

# ACT Mental Health Advisory Council

## Public Communique - Meeting 25

The ACT Mental Health Advisory Council (the Council) convened on 4 November 2021 to discuss the impacts of COVID-19 on mental health. The meeting was chaired by Sue-Ann Polden. The Council welcomed guest presenters Dr Amy Dawel, Clinical Psychologist and Senior Lecturer at the Research School of Psychology, ANU who presented on Australian's mental health during COVID-19 and Finkel Professor Jane Fisher and Dr Karin Hammarberg, Global and Women's Health, Monash University who presented on the mental health consequences of the pandemic and why a public health response is needed.

The Council considered both presentations and proposed the following recommendations to the Minister for Mental Health:

- There is a need for a public mental health response that considers universal strategies (for the whole population) and targeted strategies including low and high intensity services.
- The mental health peer workforce should be developed to help support the expanded mental health needs of the community in response to COVID-19.
- There are specific groups who will require a targeted response to support their mental health and wellbeing outcomes including the elderly, homeless people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander people, women and young people.
- There will be benefits to acknowledging the collective experience of grief and loss of the ACT community in response to COVID-19 and to provide opportunity for people to memorialise these experiences through the rituals and activities relevant to different communities. These should be community led and culturally specific.

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