

Towards our Vision: Taking a Strategic Approach to Mental Health in the ACT



The Office for
Mental Health
and Wellbeing



ACT
Government

Health

Our vision for mental health and wellbeing in the ACT

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



This tree represents strength through collaboration. A community that builds on input from a diverse range of people, is grounded and grows together. Together, we'll improve the mental health and wellbeing of all Canberrans.

Realising this vision will require not only a range of responses at all levels of our community but an overarching framework on which we can build a whole-of-person, whole-of-community, and whole-of-government approach to improving mental health in the ACT.

“The mental health and wellbeing of our communities is determined by a complex interplay of factors. This includes everything from people’s genetic disposition to developing mental illness, the nature of the place in which they live, what happens in their life, the lives of those close to them and to their wider community. Given that this is recognised and evidenced in the literature, it stands to reason that our response to the challenges faced should be multimodal too. This provides us with the opportunity to address factors influencing health outcomes in the wider community,

workplaces, places of education, while improving clinical services capacity” (ACT Government response to the Productivity Commission, April 2019).

The World Health Organisation defines mental health as *“a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community”*. Mental health is fundamental to our collective and individual ability as humans to think, emote, interact with each other, earn a living and enjoy life. Mental health is more than just the absence of mental illness.

Improving mental health in the ACT

The ACT has a wide range of existing policies and plans that address improvements in mental health, both nationally and across the ACT, which could be better connected at the local level.

This coordinating approach will inform reform and build on a whole-of-government and whole-of-community commitment to mental health. The intent is to stretch well beyond the mental health sector, to set out the strategic approach for all levels of government, portfolios, sectors and the broader community planning.

It will enhance stakeholders’ ability to work collaboratively to ensure a comprehensive and coherent approach to legislation, policy, planning, funding, service delivery and evaluation.

Taking a strategic approach - focus areas, priorities and outcomes

Taking a strategic approach enables us to systematically develop and then analyse the breath of activities being undertaken in the ACT. It sets out our priorities and a framework for analysis to inform policy and planning processes.

Focus areas for action set out the broad areas for reform as identified through a wide range of consultation processes including for Office for Mental Health and Wellbeing Work Plan. They enable consideration of planned actions across all areas and provide the opportunity to identify the areas for development that will lead towards the achievement of our Vision.

Figure 1 outlines the key components the Office will draw on to progress a connected approach for the ACT. Figure 2 outlines how this strategic approach connects with national and broader territory initiatives.

