continuous improvement, and genuine cross-sector engagement aligned with essential parts of the 2019 Regional Plan.

Action	Status	Activity
Advocate for and drive inclusion of mental health and wellbeing as part of all policies.	Action progressed	ACT-wide advocacy for mental health and suicide prevention As the ACT's peak bodies for mental health, MHCC, MHCN, and MHCV hold essential roles in supporting, advocating for, and connecting the local community. Part of this involves their efforts to represent mental health and suicide prevention needs and priorities within the activities of other sectors. Within the life of the 2019 Regional Plan, some of these included Carers ACT's campaign for a 'Carer Recognition Card' program in the ACT, input into the development of the ACT's <i>Carers Recognition Act 2021</i> and the ACT Disability Health Strategy 2024-2033, the MHCN's ongoing Policy Reference Group, and pursuing systemic change through policy submissions, government inquiries, feedback, and other contributions across a range of subjects and areas.
Explore opportunities to integrate funding and service delivery to address the broader economic and social influences on health and wellbeing.	Work ongoing	Achievements under this action were limited during the implementation of the 2019 Regional Plan. It will be considered as part of ongoing mental health and suicide prevention work in the ACT, including the 2025 Regional Plan.
Draw on evidence and available data to inform development of flexible models of funding and service delivery that can respond to the breadth of unmet need for individuals.	Broadly actioned	Several activities in the ACT mental health and suicide prevention sectors align with this action, including activities described elsewhere in the Reflective Review.
Codesign collaborative programs and services in partnership with relevant agencies across sectors.	Action progressed	Mental Health Link Team During the life of the 2019 Regional Plan, CHS' MHJHADS increased their capacity to provide support for people with complex mental health needs by establishing the Mental Health Link Team. This multidisciplinary team provides homelessness outreach services and clinical subacute supported accommodation, and partners with the Justice and Community Safety Directorate to offer transitional housing for detainees through the Justice Housing Program. This aligns with several key elements of the 2019 Regional Plan, including collaboration across sectors, identifying opportunities for collaborative care, and addressing wider factors that might impact individual mental health.
Strengthen relationships and build awareness of the importance of mental health and wellbeing across government and community sectors, including housing, education, policing and corrections, and environment and economic policy.	Work ongoing	While efforts have been made to embed awareness of mental health and wellbeing across other sectors, further work is required to ensure mental health and wellbeing are priorities for all sectors that impact people's lives. This will be considered as part of ongoing mental health and suicide prevention work in the ACT, including the 2025 Regional Plan.

Challenges and learnings



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There were numerous challenges that emerged for the mental health and suicide prevention sectors between 2019 and 2024 that impacted the implementation of the 2019 Regional Plan. These challenges were analysed as part of the Reflective Review process, with the aim of learning from them and identifying what could be changed to help improve future regional planning activities. In particular, the learnings detailed below were incorporated into the development of the 2025 Regional Plan.

	What did we hear?	What did we learn?	What would we like to change in the future?
Unpredictability of the system and needs	Feedback suggested that the 2019 Regional Plan was limited in its ability to respond to changes and deliver the programs and services that were needed. Changes can happen rapidly, affecting the mental health and suicide prevention sectors as well as the needs of the community in major and unpredictable ways. The most significant disruptor during the life of the 2019 Regional Plan was the COVID-19 pandemic, which had a widespread impact on wellbeing, service access, and community and social dynamics.	Systems need to be able to quickly and effectively respond to major changes, which requires pre-planning, inbuilt flexibility, strong relationships, frequent checkpoints, and openness to opportunities for innovation.	Enable more responsive and flexible planning with shorter-term, pragmatic action plans, consider the role of current and emerging technologies, and create a strong base for all actions across systems by prioritising key enablers such as data and connectivity.
Value of foundational enablers	Delivery of some of the 2019 Regional Plan’s priorities were limited by a lack of core supporting work or ‘enablers’. Enablers that would have been beneficial included more comprehensive data, compatible governance systems, and stronger communication. When these core supports did exist, it often benefited several different priorities.	Making change often relies on certain foundations being in place. They can be challenging to establish, but can also have widespread benefits across the mental health and suicide prevention systems if they are prioritised before more specific or targeted goals.	Identifying universal foundational enablers (such as data sharing, safety & quality standards, digital capacities), ensuring these enablers are identified early in regional planning activities, and embedding addressing these enablers into future actions.
Accessibility	The content of the 2019 Regional Plan was complex, which made it difficult to understand how it applied to different stakeholders and limited its use. Producing an Easy English version of the plan was helpful, but didn’t inherently make it accessible for all groups.	Accessibility includes practical elements like words and visuals- but can also mean a document is relevant for its intended audience, useful, comprehensive, and easy to understand or deliver.	Use of community-friendly language, clearly defining important terms and concepts, and leveraging different perspectives to ensure anyone can understand how they fit into future regional planning activities.

