



End of Year Newsletter

Welcome to our End of Year Newsletter! As we reflect on the past year, we're proud of the progress we've made, the challenges we've overcome, and the dedication shown by our teams across the organisation. This edition highlights key achievements, celebrates milestones, upcoming events, photos from 2025 and looks ahead to the opportunities the coming year will bring. Thank you for being an important part of our journey, and we wish you a joyful holiday season and a successful year ahead.



CEO End-of-Year Message

As we come to the close of the year, I want to pause and reflect on just how transformative this past twelve months have been for our sector and our community.

The recent Bondi incident has underscored the essential role that community-managed services play in fostering wellbeing, safety and connection across our communities. At moments of collective distress, it

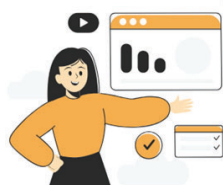
is vital that our response is grounded in care, compassion and communication. Community mental health services are foundational to this work. They provide accessible, trauma-informed and locally embedded support, strengthen social connection, and walk alongside individuals, families and communities through distress, recovery and resilience. Investing in and valuing these services is critical to building a mental health system that responds early, supports people where they live, and upholds dignity, belonging and hope for all.

Across the year, MHCC ACT and our members have continued to advocate strongly for lived-experience-led, community-based responses; to amplify the voices of consumers, carers and frontline workers; and to push for reforms that strengthen belonging, dignity and long-term wellbeing. I am deeply proud of the leadership, courage and care shown by our members and partners throughout 2025.

Looking ahead to 2026, we do so with purpose and momentum. The coming year offers real opportunities to consolidate reforms, deepen collaboration, and continue shaping a mental health system that truly supports people. Together, we are well placed to make 2026 a productive, ambitious and values-driven year for community mental health in the ACT.

Thank you for everything you have contributed this year. I look forward to the work ahead, and to continuing this journey together.

Lisa Kelly
Chief Executive Officer
MHCC ACT



MHCC ACT
team updates

🌟 AGM and End of Year Event

On 27 November, MHCC hosted its Annual General Meeting (AGM), bringing together MHCC ACT members and consumers to reflect upon, and celebrate the work achieved throughout the year.

The AGM opened with a report from the President, highlighting MHCC'S key achievements, milestones and accomplishments. This was followed by an update from the Treasurer, who provided an overview of governance and financial performance. Our CEO, Lisa Kelly, then delivered a comprehensive briefing, showcasing the significant work undertaken in 2025 and outlining MHCC's strategic priorities for the year ahead.

After the formal proceedings, we were honoured to welcome Minister Rachel Stephen-Smith, who spoke about the vital role of the community mental health sector in the ACT. The Minister also engaged with attendees in a Q&A session, offering valuable insights and fostering meaningful discussion.

We thank everyone who joined us to celebrate MHCC's achievements in 2025 and look forward to an even more productive and purposeful 2026!

🌟 MHCC ACT Policy Day 2025

MHCC ACT's Policy Day, held on 21 November 2025, brought together member organisations at executive and management level for a full day of collaboration, reflection and future-focused planning.

The day was designed to strengthen shared identity across the community mental health sector and to shape MHCC ACT's policy and advocacy direction for the next two years. Through facilitated discussions and interactive workshops, members collectively articulated what defines the community mental health sector.

Members worked together to identify priority policy pillars, focusing on the changes needed for

consumers and carers, the service system, and providers and the workforce—both in the short term and looking ahead to the next five years. A system-design session invited participants to envision what a thriving, community-based mental health system in the ACT could look like by 2030, grounding that vision in shared values, lived experience leadership, sustainable funding, and strong partnerships.

The day also directly informed MHCC ACT's forward planning. Insights from the sessions were used to draft elements of the organisation's Strategic Framework for 2026–2028 and to shape priorities for the 2026 Workplan, ensuring that MHCC ACT's advocacy remains member-led, evidence-informed and focused on meaningful system change.

Overall, the Policy Day reinforced the strength, cohesion and collective ambition of the community mental health sector, and underscored the critical role of collaboration in building a system that supports recovery, belonging and wellbeing across the ACT.

Perinatal Mental Health Alliance

2025 has been a year of collaboration, progress and growth for the Perinatal Mental Health Alliance. Together, the Alliance has worked to strengthen connections, improve understanding, and support better outcomes for new and growing families across the ACT.

Throughout the year, the Alliance met regularly to build upon the shared goals and shape the priorities for the upcoming year. The Alliance also worked toward planning strategies to raise awareness of perinatal mental health concerns, and to improve access to support services.