Figure 1: A connected approach for the ACT-

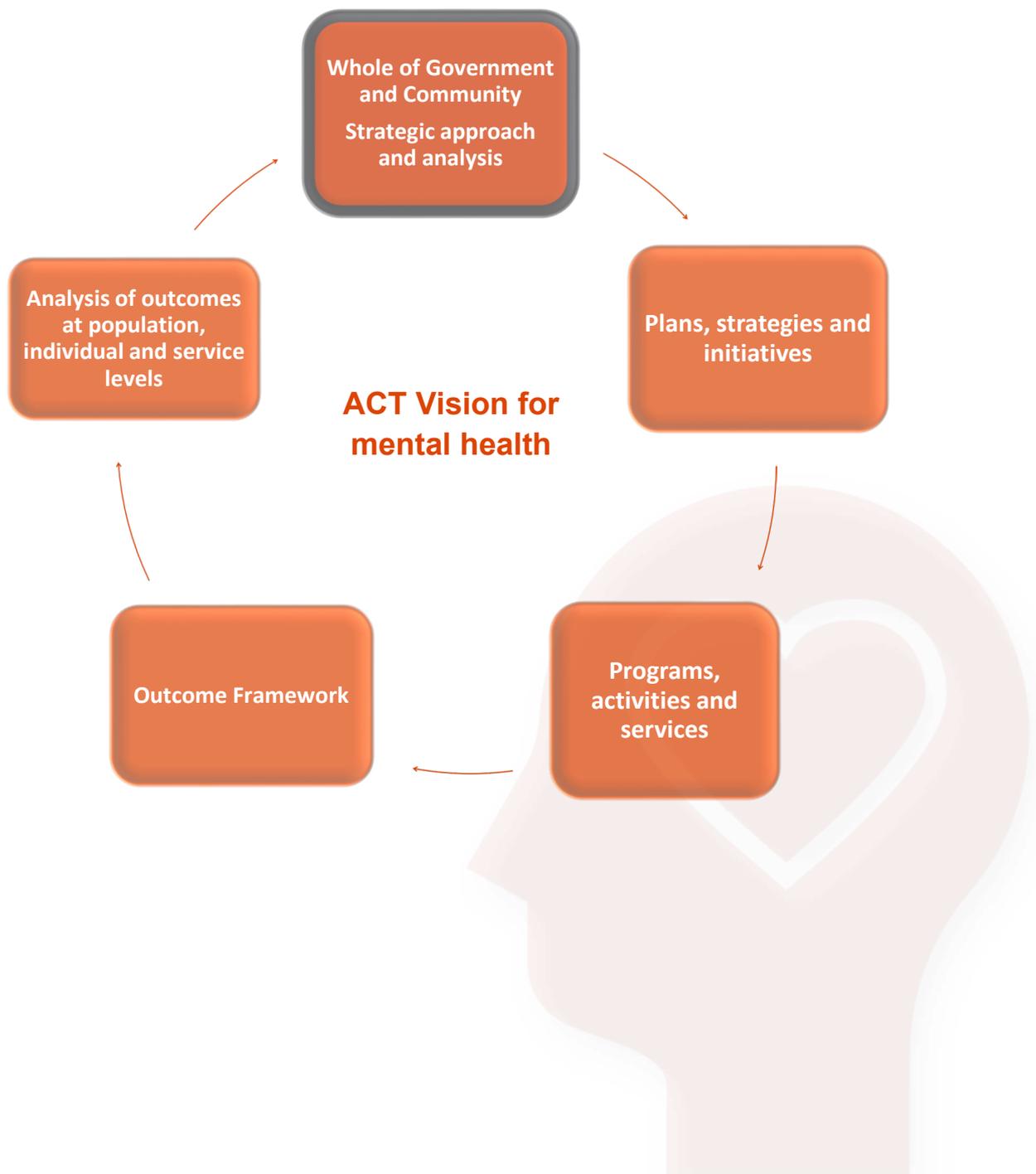
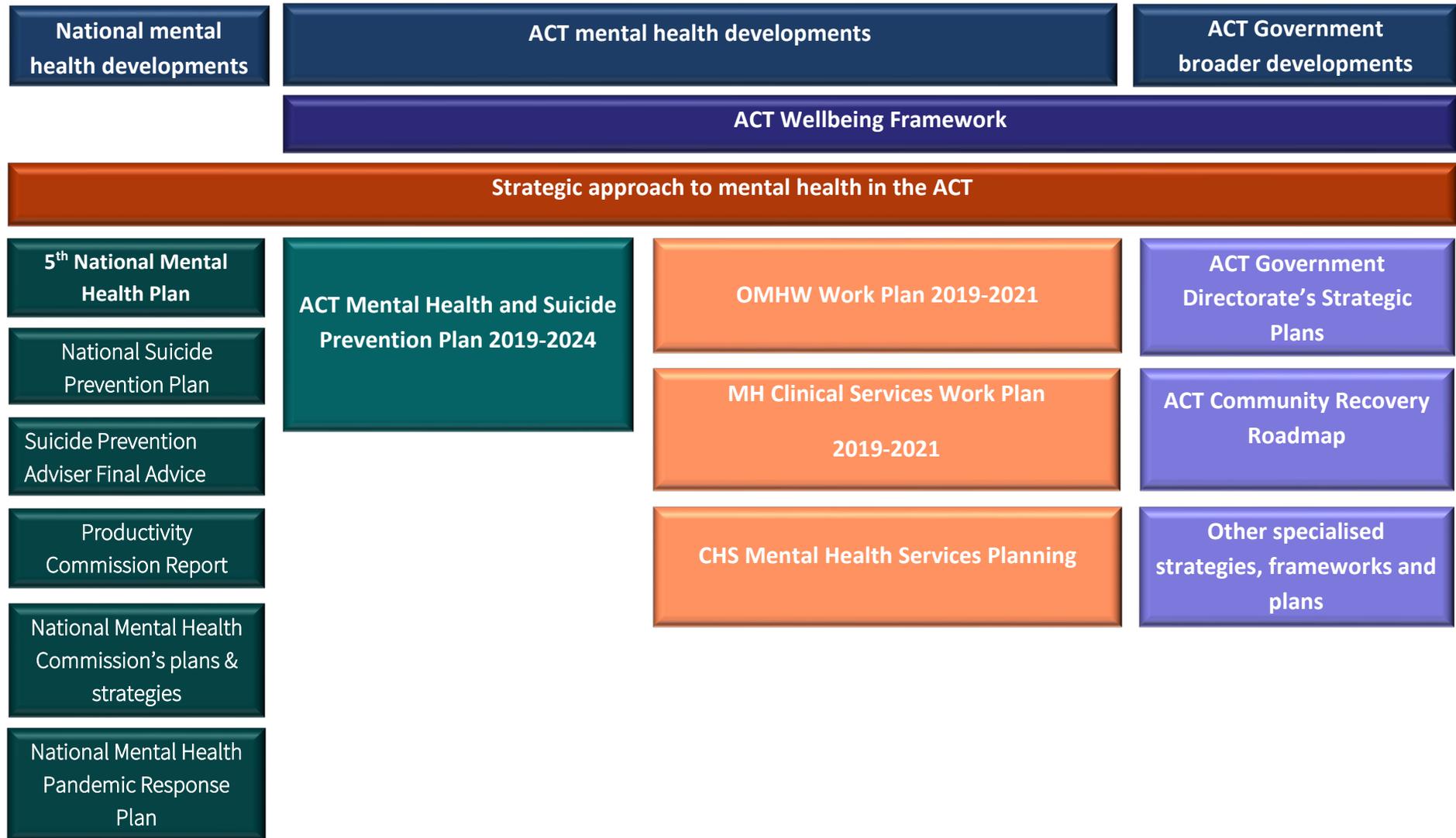


