

# Towards our Vision

## Re-envisioning Older Persons Mental Health and Wellbeing in the ACT Strategy 2022-2026

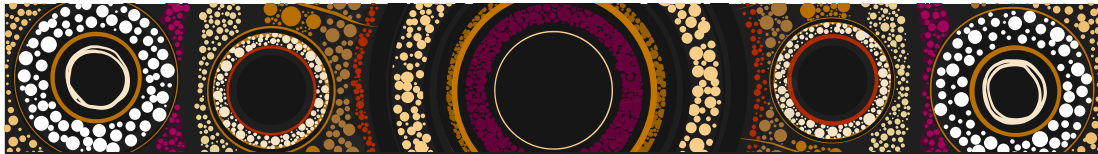


The Office for  
Mental Health  
and Wellbeing



**ACT**  
Government  
Health

[health.act.gov.au/OMHW](http://health.act.gov.au/OMHW)



### **Acknowledgment of Country**

ACT Health Directorate acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land, the Ngunnawal people. The Directorate respects their continuing culture and connections to the land and the unique contributions they make to the life of this area. It also acknowledges and welcomes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who are part of the community we serve.

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# Foreword

As with the rest of Australia, Canberra's population is ageing. Canberra provides some of the highest standards of health and wellbeing in Australia with our older people on average having the highest life expectancy in the country. However, increased life expectancy, and the growing ageing population, continue to increase demand on the aged care, healthcare and social support systems that support the needs of older people. Outside of these services there is also need for an environment that supports wellbeing and allows older people to live active and productive lives.

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The ACT Government acknowledges that while there are many positives to the current older persons mental health sector, there are also gaps and many areas that will benefit from development to strengthen our mental health service response.



Mental health and wellbeing in ageing is complex and is influenced by an interplay of mental, physical, social, economic and environmental determinants. Older people can be vulnerable to experiencing poor mental health due to their increased susceptibility to chronic disease and disability; changes in socioeconomic circumstances that can occur after retirement; and the social and emotional challenges associated with ageing. Older people are also not precluded from experiencing mental illness. Some older people will have aged with mental illness while others will be diagnosed later in life.

The ACT Government acknowledges that while there are many positives to the current older persons mental health sector, there are also gaps and many areas that will benefit from development to strengthen our mental health service response. We want to see our ageing population to be able to access the right kinds of mental health supports when they need them, to be supported to live mentally healthy lives and continue to be productive and active members of our community.

