

## Recommendations of the Final Report on the ACT Office for Mental Health

The Report on the establishment of the Office for Mental Health included 20 recommendations. The ACT Government has agreed to 17 of these recommendations and agreed in principle to 3 recommendations. Further information on how the Government will respond to these recommendations is outlined below.

Recommendation	ACT Government Response
<p><b>Rec 1:</b> That the Office develop a new Territory-wide vision for mental health and wellbeing in the ACT working with the community, the Agency Stewardship Group and the Community Advisory Council.</p>	<p><b>Agreed.</b></p> <p>The vision should be developed alongside the process to develop the workplan, which will be the first priority of the Office from 1 July 2018.</p>
<p><b>Rec 2:</b> That the Office be established as an independent agency, within Government but outside the Health Directorate.</p>	<p><b>Agreed in principle.</b></p> <p>Noting the recent decision to split ACT Health into two Directorates with separate focuses on policy and operations, we believe it is most appropriate for the Office to sit within the Health Policy Directorate and report directly to the Director General to retain a strong link with the strategic direction of other health services. However, the Office should retain a level of independence by having access to the Minister for Mental Health and being able to produce reports and reviews as required or requested by the Minister. The Office must also have a strong mandate to work across other ACT Government agencies, akin to the role of the Coordinator-General for Family Safety.</p>
<p><b>Rec 3:</b> Based on the work of a new Agency Stewardship Group to the Office, ACT Government Directors General make regular reports to Cabinet about their progress against a mental health reform workplan (see Rec 10 below) led by the Office.</p>	<p><b>Agreed in principle.</b></p> <p>The Office will report to the Director General of the ACT Health Policy agency and to the Minister for Mental Health. The Coordinator-General should also work with other agencies to update Cabinet on progress against the workplan.</p>
<p><b>Rec 4:</b> The Office works with other agencies outside of government, to identify suitable projects to include on this workplan – e.g. Capital Health Network and the non-government sector. The workplan also needs to reflect the ACT’s geography within a broader region catchment.</p>	<p><b>Agreed.</b></p> <p>The details of the workplan will be developed as the first task once the Office is Established from 1 July 2018.</p>
<p><b>Rec 5:</b> The Office does not hold the budget for mental health and is not a commissioner of everyday services.</p>	<p><b>Agreed.</b></p> <p>The Budget for mental health services and programs should remain with ACT Health.</p>
<p><b>Rec 6:</b> The Office holds funding to sponsor innovation and change across services.</p>	<p><b>Agreed in principle.</b></p> <p>\$2.9 million was allocated in the 2017-18 Budget for the establishment and operation of the Office over four years. Ongoing funding will need to be identified through future Budget processes.</p>
<p><b>Rec 7:</b> The Office must be consulted about Government decisions in relation to all mental</p>	<p><b>Agreed.</b></p>

<p>health funding, particularly growth funding. This is to ensure that over time, funding aligns and drives the strategy underpinning the workplan, to shift the balance across the continuum of care towards building resilience and earlier intervention.</p>	<p>While the Office will not be a fund holder, decisions about new or changing funding for mental health services should be considered by the Office to ensure they are consistent with the broader vision for mental health in the ACT.</p>
<p><b>Rec 8:</b> That the focus of the Office be on change management and systemic quality improvement, including all aspects of the experience of mental health and mental illness, including health services, drug and alcohol, primary care, housing, employment, community services, justice, the police, education, social inclusion and so on.</p>	<p><b>Agreed.</b></p> <p>The Office should have the skills and capacity to consider mental health not just from a health perspective but also responding to the broader social determinants of mental health.</p>
<p><b>Rec 9:</b> That the Office be led by a Coordinator General, leading a team expert in change management. Core capabilities of the Office will be analytics, quality improvement, systems design, the identification and application of evidence and community consultation and engagement. A key focus is on turning research and evidence into sustainable practice. The work of the Office would benefit from the capacity to draw on the practical experiences of service providers and service users.</p>	<p><b>Agreed.</b></p> <p>A key role for the Office will be looking at the ACT mental health service system at a strategic level and identifying areas for improvement. The Office will need to have strong relationships with service providers, consumers and carers in order to be effective in its role.</p>
<p><b>Rec 10:</b> Working with the Agency Stewardship Group, the Office prepare a practical mental health reform workplan within 100 days of commencing and agreed to by Cabinet as soon as possible subsequently. This workplan would then be further developed through community co-design.</p>	<p><b>Agreed.</b></p> <p>The initial workplan will be developed within 100 days of the Coordinator-General's commencement. It will identify key priority projects and will help set expectations about what the Office can achieve.</p>
<p><b>Rec 11:</b> That the Office work with existing agencies to ensure the Territory capitalises on opportunities for systemic quality improvement arising from individual complaints and trended data from agencies.</p>	<p><b>Agreed.</b></p> <p>Individual complaints are best progressed through existing avenues in ACT Health, the ACT Human Rights Commission and the Ombudsman. However, the Office should work with these agencies to identify systemic issues and develop solutions with the sector.</p>
<p><b>Rec 12:</b> That the Office has the authority to request and receive any information and to undertake service reviews and site visits for the purposes of quality improvement. Government agencies have an obligation to assist the Office compile the data necessary to drive reform.</p>	<p><b>Agreed.</b></p> <p>The Coordinator-General must have the authority, agreed through Cabinet, to work with ACT Government services and agencies. While investigations and complaints will continue to be handled through the Official Visitors Scheme and the Health Services Commissioner, the Office should have a mandate to request information or attend services where it is necessary to inform its work. Interaction with other non-Government and Commonwealth agencies will need to be driven by developing strong relationships.</p>