A key highlight for the Perinatal Mental Health Alliance, was the hosting of the information and training session for Alliance member frontline staff and direct managers, helping to build knowledge

about perinatal mental health and some of the available services. The session was extremely beneficial and helped to bring together professionals from across the sector to learn, connect and strengthen referral pathways.

Thank you to the Alliance members for your commitments and collaboration this year. We look forward to continuing this important work in 2026!

✨ **Peer Workforce Community of Practice**

The Peer Workforce Community of Practice (CoP) was established in partnership with MHCC ACT and Think Mental Health, to provide a safe, supportive space for peer workers to connect, collaborate and share knowledge.

Since its initial meeting in August 2025, the CoP has been fostering meaningful conversations and professional growth. The meetings are led by peer workers, and are held monthly, offering an opportunity to discuss topics that matter most to the peer workforce.

If you'd like to join the conversation and connect with fellow peer workers, please email communications@mhccact.org.au to find out more.

✨ **The Social Media Minimum Age (SMMA) Obligation**

The Social Media Minimum Age (SMMA) obligation, which restricts access to many social media platforms for young people under the age of 16, came into effect on 10 December. This significant change is expected to have wide-ranging impacts on young people and their families.

While we acknowledge that we are not the experts in this area, it is important to consider the potential effects - both positive and negative - that this obligation may bring. Understanding these impacts

will help us provide better support during this transition.

Key facts about the SMMA obligation:

- The platforms that have been age-restricted are:
 - Facebook
 - Instagram
 - Snapchat
 - TikTok
 - YouTube
 - Threads
 - Reddit
 - Twitch
 - X
 - Kick
- Platforms that do not take steps to enforce age-restrictions could face fines up to \$49.5 million
- Young people under 16 will not get into trouble if they have an account on a platform that has been age-restricted
- Platforms that have been age-restricted, will require users to provide a proof of age

How we can support young people and their families:

- Learn more about which apps have been affected by the SMMA obligation
- Have open conversations with young people about their feelings toward the SMMA obligation
- Consider the impacts (both positive and negative) that this SMMA obligation may have for young people, especially since this change coincides with the start of school holidays

Together, we can help young people feel supported and connected during this period of change.

🌟 Policy Input and Submissions

MHCC ACT provided substantive policy input across multiple ACT Government and national processes. This included contributing to reviews of the CHS–ACAT assessment order procedures, providing

feedback on policy frameworks, and developing submissions for the ACT Budget 2026–27 and the DSS consultation on programs for families and children. MHCC ACT also participated in hearings and briefings, including the Inquiry into Men’s Suicide Rates and the Inquiry into barriers to participation in community sport, ensuring that community sector perspectives were strongly represented.

Sector Engagement and Peak Body Collaboration

MHCC ACT actively engaged with peak bodies and sector partners through regular ACT Peaks Policy Meetings, Mental Health Australia consultations, CMHA state peaks meetings, and briefings such as the National Mental Health Scorecard and NDIS legislative updates. These engagements strengthened collaboration across the mental health and community sectors and ensured coordinated advocacy on shared priorities.

Consultations, Meetings, and Advisory Work

MHCC ACT attended and contributed to numerous consultations with government agencies, non-government organisations, and research bodies. This included meetings with the Mental Health Policy Unit at UC, Canberra Health Services, and the ACT Child & Youth Mental Health Sector Alliance. Through this work, MHCC ACT provided expert advice, examined emerging sector issues, and supported evidence-informed policy development.

Training and Capacity Building

MHCC ACT delivered multiple Compassion at Work and Community Suicide Awareness training sessions for community members and sector workers. The team also engaged in professional development activities, including attending webinars on youth mental health pathways and the Australian Suicide Prevention Planning Model. These efforts supported capacity building across the mental health ecosystem.

🌟 Events and Organisational Activities

MHCC ACT played a central role in coordinating and participating in key organisational events, including the MHCC ACT AGM and the annual Mental Health Sector Policy Day. Staff also attended national and local events such as the Prevention in Practice Summit and sector briefings to stay informed of system developments and emerging best practice.



MHCC ACT Training & Development

February 6 @ 10:00 am - 1:00 pm

Training: Compassion at Work

Winanggaay Function Room, 5 Felstead Vista Denman Prospect, ACT 2611

Do you work in a community services or care setting?

Many of us working in community services, health, disability, ATOD, teaching and other care roles have a really difficult job supporting people in distress. We have to draw on our compassion everyday, which sometimes can lead to feelings of burnout and compassion fatigue. What if there was an evidence-based way to sustain your wellbeing and performance, allowing you to show up as your best self for your clients, your communities and yourself?