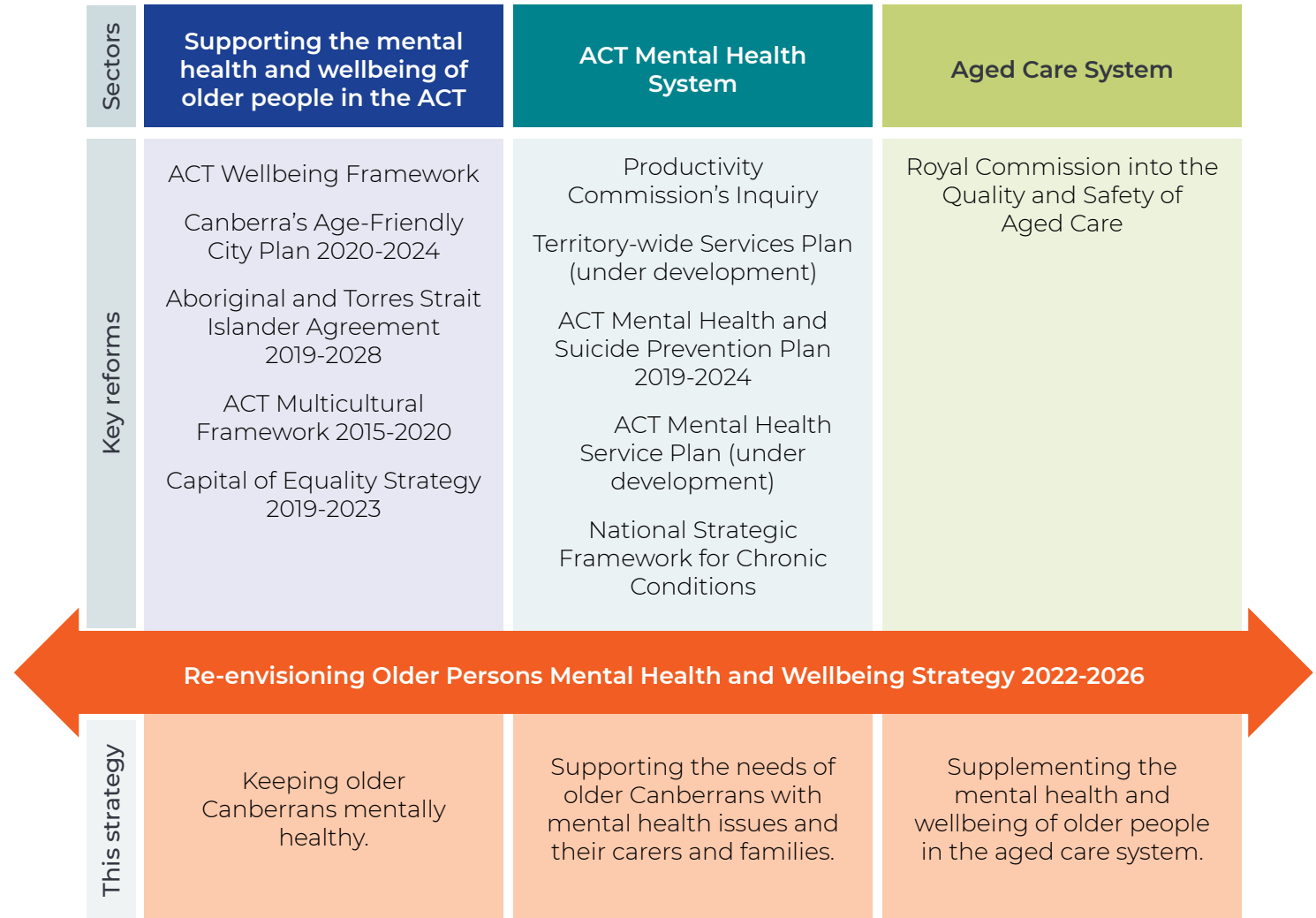
It is in this complex and shifting landscape that the ACT Government, through the Office for Mental Health and Wellbeing (OMHW), has developed the *Re-envisioning Older Persons Mental Health and Wellbeing in the ACT Strategy 2022–2026* (the Strategy). The Strategy provides strategic guidance to the ACT Government on priorities and initiatives that can be implemented over the next five years to enhance the mental health and wellbeing outcomes of older Canberrans.

The Strategy proposes 25 actions across three priority areas including building mentally healthy communities for all older Canberrans, enhancing the lives and experiences of older Canberrans with mental illness and improving structural and system capacity to respond to the needs of older Canberrans requiring mental health care. Actions include research and scoping initiatives to further our knowledge on emerging needs, piloting new initiatives and enhancing knowledge and coordination across existing services to better support the mental health needs of older Canberrans. The Strategy seeks to improve coordination between the intersections of mental health and wellbeing and ageing and to provide a focussed lens on efforts to improve supports for this priority population. This focussed and coordinated response is anticipated to be an important step towards improving the mental health and wellbeing outcomes for older people in the ACT.

The OMHW will drive the implementation of initiatives through strengthening partnerships, collaboration and coordination between ACT Government agencies, service providers and community organisations to progress the objectives outlined in this document.

# Where this works fits into the broader landscape

There are currently national and ACT Government reforms that will impact mental health and wellbeing services and outcomes for older Canberrans in the ACT. Figure 1. provides an overview of the key reforms and where this strategy fits within this dynamic landscape to supplement the gaps and intersections between ageing and mental health and wellbeing reforms in the ACT.



## OMHW vision

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

	Mentally healthy community	Enhancing lives	Structural and system capacity
OMHW Strategic Focus Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotion of mental health and prevention of mental illness</li> <li>• Early intervention in community and workplaces</li> <li>• Integrated suicide prevention</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen social connection and economic participation.</li> <li>• Integrated personalised mental health supports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhance workforce capacity, capability, and diversity</li> <li>• Shared responsibility and collaborative action</li> <li>• Deliver innovation and reform</li> </ul>
What we would like to achieve for older Canberrans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To increase focus on the promotion of mental health and the prevention and early intervention of mental illness for older Canberrans.</li> <li>• To strengthen opportunities for social participation for older Canberrans.</li> <li>• To address the needs of at-risk older people within suicide prevention initiatives.</li> <li>• To support the mental health and wellbeing of older Canberrans during challenging times.</li> <li>• To increase the mental health literacy of older Canberrans with a focus on priority populations (including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse and LGBTIQ+).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To explore housing options for older people with mental illness.</li> <li>• To enhance access to appropriate mental health services for older people including people in residential aged care and custodial settings.</li> <li>• To enhance the ability for mental health services to support older people with mental illness and other intersectional needs including people in custodial settings.</li> <li>• To enhance integration between general practitioners, geriatrics, mental health services and aged care and reduce barriers for patients accessing these different services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To strengthen partnerships with community mental health services, community sector and ACT Government to expand community-based older persons mental health supports including prevention and early intervention.</li> <li>• To enable the mental health system to be responsive to the needs of older Canberrans into the future.</li> <li>• To improve integration and reduce barriers between different levels of mental health care.</li> <li>• To enhance opportunities for carer engagement in mental health service planning and delivery.</li> <li>• To increase knowledge of the intersections between ageing and mental health and wellbeing amongst service providers.</li> </ul>

