

# Stand with Carers: our ACT Election 2024 Campaign

Dedicated Mental Health Prevention Funding

CarersACT

## The ACT needs dedicated investment in prevention and early intervention, not just treatment of mental ill health

We believe that Canberrans should be able to:

- Access early intervention and prevention services that reduce the risk of mental ill-health
- Live in a community where mental wellbeing thrives
- Benefit from a healthcare system that balances treatment with prevention for better long-term outcomes

over  
**75,000**

In the ACT, over 75,000 adult Canberrans are estimated to be caring for someone experiencing mental ill-health or have experienced mental ill-health themselves.

Nationally, 1 in 5 Australians 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 a leading cause of burden of disease in the ACT, with those experiencing mental ill-health often facing significantly reduced life expectancy and worse health outcomes.
- Despite increased spending on acute mental health services, the prevalence of mental ill-health in the ACT continues to rise. Emergency department presentations for mental health-related issues have nearly doubled between 2004-05 and 2020-21.
- Current health spending is heavily focused on treating symptoms rather than addressing underlying causes. As Canberra's population grows, the strain on our health system will only intensify unless prevention becomes a priority.



## The Solution

We need a commitment to dedicating 20% of the health budget specifically towards the prevention of mental ill-health and the creation of a mentally healthy ACT.

The Productivity Commission's research indicates that reallocating resources from hospital-based treatments to more cost-effective community-based interventions—focused on prevention—would achieve better outcomes. Preventative initiatives should address social factors such as housing, employment, and social support, which are key determinants of mental health.

By investing in preventative measures now, the ACT can reduce the long-term burden on its healthcare system, improve quality of life for its residents, and foster a community where mental wellbeing truly thrives.

## Legislative and Policy Frameworks

- **The ACT Wellbeing Framework** – Investment in mental ill-health prevention will drive positive outcomes across various domains – including, but not limited to 'Health', 'Social Connection', 'Education and life-long learning', 'Housing', and 'Access and connectivity'.
- **The ACT Preventive Health Plan 2020-2025** – Dedicated investment in preventative mental health will support the goals of the Preventive Health Plan and contribute to a healthier community.
- Investment in preventative mental health will also advance objectives under several other ACT policy frameworks:
  - **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**
  - **The ACT Health Services Plan 2022-2030**