	What did we hear?	What did we learn?	What would we like to change in the future?
<i>Embedding suicide prevention</i>	Feedback pointed out that suicide prevention was included in the 2019 Regional Plan as one of the 'Strategic Priorities', separating it from other parts of the Plan. While suicide prevention is a different field to mental health, they also have significant overlap.	It is vital that suicide prevention is framed as an over-arching principle, as this work is done across many levels of many different systems and sectors.	Embedding suicide prevention as part of future high-level regional planning frameworks, and ensuring suicide prevention activities are considered and included across all domains.
<i>Leadership and implementation</i>	Some elements of the 2019 Regional Plan faced barriers to being actioned because the Plan had not identified clear leadership to progress the action and encourage engagement, participation, and commitments from other parts of the sector. A lack of strong leadership was also seen as limiting opportunities for innovation, as there was less confidence to take risks or try something new.	Systemic change does not happen organically, but instead needs to be intentionally progressed. In some cases, working towards change might be better supported by an organised group or consortium, where different skills can be leveraged and the burden shared.	Active planning with clear roles and responsibilities to ensure strong leadership is embedded when needed, considering opportunities for collaborative arrangements to progress change, and identifying and using leading voices (e.g. 'champions') to encourage and foster innovation opportunities.
<i>Interconnected ecosystem</i>	The 2019 Regional Plan was structured in a way that separated many different parts of the system. This made it hard to understand what concepts, priorities, or outcomes were relevant to activities that sat across multiple areas.	All parts of the mental health and suicide prevention systems form one larger, interconnected ecosystem, which further links to all other social determinants of health. Strategic planning efforts need to accommodate this complexity and reflect the variation in consumer and carer journeys.	Leveraging regional planning structures that enable responses to the full span of a mental health care journey, identifying key social determinants in action planning, and promoting holistic perspectives throughout future strategic activities (e.g. actions in areas across sectors and improving the pieces in between services via integration and coordination).

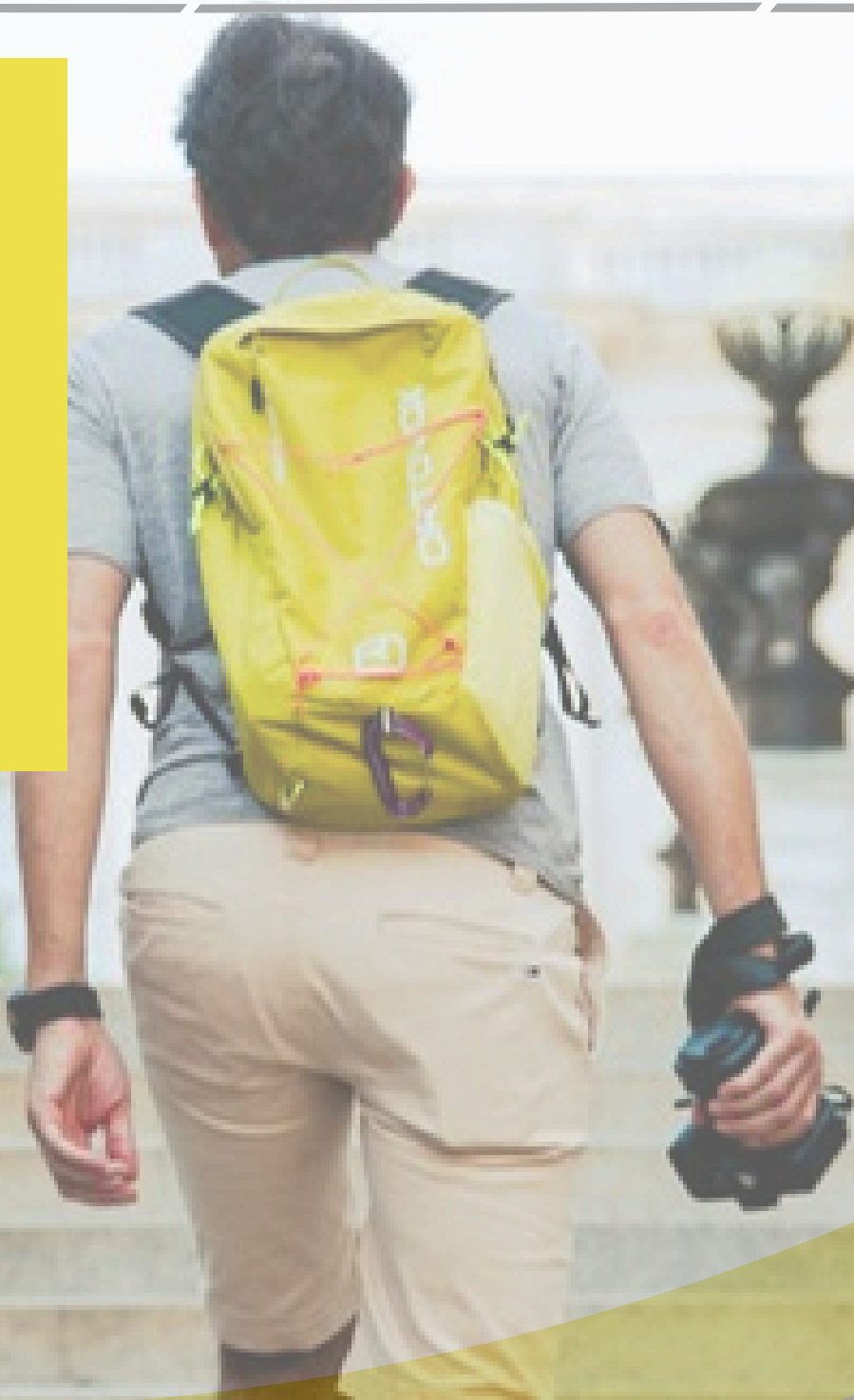
Next Steps 

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Development of the 2025 Regional Plan carefully considered the observations, successes, challenges, and learnings identified by this Reflective Review. This work was supported by community consultation activities, robust internal governance structures across CHN and the Health and Community Services Directorate (formerly ACT Health), and expert committees including government, community, and lived experience representation.

The *2025-2030 ACT Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Regional Plan: The Framework* (the Framework) was published in December 2025, and is the first and foundational part of the full 2025 Regional Plan. Developed in partnership between CHN and the Health and Community Services Directorate, it provides the strategic direction for the ACT Government and the ACT PHN to work together to improve mental health and suicide prevention in the region. The Framework will inform the development of two subsequent documents – the PHN-led Action, Implementation and Monitoring (AIM) Plan and the ACT Government’s Mental Health Services Plan.





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