



# Building a Strong Foundation

## A Framework for Promoting Mental Health and Wellbeing 2009–2014

### Message from the Minister

Promoting mental health and wellbeing is everyone's business. ACT Health is leading the way nationally in developing the first promotion, prevention and early intervention Framework with commitment across the whole of government.

*Building A Strong Foundation: Promoting Mental Health and Wellbeing in the ACT 2009–2014* is an important step in the implementation and development of activities to promote mental health and wellbeing, prevent mental illness and, where this is not possible, intervene early to detect and treat mental disorders. *Building A Strong Foundation* extends the original ACT Action Plan for Mental Health Promotion, Prevention and Early Intervention, embedding a whole of government, whole of community approach to the promotion of mental health and wellbeing and provides a model to coordinate service delivery and workplace practices.

I am confident that *Building A Strong Foundation* will provide a strong foundation for enhancing the mental health and wellbeing of all Canberrans and providing timely prevention and early interventions for those experiencing the signs and symptoms of mental illness.

*Katy Gallagher*

Katy Gallagher, MLA  
Deputy Chief Minister

### Key Features of Building a Strong Foundation

- Articulates the principal that promoting mental health and wellbeing is everybody's business.
- Integrates a whole of government approach to promoting mental health and wellbeing.
- Promotes skills training to increase awareness of the signs and symptoms of mental illness for the whole community.
- Provides universal screening for peri-natal depression for all expectant mothers.
- Builds capacity of whole school communities to promote mental health and wellbeing.
- Implements the *No Wrong Door Policy*.
- Expands the *Better General Health Program*.
- Increases access to mental health promotion and prevention information for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- Implements housing programs that enable people with a moderate to severe mental illness to sustain successful tenancies.
- Provides support to people with a mental illness to increase social connection.

### The Need for Action

Treatment interventions are required earlier in the development of mental health problems and mental disorders and in isolation, cannot significantly reduce the enormous personal, social and financial burdens associated with these conditions. There is a compelling need to make promotion, prevention and early intervention priorities in global, national and regional policy, and to develop a clear plan for progressing activities in these areas.

### Core Elements of Building a Strong Foundation

#### **Element 1: Promoting mental health and wellbeing is everybody's business.**

Building a fair and safe community requires involvement from all sectors of a community including individuals, health professional groups, and service providers.

#### **Element 2: Preventing mental illness is a shared responsibility.**

More can be done to prevent mental illness and/or reduce the severity and impact of symptoms and promote recovery. Strategies include:

- access to community and social support, stable housing, education, employment and health care services
- address basic needs that reduce risk factors and enhance protective factors for mental health.

#### **Element 3: Early intervention requires strong inter-sectoral cooperation.**

Service systems will need to work cooperatively and be proactive in identifying activities to promote mental health and wellbeing, prevent mental illness and employ effective, evidence based approaches for the early identification of people who may be experiencing a mental illness.

# Action Areas

Four key action areas underpin the *Building A Strong Foundation: A Framework for Promoting Mental Health and Wellbeing in the ACT 2009–2014*

## Action Area 1: Enhancing the mental health and wellbeing of the whole community

**Outcome 1.1:** Progress is made towards a whole of government approach to the promotion of mental health and wellbeing for the 2015 plus Framework.

**Outcome 1.2:** Increased mental health and wellbeing literacy, reduced stigma concerning mental illness and increased capacity of the community to maintain and support better health and wellbeing.

**Outcome 1.3:** Increased mental health and wellbeing via greater community access and engagement with the ACT natural environment.

**Outcome 1.4:** Relevant Government Departments and community agencies have the knowledge, skills and capacity to implement and sustain a mental health promoting approach in service delivery and workplace practices.

**Outcome 1.5:** Improved service delivery for people with a mental illness.

## Action Area 3: Enhance services to those with comorbidity issues and/or who have received care in closed settings

- Individuals who are or have been an inpatient of a psychiatric facility;
- Individuals who are or have been incarcerated, including those coming into contact with the juvenile justice system; and
- Individuals who are or have experienced detention in immigration facilities or detention camps.

**Outcome 3.1:** Individuals with comorbidity issues will have access to a system of integrated services that will intervene early, prevent deterioration and offer continuity of care.

**Outcome 3.2:** Individuals with a mental illness or emerging mental illness have the skills and resources to reduce the likelihood and impact of future episodes of illness.

**Outcome 3.3:** MHACT clinicians have the knowledge, skills and capacity to work respectively with consumers and carers/families to promote the best outcomes for consumers.

