



ACT
Government

CONSULTATION REPORT

**ACT Preventive Health
Action Plan 2023-2025
community consultation**

December 2023

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1. Background

The [Healthy Canberra: ACT Preventive Health Plan 2020-2025 \(Preventive Health Plan\)](#) is a six year whole -of-government plan that aims to reduce the prevalence of chronic disease in the ACT and support good health at all stages of life. It is being implemented through two consecutive three-year action plans (2020-2022 and 2023-2025).

The draft ACT Preventive Health Action Plan 2023-2025 was released for community feedback between 8 May and 11 August 2023. The core focus of the community consultation was to seek feedback on how the action plan could better address health inequities, particularly inequities experienced by priority population groups.¹ We wanted to know what the ACT Government could do to better support people to live in good health throughout their life.

The consultation included an online YourSay survey and a YourSay digital sticky notes board.

A total of nine workshops were held. Two workshops were open to sector stakeholders and focused on priority areas of the plan ‘supporting children and families’ and ‘reducing risky behaviours’. Six workshops focused on different population groups and strategies to reduce the risk of chronic disease for:

- the general community
- the LGBTIQ+ community
- people living with disability or caring for someone living with disability
- the culturally and linguistically diverse community
- the older community aged 45 years and over, and
- young people aged 18-25 years .

The ninth workshop was held at Australian National University to seek feedback from academic stakeholders. Written submissions were also invited, followed by a final ‘sense-making’ workshop.

Overall, feedback included perspectives from members of the public, peak body organisations, health and community service providers, advocacy groups, volunteer and community groups, advisory bodies and research institutions. More than 400 people provided feedback on the action plan.

Further details on the consultation findings can be found at [Appendices 1-4](#).



¹ see page 9 of the [action plan](#).

The challenge ahead

Preventive health action can help to keep people healthier, which in turn reduces the burden on our healthcare system. Effective and sustainable change is best achieved through a focus on changing systems and environments to support healthy behaviour. Important associated benefits of prevention include increased workforce participation, greater economic productivity and increased resilience to climate change.

We acknowledge that many of the themes and issues identified during the consultation process lie outside the remit of the health portfolio. While the health sector plays a key role in the prevention of chronic disease, broader factors known as the social determinants of health are significant drivers of poor health and health inequities. These factors, such as the natural and built environment, access to education and transport, socioeconomic status, and social supports, require action beyond the health sector. To address the broad range of factors that influence health, we need to continue to deliver against a common and shared agenda with a coordinated approach across government and the community sector.

The ACT Government is committed to supporting all Canberran's to make healthy lifestyle choices and to take the steps needed to prevent disease. Actions in the health sector alone will not be enough to meet this challenge. This consultation report will be shared across all Directorates and with our community partners that can play a part in helping us achieve this goal to ensure voices are being heard where it matters.

2. Summary of key themes

Socioeconomic factors impacting on health

Socioeconomic factors such as income, employment, housing and education all impact on health. Feedback reinforced the need to address these structural factors if we want to make a real difference in reducing health inequity in our community.

We heard that many people are struggling with challenges relating to cost-of-living, working hours and accessing suitable housing. Feedback noted these factors particularly impact priority populations, people on low incomes or who are living in poverty.

Suggestions to address these challenges included:

- providing subsidies to support healthy behaviours such as using exercise facilities, playing sports, choosing active travel, consuming healthy food and drink and accessing health care
- addressing the high cost-of-living and providing support to people and families with low-incomes
- addressing poverty as a key driver of health inequity
- addressing food insecurity including by providing free meals at school and investing in food relief
- increasing access to affordable, suitable and stable housing, including public housing
- improving education outcomes through a focus on early childhood
- supporting the workforce so people have more time, energy and income for healthy lifestyles
- supporting parents with equitable parental leave, flexible work arrangements and childcare subsidies

"To help counter the barriers to eating well in our current food environment, the ACT Government is encouraged to prioritise initiatives that focus on supporting greater access, affordability and availability of healthy foods."

"With the highest sports participation costs in Australia, the ACT Government would do well to consider providing annual vouchers to cover sporting memberships and equipment."

"For many vulnerable populations in Canberra, poverty is a severely limiting factor in achieving healthy outcomes and presents major barriers to many of the actions outlined throughout the plan."