<p><b>Rec 13:</b> That the Office have the authority to conduct its own independent reviews, inquiries and reports. The Office has discretion to make these reports public.</p>	<p><b>Agreed.</b></p> <p>The need to conduct reviews and release reports should be determined by the Coordinator-General.</p>
<p><b>Rec 14:</b> That the Office provide an annual report to Government and the community about progress towards mental health reform, referring to the workplan and data in relation to agreed key performance indicators.</p>	<p><b>Agreed.</b></p> <p>This annual report should be separate from the ACT Health annual report.</p>
<p><b>Rec 15:</b> That the Office provide Cabinet and the ACT community with regular reports on progress against this workplan and against the identified KPIs.</p>	<p><b>Agreed.</b></p> <p>The Office will report to Cabinet to update on progress against its work plan. Updates to the ACT Community will be provided through annual reports and any other reports as determined by the Coordinator-General.</p>
<p><b>Rec 16:</b> That in order to lead improvements in consumer-centred care, the Office gives priority to working with consumers and carers and ground level providers to establish an effective system of real time feedback reflective of the entire continuum of care. This feedback will permit transparent real time tracking of consumer and carer and on the ground providers of experiences of mental health services, at the point of care.</p>	<p><b>Agreed.</b></p> <p>The Office will be responsible for the work to develop the real-time feedback mechanism, which will then be used by services providers to improve care on the ground.</p>
<p><b>Rec 17:</b> That the Office develop a 'clearing house' of best practice information and current translational evidence, accessible by the ACT community.</p>	<p><b>Agreed.</b></p> <p>Information on best practice and examples from other jurisdictions should be available to help inform evidence-based care.</p>
<p><b>Rec 18:</b> That the existing Ministerial Mental Health Advisory Council Terms of Reference be modified, using the template from the Queensland Mental Health Commission, to become the Community Advisory Body to the new Office, bringing the voice of consumers, carers, health professionals, service providers and others into the work of the Office and conveying these voices to Government.</p>	<p><b>Agreed.</b></p> <p>There is a need to update the Mental Health Advisory Council Terms of Reference to give that group a dual reporting role to both the Minister for Mental Health and the Coordinator General. Examples of similar bodies from other jurisdictions should be considered as part of this process.</p>
<p><b>Rec 19:</b> The Office supports and sustains standing networks of consumers, carers, health professionals, service providers and others to ensure it understands the everyday situation of mental health care in the ACT.</p>	<p><b>Agreed.</b></p> <p>The Office will need to have strong relationships with all key stakeholder groups across the sector in order to be an effective agent for change.</p>
<p><b>Rec 20:</b> That the Office is subject to a review in relation to its own effectiveness and contribution to reform, five years after its commencement (July 2023).</p>	<p><b>Agreed.</b></p> <p>Five years is considered an appropriate time for a review of the functions of the Office.</p>