	Mentally healthy community	Enhancing lives	Structural and system capacity
<b>What we would like to achieve for older Canberrans</b> <i>(continued)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To address the psychological impacts for older people transitioning out of the custodial settings.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To increase knowledge and capacity around human rights including supported decision making.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To build the capacity and knowledge of general practitioners and allied health practitioners in older persons mental health.</li> <li>• To enhance the cultural responsiveness of mental health services for older people.</li> </ul>
<b>How we can get there: the first two years (2022-2024)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include older persons mental health and wellbeing as a focus area in OMHW mental health promotion and prevention of mental illness project. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» <i>Lead agency: Office for Mental Health and Wellbeing</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• Evaluate options for maintaining and expanding intergenerational programs in the ACT. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» <i>Lead agency: Office for Seniors and Veterans</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• Promote, encourage and build the capacity of community members and organisations to apply for grants relating to older persons mental health and wellbeing. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» <i>Lead: Health Promotion, ACTHD</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• Promote a lens on older Canberrans in suicide prevention activities. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» <i>Lead agency: Office for Mental Health and Wellbeing</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• Co-design communication channels for providing information and support to promote mental health and wellbeing in older Canberrans.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide education to older people with mental illness, families/carers/ guardians enduring powers of attorney and service providers and staff on human rights including supported decision making and alternatives to restrictive practices and seclusion. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» <i>Lead agency: Office for Professional Leadership</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• Support the design and implementation of the Wellbeing Clinic Pilot. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» <i>Lead agency: Public Advocate</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish a community of practice on older persons mental health and wellbeing that will bring together relevant service providers, community organisations, government agencies and consumers and carers to share knowledge and experience, strengthen partnerships, promote learning, and identify areas of concern and priority. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» <i>Lead agency: Office for Mental Health and Wellbeing</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• Explore barriers and incentives for the recruitment and retention of culturally and linguistically diverse and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers in older persons mental health services and aged care settings. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» <i>Lead agency: Canberra Health Services</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>



	Mentally healthy community	Enhancing lives	Structural and system capacity
<p><b>How we can get there: the first two years (2022-2023)</b> <i>(continued)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To include:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Targeted information and advice to support mental health and wellbeing during challenging times.</li> <li>- Identify and promote information and advice on supporting mental health and wellbeing in different languages, including for specific needs of older Canberrans from a refugee or asylum seeker background or those who are recent migrants.</li> <li>- Identify and promote targeted resources for those with particular needs including chronic illness.</li> <li>- Identify and promote targeted resources for older LGBTIQ+ people.                   <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» <i>Lead agency: Office for Mental Health and Wellbeing</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>• Co-design an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elder day program.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» <i>Lead agency: Office for Mental Health and Wellbeing</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• Explore the mental health impacts of family violence on older women.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» <i>Lead agency: Office for Mental Health and Wellbeing</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• Explore the experience of older women with homelessness and the drivers of homelessness in older women.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» <i>Lead agency: Office for Mental Health and Wellbeing</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• Use data to drive policy reforms relating to older persons mental health and wellbeing including to consider an older person's lens on the ACT Wellbeing Framework data.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» <i>Lead agency: Office for Mental Health and Wellbeing</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review the older persons model of care for public mental health specialist community services to ensure equitable access to streamlined and coordinated services for older people with mental illness.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» <i>Lead agency: Canberra Health Services</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore the barriers for older people to access support from General Practitioners and work with government, community and service partners to reduce and address these barriers.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» <i>Lead agency: Office for Professional Leadership</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• Investigate innovative models in undergraduate and postgraduate training to enhance opportunities for student engagement with older people.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» <i>Lead agency: Office for Professional Leadership</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>