Support for priority populations

We heard the plan does not do enough for certain groups who may be less likely to live with good health and more likely to develop chronic disease. This included:

- people living with disability
- carers
- older Canberrans
- parents and caregivers
- children and young people
- people living with chronic disease
- people living in poverty
- people from culturally diverse backgrounds
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- people identifying as LGBTIQ+
- people experiencing domestic and family violence.

"Increase supports availability for disability carers."

"Pay more attention to elderly Canberrans living in poverty."

"For many LGBTIQ+ people accessing preventative or diagnostic medical care is difficult, costly and ineffective."

Suggestions for how to be more inclusive of these groups included:

- creating mechanisms for people with lived experience to have input on policy that impacts them
- delivering targeted actions to provide support to these priority groups to meet specific needs
- co-designing preventive health actions and initiatives with priority populations to ensure community need is met

- tailoring services and supports to be more inclusive and safer for diverse communities
- training and professional development for health care, community service and teaching staff
- supporting more community-led preventive health initiatives for priority groups which provide safety, flexibility and understanding of need
- increasing awareness of and celebrating diversity in our community
- reducing stigma around use of supports and services to enable help-seeking when needed
- use of universal design to ensure public spaces, amenities and events are suitable for all people
- support for schools to be more inclusive of people with diverse backgrounds and needs
- being conscious that certain actions or healthy behaviours may not be possible for all members of our community, and this must be a consideration in developing policy
- ensuring translation services and translated information related to preventive health are available for people who do not speak English
- providing dedicated spaces for specific groups in the community to spend time and socialise
- providing opportunities for new members of the ACT community to meet and connect
- addressing broader inequities in our community so people of all backgrounds can have their basic needs met.

“People from culturally and linguistically diverse communities may find it difficult to use public transport during the weekend or on public holidays if they are unable to drive or just learning to drive. They may also face difficulties in navigating public transport or fear of discrimination/racism.”

Urban planning and local infrastructure

Providing good quality and well-maintained local infrastructure can support people to live active and healthy lives. Planning our city with health in mind helps to create health-promoting environments.

We heard that sometimes it is hard for people to make healthy choices if local infrastructure like bike paths, walking paths or local parks are not safe, accessible or suitable for use. We also heard there are not enough pools or other indoor facilities to support people to exercise all year round. People told us that public transport is not frequent enough or reaching enough places to help them stay active and connected.

Suggestions to address these challenges included:

- providing more indoor recreation facilities including disability-accessible hydrotherapy pools
- increasing investment in local parks to provide more and better playgrounds, natural and artificial outdoor shade covers, benches, sportsgrounds, safety fencing, outdoor fitness equipment and public toilets which are safe, clean and accessible
- improved public transport connectivity and frequency to make it easier for people to travel for social connection, grocery shopping and physical activity opportunities
- improving connectivity and maintenance of active travel infrastructure including off-road cycling paths, walking-only paths, bike racks and street lighting
- protecting and regenerating natural spaces in urban areas
- making it easier for people to experience the health benefits of nature connection increasing accessibility to nature reserves for people living with disabilities or mobility issues
- providing more LGBTIQ+ inclusive infrastructure such as public toilets and changing rooms
- providing more community facilities available for community events or social groups

“Public “gym”/exercise equipment in parks, lower to no cost access to indoor facilities such as pools and gyms or subsidised access for low-income families and children. Safe places to swim and exercise for trans, gender diverse and intersex people.”

“People would walk more if they took public transport: to and from the bus stop and while at their destination. The barrier is that there are not enough buses that go frequently enough to the places people want to travel.”

- providing more free water stations in public areas
- providing more and cheaper parking options at facilities which support healthy behaviours, particularly disability parking
- consideration of community needs in urban planning decisions relating physical activity, social connectedness, health and community service provision and access to healthy food and drink
- considering needs of ageing population in urban planning to support ageing in place.

"The government needs to understand that less parking is a barrier to the disabled getting to and from areas they want to or need to attend."

Health care and community services

Access to health care and community services was a key concern for the community. We heard that services are often not available when people need them, they are too expensive and there is a lack of continuity of care between service providers. We also heard there is a need to improve dissemination of information about available services. Feedback broadly focused on the need for improved service delivery, integration, accessibility, affordability and availability.

"Increase access to services when they are needed - too few specialists in the ACT and long waitlists."