More information: [Compassion at Work training Tickets, Fri, Feb 6, 2026 at 10:00 AM | Eventbrite](#)

February 13 @ 10:00 am - 1:00 pm

Training: Community Suicide Awareness

Winanggaay Function Room, 5 Felstead Vista Denman Prospect, ACT 2611

Do you know how to react when someone is at risk of suicide?

Everyone can have a role in responding safely to someone at risk of suicide. However, most of us are not confident in talking to someone who is suicidal and may even find the idea scary no matter how much we want to help.

More information: [Community Suicide Awareness training Tickets, Fri, Feb 13, 2026 at 10:00 AM | Eventbrite](#)

March 5 @ 10:00 am - 1:00 pm

Training: Compassion at Work

The Function Room, Ainslie Arts Centre, 30 Elouera Street Braddon, ACT 2612

Winanggaay Function Room, 5 Felstead Vista Denman Prospect, ACT 2611

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Many of us working in community services, health, disability, ATOD, teaching and other care roles have a really difficult job supporting people in distress. We have to draw on our compassion everyday, which sometimes can lead to feelings of burnout and compassion fatigue. What if there was an evidence-based way to sustain your wellbeing and performance, allowing you to show up as your best self for your clients, your communities and yourself?

More Information: [Compassion at Work training Tickets, Thu, Mar 5, 2026 at 10:00 AM | Eventbrite](#)

March 10 @ 10:00 am - 1:00 pm

Training: Community Suicide Awareness

The Function Room, Ainslie Arts Centre, 30 Elouera
Street Braddon, ACT 2612

Do you know how to react when someone is at risk of suicide?

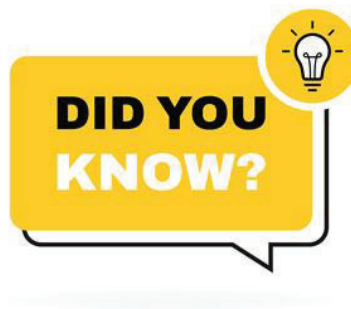
Everyone can have a role in responding safely to someone at risk of suicide. However, most of us are not confident in talking to someone who is suicidal and may even find the idea scary no matter how much we want to help.

More information: [Community Suicide Awareness training Tickets, Tue, Mar 10, 2026 at 10:00 AM | Eventbrite](#)

Sector Events, Training & Development Opportunities

There are plenty of **sector wide opportunities** available for networking, training and career development. We have heard that information can be hard to find, so to make it easier we created a **Community Notice Board**.

Please contact us on communications@mhccact.org.au if you have an item to add to the calendar.



Final ACT NGO Mental Health Sector Investment Plan

💡 Following recent consultation with the sector, ACT Health have published the final ACT NGO Mental Health Sector Investment Plan.

We have provided a quick snapshot of the ACT's final NGO Mental Health Sector Investment Plan, highlighting clearer commissioning frameworks, updated service maps to identify gaps, and key changes to funding and program inclusion - supporting stronger, more transparent planning across the NGO mental health sector.

Read here -> [Snapshot-of-the-NGO-Mental-Health-Sector-Investment-Plan.pdf](#)

💡 The Perinatal Wellbeing Centre has recently launched their own storybook!

Go to
<https://www.perinatalwellbeingcentre.org.au/cakeberra> to learn more about the book and order your copies TODAY!

💡 ACT Youth Assembly

Are you aged 12-25 and live in Canberra? Join the conversation today on issues like bullying, racism, cultural identity and safety- and help turn them into a real change at this one-day event for young people.

31st March 2026 - 9:00 am-4:00 pm - CIT Woden

💡 New Youth Trauma service to deliver lifeline for young Canberrans

The ACT Government is establishing a new Youth Trauma Service to provide free, trauma-informed mental health support for young Canberrans aged 13–17 (up to 18 if at school), filling a critical gap in local services. Delivered by Uniting, the service is part of

the broader Youth at Risk Project and backed by more than \$4 million in ACT and federal funding, offering evidence-based therapy and tailored support to help young people with complex needs access the right care at the right time. The Youth Trauma Service is expected to open in March 2026, strengthening early intervention and holistic support for young people who've experienced trauma.

Read more- [New youth trauma service to deliver lifeline for young Canberrans - Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate](#)

Photos From 2025











Holiday Office Closure Notice

The Mental Health Community Coalition ACT office will close at **4:00pm on 24 December** and will reopen at **8:00am on 2 January 2026**.

During this period, please email admin@mhccact.org.au. All enquiries will be responded to when the office reopens.

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