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<p><b>How we can get there: the outer years (2024-2026)</b></p> <p><b>These actions will be reviewed after the first two years of implementation.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partner with community organisations to co-design targeted responses/programs to promote mental health and wellbeing to those who are first receiving aged care and keeping them well in the community.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» <i>Lead agency: Office for Mental Health and Wellbeing in collaboration with community organisations</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• Document and promote skills in resilience and maintaining wellbeing that older people have developed over their lifetime through storytelling projects.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» <i>Lead agency: Public Advocate</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• Explore the specific impacts of elder abuse concerning older Canberrans and Carers of people with mental illness, including older parents caring for people with mental illness.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» <i>Lead agency: Public Advocate</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore how older carers want to be supported when accessing the systems in partnership with Carers ACT.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» <i>Lead agency: Office for Mental Health and Wellbeing</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• Explore the experiences of older people transitioning out of custodial settings and identify points for intervention.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» <i>Lead agency: Mental Health Policy and Strategy, ACTHD</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• Promote gender affirming training and accreditation activities in older persons mental health services.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» <i>Lead agency: Office for Mental Health and Wellbeing</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• Explore potential options for the implementation of the Health Care Consumers Association Patient Navigation Model for older people with mental illness seeking care.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» <i>Proposed lead: Mental Health Policy and Strategy and Health Policy and Strategy, ACTHD</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitate the ongoing engagement of carers in mental health programs and service development and identify opportunities for developing advocacy skills of Carers.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» <i>Lead agency: Office for Mental Health and Wellbeing</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• Identify opportunities for training and development for clinical and non-clinical health professionals that work with older people experiencing mental ill health.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» <i>Lead agency: Office for Mental Health and Wellbeing.</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>

**Mentally healthy community**

**Enhancing lives**

**Structural and system capacity**

**How we can measure impacts of the Strategy**

The following indicators and measures have been developed to evaluate the impacts of implementation of the actions proposed in the Strategy on the mental health and wellbeing outcomes of older Canberrans. Available data from 2021 will be used as a baseline to measure the impacts of the Strategy at the end of the five year period.

Population level	Indicator	Measure	Suggested Data source
	Older Canberrans report very good or excellent mental health outcomes	An increased percentage of older Canberrans who report very good or excellent mental health and wellbeing	Wellbeing Indicator data/ ACT General Health Survey/ Living Well in Canberra Survey
	Older Canberrans have lower rates of suicide or self-harm	Decreased percentage of suicide or self-harm in older Canberrans over a five year trend	ACT Health suicide and self-harm data
	Older Canberrans experience low levels of psychological distress	Decreased percentage of older Canberrans report experiencing psychological distress	Wellbeing Indicator data/ ACT General Health Survey
	Older Canberrans feel socially connected and report low levels of social isolation	An increased percentage of older Canberrans report increased sense of social connection and lower levels of loneliness	Wellbeing Indicator data/ ACT General Health Survey/ Living Well in Canberra Survey

	Mentally healthy community	Enhancing lives	Structural and system capacity	
<b>How we can measure impacts of the Strategy</b> <i>(continued)</i>	Mental health system level	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Measure</b>	<b>Suggested Data source</b>
		Older Canberrans with mental health concerns have positive experiences with mental health services. Including older Canberrans from priority populations, including those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, and people who identify as LGBTIQ+	An increased number of older Canberrans with mental health concerns report positive experiences with mental health services	To be developed through the Your Experience Survey and the Carer's Experience Survey. Access to mental health services measured in the Living Well in the ACT Region survey, University of Canberra (2020)
		Older Canberrans have high levels of mental health literacy	An increase percentage of older Canberrans report improved knowledge on mental health, wellbeing and how and when to seek supports	Office for Mental Health and Wellbeing to conduct a survey
		Mental health and aged care professional have strong knowledge of the intersections between mental health, wellbeing and ageing	Mental health and aged care professionals report increased knowledge of the intersections between mental health, wellbeing, and ageing after education and training	Evaluation reports after training sessions
	Service practices relating to older persons mental health and wellbeing reflect best practice and are informed by key stakeholders	Members of communities of practice report increase in learning and development of practices relating to older persons mental health and wellbeing	Office for Mental Health and Wellbeing to conduct an evaluation survey	
<b>Monitoring and reporting</b>	Implementation of strategies will be reviewed after the first two years to assess where progress. At this stage, the actions listed in the second stage of implementation will be reviewed and assessed against current priorities.			



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