Figure 2: Connection with national and broader territory initiatives



Focus Area 1

Mentally healthy community

Good mental health improves a range of outcomes for individuals and communities, including healthier lifestyles, physical health, improved recovery from illness, higher education, employment, social connections and an improved quality of life, and in turn these attributes improve mental health. Improved outcomes in mental health and well-being will strengthen our community, increase our productivity and allow the ACT economy to thrive.

A concerted effort in improving mental health requires a paradigm shift whereby the goal is not only to reduce the incidence of mental illness, but to also promote mental health across the whole of the community. A whole-of-government approach that recognises and seeks to improve the social and economic circumstances of people lives will have many flow on effects including improving the mental health in the community. This approach will also provide opportunities for early intervention to reduce the negative impacts of mental illness.

Promotion of mental health and prevention of mental illness

What do we want to achieve?

- A welcoming community that is informed, healthy, active, safe, secure, inclusive and respectful.
- People live in communities that support them to connect, participate and contribute meaningfully.
- Social cohesion that is enhanced through access to a range of meaningful community-based activities.
- There are opportunities for educational engagement across the lifecourse.

Early intervention in community and workplaces

What do we want to achieve?

- People receive the mental health support they need early in life and illness.
- The community and workplaces have high levels of mental health literacy and resilience and reduced stigma and discrimination.
- Workplaces and educational institutions value and support diversity and are responsive to individuals.
- Reduced avoidable trauma across the lifecourse

Integrated suicide prevention

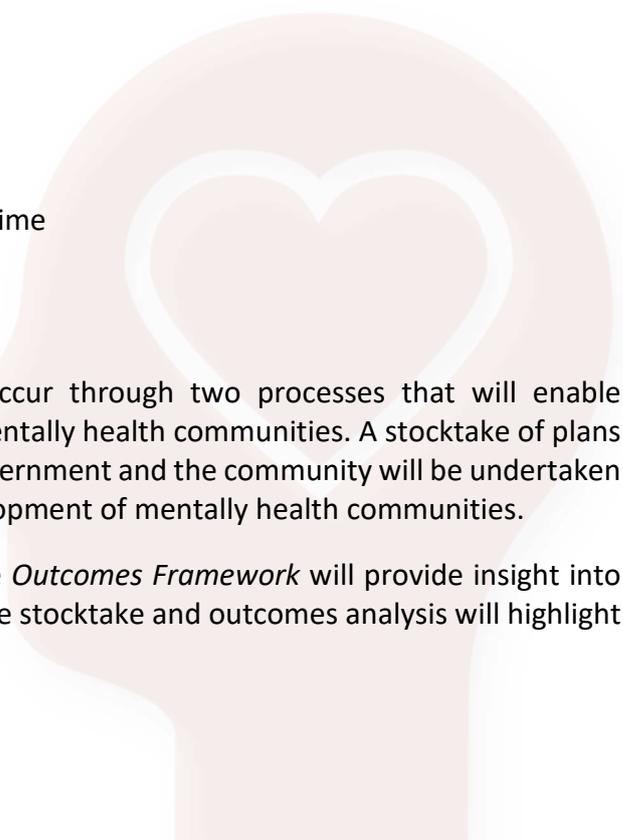
What do we want to achieve?

