

## MHCC ACT Position Statement

### Place-Based Approaches to Service Funding

#### Context

Current procurement practices apply a generic understanding of community need that lacks the nuance of the factors that impact unique communities and people. This approach often funds a service model that provides a unified program/service/activity across the Territory or across Australia and assumes that the need, demographics, resources and other environmental and social factors are even or do not impact implementation and outcomes.

The alternate to consistent service model implementation is a place-based approach which supports co-design and consideration of local need and environment to drive service model implementation. In this way, government funds outcomes and local community determine the best way to meet these based on their unique needs and features.

#### What is a Place-Based Approach (PBA)?

PBAs are collaborative, community focussed and led, long-term commitments towards addressing specific needs and issues in a determined location.

PBAs ensure that community is at the centre of the work being completed. Place-based refers to the specific geographic location of a community and therefore, ensures that the community being served is at the forefront of the planning, designing and implementation of services and interventions. PBAs place a strong emphasis on the importance of community-led work, and tailored programs and interventions for different communities.

The primary focuses of PBAs are:

- People and place,
- Engagement and meaningful interaction with community stakeholders,
- Community strengths,
- Local decision-making,
- Strengthening, designing and reviewing systems within local contexts, and
- Better access to services and better outcomes for local people.

#### Why are PBAs important?

When PBAs are implemented and integrated into community, individuals and families can feel confident that the services and programs available will be tailored to suit local needs.

PBAs are vital because they:

- Ensure that connection and engagement from Government, service providers, and community takes place.

- Allow for collaboration on all levels.
  - Community members can become active participants in the development of a local service, allowing for knowledge to be gained regarding the current needs of the community, potential opportunities, and required resources.
- Look holistically at a community, incorporating both the physical and social environment, to ensure that the needs of that community are met.
  - This removes the risk of service providers and programs in community being designed to suit programmatically defined needs, rather than the specific needs of the local community.
- Focus on the social determinants of health.
  - The social determinants of health encompass socioeconomic positions, employment, and social support, and most importantly, the social determinants of health differ between locations. To ensure that a community's needs can be met, the services provided in that community must meet their needs, therefore helping to ensure that the community members social determinants of health can be met.

## PBAs for mental health services

The utilisation of PBAs allows for mental health services in the ACT to be tailored to the specific needs of a more localised community or demographic and allow for programs and services to be regularly updated as the needs of the community they are serving change.

MHCC supports the integration of PBAs for mental health services throughout the ACT. Having place-based mental health services allows for people accessing services in the community, to receive effective and integrated care, that can address the specific needs of the individual.

## The future of PBAs in the ACT

MHCC advocates for the implementation and integration of place-based mental health services in the ACT, creating a sustainable service landscape, and to strengthen trust and meet the unique needs of the local community.

In previous years, when PBAs were implemented throughout Australia, they were often short-term, creating instability and fostering a lack of confidence among service providers and local community. To ensure this is mitigated, MHCC calls on Government, at both levels, to invest in mental health services that are locally grounded, and employ a workforce of both frontline staff and management that are based in the ACT, ensuring that decision-makers have a strong understanding and knowledge-base of the ACT and surrounding region. The funding opportunities need to be presented to local community organisations and service providers, who have strong links and connections, and are based in the ACT region.

The services employed in the ACT should also be informed by, and be in support of, ongoing data collection and analysis. Local data, such as that collected in the University of Canberra's study 'Living Well in the ACT Region', allows for the identification and understanding of our region. Data collection by local organisations would allow for an analysis of the services which are currently working, which approaches no longer suit the needs of the community, what gaps may be present within the current service landscape, and what adaptations could be made to best support the communities' needs.