Suggestions to address these challenges included:

- increasing affordability and availability of specialist services to provide preventive health care for detection and management of chronic disease including psychologists, psychiatrists, dentists, paediatricians, dieticians and physiotherapists in the ACT so people do not have to travel interstate for care or spend too long on waitlists
- increasing availability of General Practitioners who offer bulk billing
- building more walk-in centres with broader remit to provide preventive care including vaccinations, screening services and prescriptions
- building a children's hospital and increasing access to child health clinics
- increasing investment in community-based and outreach models of support
- supporting the health care and community service workforce to improve care provision through increasing salaries, providing training opportunities and improving working conditions
- providing tailored continuity of care to individuals in recognition that one size does not fit all
- supporting services to be more appropriate, accessible, safe and inclusive of people with diverse backgrounds, including people who are culturally and linguistically diverse, LGBTIQ+, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander or living with disability
- increasing access to and affordability of early childhood education and care services
- providing childcare services near major shopping hubs or exercise facilities
- improving support for parents and children pre and post birth to help with establishing breastfeeding, mental health of parents and early identification of support needs
- providing better support for people who are not eligible for NDIS but require services
- making it easier for people to navigate between health services by providing accurate and timely information, improving referral pathways and reducing silos between services
- improving support for people with co-occurring issues through better integration and sharing of information between services
- delivering trauma-informed care and addressing the root cause of health issues
- increasing the availability of primary health screening to support early identification of issues
- increasing availability and affordability of drug rehabilitation centres
- increasing access to sexual health services including free sexually transmitted infection checks
- improving pathways of care for people later in life by investing more in the aged care sector and increasing the availability and standards of residential aged care facilities.

"These services need to be approachable, acceptable, available, as well as appropriate to varying health needs and cultural settings."

Health literacy, health promotion and education

Health literacy is a person's ability to access, understand and use health information and services. Improving health literacy across our community through health promotion and education can improve health outcomes.

We heard that people find it hard to know what decisions to make around their health, where to go for support and how to support others. We also heard there is a need to support improved health literacy among health and community service providers so they can better support clients. It was important to people that information and education was not stigmatising or triggering for people.

Feedback on areas for improvement relating to health literacy in our community include:

- availability of services and supports
- chronic disease prevention and management
- food and nutrition
- eating disorders and body image
- physical activity
- mental health
- alcohol, tobacco and other drugs
- e-cigarettes
- sexual health
- child development
- healthy ageing
- menopause
- breastfeeding
- diversity
- environmental health and climate change.

"Finding out what is available should be more straight forward."

"Consideration should also be given for funding and delivery of social media campaigns in languages other than English... and to effective use of multicultural community organisations to assist in passing on relevant messages."

A range of evidence-based health promotion and education tools were suggested for use including:

- health promotion campaigns
- free online information and resources
- printed information in community locations
- workshops or programs in community locations such as libraries or community gardens
- health education in schools and early childhood education and care settings
- skill development classes or programs
- professional development training
- green prescriptions.

Commercial determinants of health

'Commercial determinants of health' refers to private sector activities shaping public health and health policy. This includes the influences of big food, tobacco, pharmaceuticals, gambling, alcohol and chemical industries on health. Unhealthy commodities worsen pre-existing economic, social and racial inequities. Addressing these can prevent illness and promote health equity.

We heard that people are concerned about exposure to marketing of harmful products such as alcohol, junk food and e-cigarettes, particularly for young people. People are also concerned about the increasing numbers of junk food outlets in close proximity to schools and suburban areas.

"Invest in increased and tighter restrictions on advertising of harmful industries (alcohol, gambling, e-cigarettes) across all forms of media and digital platforms, especially government owned or managed platforms, services and products."

Suggestions to address these challenges included:

- developing legislation and regulating exposure to advertising and sale of alcohol, unhealthy food and drinks, gambling products and e-cigarettes

- developing ACT Government policies and guidelines that prevent the procurement and supply of potentially harmful goods and services (e.g., food and drink in government venues and facilities)
- reviewing nutritional advice including the healthy eating pyramid and school canteen traffic light systems
- monitoring memberships of health advisory bodies to reduce commercial influence
- increasing taxes on unhealthy items such as junk food, sugary drinks, alcohol and e-cigarettes
- promoting healthier fundraising options and sponsorship in sports
- reducing the use of junk food as rewards for healthy behaviours such as playing sport or getting vaccinated
- creating incentives for businesses and community events to provide healthier food and drinks
- improving urban planning to restrict fast food outlets and enable more healthier food outlets around suburban areas, shopping centres and schools.