- People seek help when needed.
- The rate of suicide and self-harm trends down over time

Stocktake of activities and analysis of outcomes

The implementation of the Strategic Approach will occur through two processes that will enable consideration of outcomes achieved towards building mentally health communities. A stocktake of plans and strategies being delivered across the ACT by both government and the community will be undertaken to identify what has been delivered to support the development of mentally health communities.

The analysis of the outcomes measures as set out in the *Outcomes Framework* will provide insight into the progress at a population level. The combination of the stocktake and outcomes analysis will highlight areas for greater focus for the future.



Focus Area 2

Enhancing lives

Mental health and wellbeing are fundamental to our ability to interact with others, work and earn a living, and feel connected to the broader community. To support individuals, families and carers who are experiencing mental health concerns, it is critical address the social and economic circumstances of each person's life as well as providing integrated accessible mental health services.

Strengthen social connection and economic participation

What do we want to achieve?

- The ACT community works in partnership to address the social, economic, cultural and environmental factors that contribute to mental health and wellbeing.
- People with mental illness and their carers and family members are connected to their community.
- People with mental illness and their carers and family members are able to access activity that is meaningful activity to them including but not limited to employment and education.
- People with mental illness and their carers and family members have safe and stable housing.

Integrated personalised mental health supports

What do we want to achieve?

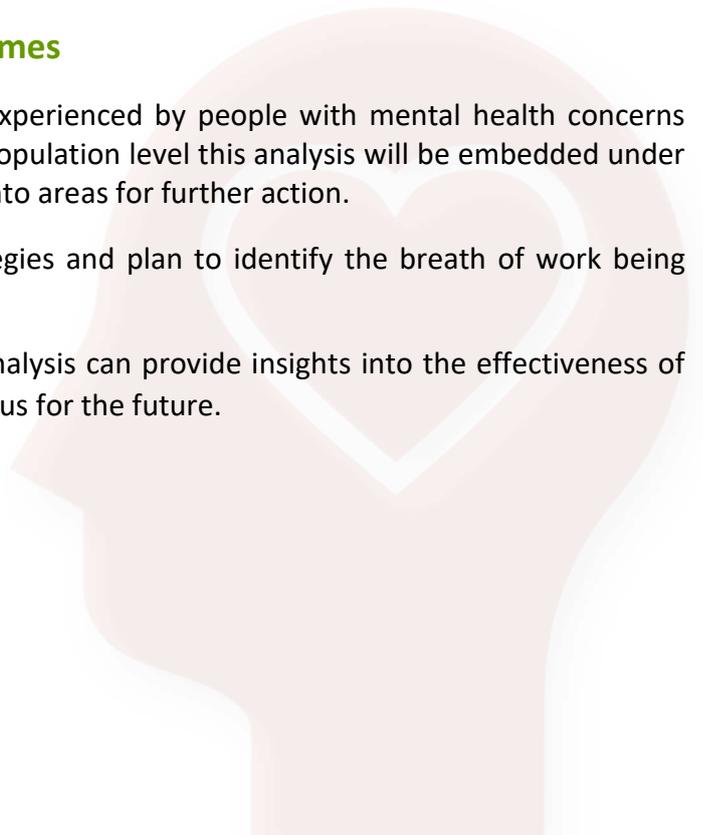
- People with mental health support needs, their families, and carers have access to holistic, wrap-around support, care and treatment to promote their mental health and wellbeing.
- People with mental health support needs and their carers and families are able to access culturally safe services and supports they need at the time they need them.
- People with mental illness are appropriately diverted from the criminal justice system.
- People with mental illness and their carers experience improved physical wellbeing and longer life expectancy.
- Carers feel supported in their caring role.