**Outcome 3.4:** Young people diagnosed with a mental illness receive recovery based services to reduce the impact of their illness on future function and increase their coping skills and resilience.

**Outcome 3.5:** Individuals with a severe and persistent mental illness and complex care needs are able to access a range of clinical and support services in an integrated and coordinated manner.

**Outcome 3.6:** Mental health consumers have increased skills, knowledge and access to programs and resources to effectively manage their physical and mental health.

**Outcome 3.7:** Increase access to general health care for individuals with a mental illness.

**Outcome 3.8:** Detainees in both juvenile and adult detention centres in the justice system have increased access to mental health risk assessment and evidence-based early interventions.

**Outcome 3.9:** Increase supports for people identified as 'at risk', who are transitioning between services.

**Outcome 3.10:** People who have a mental illness and have been institutionalised receive services that comply with human rights legislation.

**Outcome 3.11:** Human Rights Commission - Resolution of complaints from people with a mental illness who have been cared for in closed settings.

## Action Area 2: Supporting Children, Youth and Families

- Support parents and children during the perinatal period;
- Support children and families during the school years; and
- Support children of parents with a mental illness.

**Outcome 2.1:** Expectant mothers at risk of developing PND or another mental illness receive appropriate mental health assessment, treatment and support.

**Outcome 2.2:** Parents and caregivers have the knowledge, skills and capacity to meet the emotional and social needs of infants and young children and know where to seek support when necessary.

**Outcome 2.3:** Women and children have enhanced mental health and wellbeing and improved social connection.

**Outcome 2.4:** Improve social connectedness for vulnerable parents such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents and children; parents with a mental illness; parents isolated due to domestic violence; young parents; and parents with a history of problematic alcohol or other drug use.

**Outcome 2.5:** Increased individual understanding of positive mental health and mental health literacy, reduced stigma of mental illness and increased capacity of school communities to maintain and support better health and wellbeing.

**Outcome 2.6:** People in identified 'at risk' groups have increased access to programs and initiatives to increase resilience and reduce the incidence of mental illness.

**Outcome 2.7:** Increased resilience and reduced incidence of mental illness among children of parents with a mental illness.

**Outcome 2.8:** Increased skills and knowledge of the needs of COPMI families among those who may come into contact with them.

**Outcome 2.9:** Specialised advocacy provided to children, young people and families which supports early intervention, prevention, promotion efforts.

**Outcome 2.10:** Maintain family relationships by providing family visits for prisoners at the Alexander Maconachie Centre.

**Outcome 2.11:** Maintain family relationships by having mothers and their young children remain together during mothers' incarceration.

**Outcome 2.12:** Children and families who are victims of family violence receive support for recovery from the effects of the violence.

## Action Area 4: Enhance the social equities and reduce the social inequities that influence mental health and wellbeing

- Individuals who are or have been an inpatient of a psychiatric facility;
- Individuals who are or have been incarcerated, including those coming into contact with the juvenile justice system; and
- Individuals who are or have experienced detention in immigration facilities or detention camps.

**Outcome 4.1:** Increased social connectedness for all Canberrans.

**Outcome 4.2:** Improved mental health literacy in services and agencies working with people experiencing social disadvantage and other 'at risk' population groups.

**Outcome 4.3:** Reduce the incidence of young people with an emerging mental illness becoming socially isolated.

**Outcome 4.4:** People recovering from an episode of mental illness are able to more easily remain engaged or reengage with the community.

**Outcome 4.5:** Improved access to sustainable and affordable accommodation for people with a mental illness who have experienced or are at risk of homelessness.

**Outcome 4.6:** Improved participation in education and employment for people with a mental illness.

**Outcome 4.7:** Improving residents' actual and perceived sense of safety and security in their homes.

**Outcome 4.8:** Improved processes and support for victims of sexual assault in the criminal justice system through the Sexual Assault Reform Program (SARP).

**Outcome 4.9:** Victims of crime receive individualised care and support to prevent the development of mental health problems subsequent to experiencing crime.

**Outcome 4.10:** Victim Support ACT will provide recovery from the social inequality suffered because of crime.

**Outcome 4.11:** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have access to promotion, prevention and early intervention resources in a range of suitable formats.

**Outcome 4.12:** Increased mental health and wellbeing literacy, reduced stigma of mental illness, and increased capacity of people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities to maintain and support better health and wellbeing.

**Outcome 4.13:** Culturally diverse groups have access to promotion, prevention and early intervention resources in a range of suitable formats and languages.

**Outcome 4.14:** Increased probability that people of CALD background will access services early in the course of their illness.