

# Stand with Carers: our ACT Election 2024 Campaign

Integrated Mental Health Centre

CarersACT

## The ACT community needs an integrated mental health care, navigation, and respite centre

We believe that Canberrans should be able to:

- Have a place to turn to in times of crisis
- Navigate the care system with greater ease
- Avoid the trauma of emergency department visits when experiencing mental distress
- Find comprehensive support under one roof



In the ACT, almost half of residents have been diagnosed with a mental health condition at some point.

In Australia, 1 in 5 people experience mental illness annually, with 15% of the adult population estimated to be carers of people with mental ill health

### The Problem

- Mental illness is the leading cause of burden of disease in the ACT. The 2021 census reveals that the proportion of ACT residents living with a mental health condition is higher than the national average. Generally, people with mental illness have worse health outcomes than the rest of the population, including a significant reduction in life expectancy.
- The mental health system is fragmented, inaccessible, and often overwhelming for the average Canberran to navigate. Carers and consumers frequently have to retell experiences of trauma and mental ill-health multiple times to different services.
- Only 13% of Canberra's carers feel they make high-quality use of their personal time, compared to 28.1% of the general population. Carers have less time for activities that enhance their wellbeing, such as work, education, and leisure. They stress the need for short-term emergency respite services to ease the demands of caring during crises.

### What's Working Elsewhere

Other places around the world are implementing innovative mental health care models to provide effective support for individuals in mental health crisis. For example:

- The Urgent Mental Health Care Centre in Adelaide, South Australia, operates as an Emergency Department diversion model, offering a safe and supportive environment for those experiencing a mental health crisis.
- The Peacock Centre in Hobart, Tasmania, combines short-term emergency respite, crisis de-escalation, mental health education, and peer support within one home-like facility.
- Crisis houses in the United Kingdom offer intensive, short-term support in a residential setting as an alternative to hospitalisation for individuals in crisis.



## The Solution

Learning from models in Adelaide, Hobart, and the UK, we want a commitment to reallocate one of the proposed community-based health centres to become an integrated mental health care, navigation, and respite centre that features:

- A home-like, inviting environment
- Emergency service drop-off
- Peer support and clinical integration
- Short-term respite and crisis de-escalation
- Education and capacity building
- In-person navigation services
- Integration hub for social services

We want to see an ACT where mental wellbeing thrives. By implementing these features, the ACT can be a leading example of integrated mental health care, providing essential services and support to the Canberra community.

## Legislative and Policy Frameworks

- **The ACT Wellbeing Framework** – Integrated and accessible mental health services will drive positive outcomes in the wellbeing of all Canberrans. While primary impact will be in indicators across the 'Health' domain, there will be flow on impact across almost domains including 'Social Connection', 'Education and life-long learning', 'Housing and home', and 'Access and connectivity'.
- **The ACT Health Services Plan 2022-2030** – The Health Services Plan outlines system-wide priorities for the development and redesign of ACT Government-funded health services throughout the decade. The Centre will make a significant impact on several key transition of care actions outlined in the plan, including: "Review and redesign patient pathways and models of care to improve integration across the health system for... people with mental health issues."
- Investment in integrated mental health care will also influence the outcomes of several other ACT policy frameworks, including:
  - **The ACT Carers Strategy**
  - **The ACT Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan**
  - **The ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2019-2028**
  - **The ACT Disability Strategy and the ACT Disability Health Strategy**
  - **The ACT Women's Plan 2016-2026**