Stocktake of activities and analysis of outcomes

We will seek to understand the outcomes being experienced by people with mental health concerns through the *Outcomes Framework*. On a whole of population level this analysis will be embedded under the *ACT Wellbeing Framework* and provide insight into areas for further action.

This will be supported by a stocktake of the strategies and plan to identify the breath of work being undertaken to achieve these outcomes.

The combination of the stocktake and outcomes analysis can provide insights into the effectiveness of activities as well as highlighting areas for greater focus for the future.



Focus Area 3

Structural and System Capacity

The National Mental Health Commission's review of Mental Health Programmes and Services concluded that services are fragmented and delivered within a complex system involving multiple providers and siloed funding streams. This is a challenge for all advanced health care systems and is a concern raised by the community. There is a need for a cross sector approach to support the change required to enable a more integrated and coordinated system. Key stakeholders in this change will include General Practice, private and public mental health clinical services and non-government support agencies.

The performance of the system is also highly dependent on the broader workforce and requires a concerted effort to enhance their capabilities through training and skills development and provide the ongoing support they require to perform well in their role.

Enhance workforce capacity, capability and diversity

What do we want to achieve?

- A highly skilled, multidisciplinary workforce that meets the needs of the population, now and into the future.
- The mental health workforce feels safe, supported, valued and fulfilled in their work.
- Peer workers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers have strong career pathways in the mental health and broader community sector.

Shared responsibility and collaborative action

What do we want to achieve?

- The ACT community works in partnership to address the social, economic, cultural and environmental factors that contribute to mental health and wellbeing.
- People with mental illness and their carers and family members are engaged in the planning, development and evaluation of initiatives in areas that impact them.

Deliver innovation and reform

What do we want to achieve?

- A service system that is supported to continuously improve through evidence-informed planning, innovation, uptake of appropriate technology and evaluation.
- Research and evaluation underpinning continuous improvement, innovation and evidence informed practice across the mental health and broader community sectors.

Stocktake of activities and analysis of outcomes

We will undertake a stocktake of actions taken under the priority areas as well as analysis of the outcomes through the Outcomes Framework. This will aim to provide a greater understanding the mental health outcomes being experienced across the whole of the population and their relationship with the activities delivered across the whole of government as well as the key outcomes for people receiving support with the mental health service system.

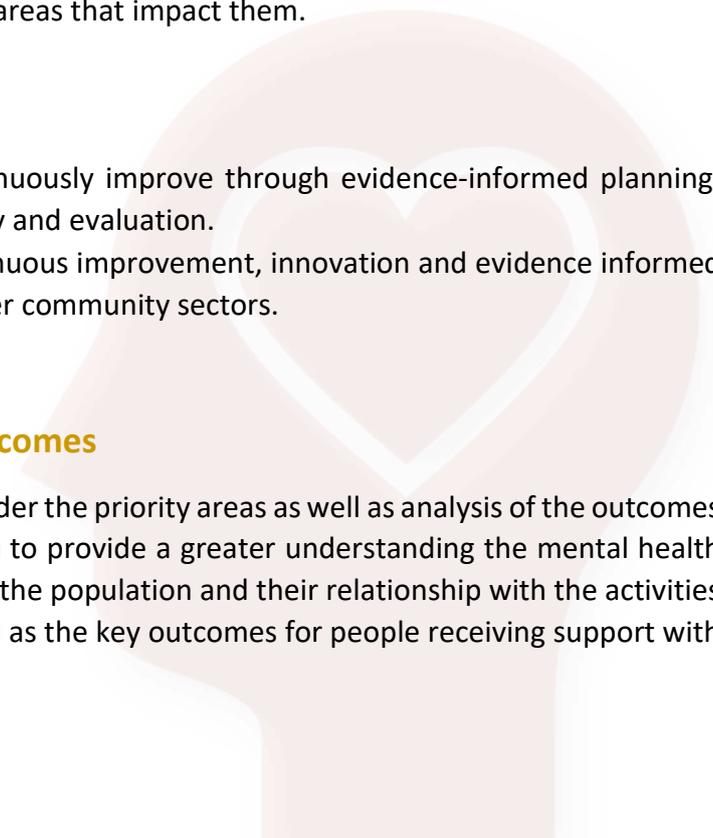


Figure 3: Strategic Approach and Outcomes Framework for Mental Health in the ACT

