



Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2023–2024

Answer to question on notice

Asked by: Ms Fiona Carrick MLA

Addressed to: Minister for Mental Health

Reference: ACT Health Directorate

Hearing: 11 February 2025

In relation to: Preventative Health

Question received: 18 February 2025

Answer Due: 25 February 2025

Mental health status is impacted by a range of factors, including access to appropriate preventive, early intervention, primary care, community and acute services.

- 1) Do you look at the impact on mental health of social isolation?
- 2) Do you discuss the mental health benefits of connecting people through encouraging physical activities with other directorates and how the location of community facilities that are convenient to access by public transport can help with preventative health outcomes?

MINISTER FOR MENTAL HEALTH: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

- 1) The ACT Government recognises that social isolation and loneliness have detrimental impacts on health and other social factors. The ACT Government further recognises the interplay between mental health and loneliness is complex and multi factorial. A diverse range of promotion, prevention and early intervention programs and services respond to this complexity. Many of these programs sit outside of the health and mental health service system but are integral to supporting good mental health across the ACT. In addition, the ACT Government continues to undertake community awareness raising at key points of time such as Christmas, to promote mental health which include messaging around social connection.

The ACT Government notes the higher rates of loneliness among young people and this forms part of the broader considerations in addressing youth mental health. The Office for Mental Health and Wellbeing continues to monitor the data on loneliness. The ACT Health Directorate supports a number of mental health promotion and early intervention services including school-based programs such as Youth Aware of Mental Health and other programs run by Mental Illness Education ACT that address social connection and mutual support.

- 2) The Office for Mental Health and Wellbeing (the Office) has a role in facilitating a whole of government and whole of community approach to mental health and regularly connects with all ACT Government directorates to promote programs and services that improve mental health. The Office has participated in discussions and presentations on planning and environmental design and green and social prescribing to seek to influence for improved mental health. The Office has recently commenced discussions to identify and drive opportunities for collaborative action in 2025 and beyond.

The [Healthy Canberra: ACT Preventive Health Plan \(2020-2025\)](#) (the Plan) aims to reduce the prevalence of chronic disease in the ACT and support good health at all stages of life. The plan has five priority areas, one of which is enabling active living.

The plan acknowledges that active living is about moving more and integrating physical activity into daily routines. The plan acknowledges that active living has a range of physical and mental health benefits including the prevention of chronic disease and that even small increases in physical activity and movement can have long term benefits for health and wellbeing.

The ACT Government's response to the recommendations of the Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion - Report No. 13 [Inquiry into Loneliness and Social Isolation in the ACT](#) sets out further details in responses to recommendations in relation to public transport and public spaces.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Social Policy

Signature:



Date:

25/2/25

By the Minister for Mental Health, Rachel Stephen-Smith