"Stop development applications that allow take away restaurants to be built under apartments and dense residential areas. Limit commercial spaces under apartment blocks to gyms, medical practitioners and other health promoting services."

Mental health and substance use

We heard that mental health is a key concern for people in our community and it often co-occurs with other issues such as substance use. We heard there are not enough supports available for mental health or substance abuse issues and people still experience stigma when seeking help.

"For alcohol use and for other substances integrating substance use management with mental health service provision is essential."

Suggestions to address these challenges included:

- taking action to reduce stigma around seeking help for mental health and substance abuse issues
- increasing availability of mental health services including specialists and inpatient facilities
- improving supports for people experience co-occurring mental health and substance abuse issues
- increasing availability of information about mental health or substance abuse and available supports and services
- providing more subsidies or bulk billing for mental health or substance abuse support services
- increasing availability of diagnostic services for conditions such as autism spectrum disorders and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder
- supporting eating disorder prevention, including through promotion of positive body image
- promoting healthy behaviours as a tool for improving mental health
- delivering community programs and initiatives to support good mental health, including bibliotherapy programs at libraries or social walking groups.

"If you can't afford to access mental health providers but earn 'too much money' to get assistance then there is no way to get help. The waiting list for psychological assistance is so long it's impossible to get timely treatment or any help at all."

Environmental impacts on health

Environment factors that can impact on our health include air quality, ultraviolet rays from the sun and extreme temperatures.

We heard that people in the ACT are impacted by pollen, allergens, woodfire smoke, bushfire smoke and extreme temperatures. We heard these issues can prevent people from spending time outdoors and contribute to chronic illness. People are also concerned about the impacts of climate change and what action is being taken to mitigate this. We heard people want more planning for how we will adapt to our changing environment and reduce associated health impacts.

"With climate change, heat is only one effect that will require adapting to. Heat and smoke refuges will be important, trained staff to deal with related health effects, understanding around potential vector-borne disease and general health education to assist households to adapted needs."

Suggestions to address these challenges included:

- addressing the impacts of woodfire and bushfire smoke on air quality through banning woodfires, improving air quality monitoring and providing adequate ventilation in buildings
- providing free or subsidised sunscreen to prevent sunburn
- planning for future health impacts of climate change by creating heat and smoke refuges and increasing tree canopy cover to reduce the urban heat island effect
- restricting use of high emissions vehicles to improve air quality
- provide subsidies or incentives to install energy efficient heating and cooling.

"People who already suffer a medical condition and wish to improve their health are unable to walk around their neighbourhoods when they are filled with residential woodsmoke pollution in the cooler months of the year."

Investing in and engaging with the community sector

Many community organisations deliver supports, programs or initiatives that contribute to preventive health efforts. We heard that ACT Government can do more to invest in these initiatives and engage with the community sector when developing preventive health policy.

"For the most effective and equitable implementation of the Preventive Health Action Plan, it is critical to focus on the principles of community engagement and co-design of solutions."

Suggestions to improve this include:

- increasing investment in community organisations that deliver on priority areas of plan
- focusing more on collaboration and co-design of preventive health actions and initiatives with community organisations
- acknowledging the key role played by the community sector in preventive health
- providing visibility, clarity and guidance for the community sector on how to contribute to the ACT Government's preventive health policy and goals.

"The community sector must play a key role in delivering cost-effective, impactful, preventative health strategies."

Social connection

Promoting social connection to reduce isolation and loneliness can help to prevent development or progression of chronic disease.

We heard that people in our community are feeling isolated, particularly during retirement. It can be challenging for people to remain socially connected or meet new people in the ACT, especially if they do not have family living locally. We heard that having a good support network and opportunities to connect with others is important throughout life.

"Identification and engagement of isolated folk; innovative service delivery to single parents, seniors and those with chronic illness and disability. Structural inequality entrenches isolation."

Suggestions to address these challenges included:

- investing in community groups, events or initiatives that support healthy behaviours in social settings such as exercise, reading or cooking
- improving public transport to make it easier to travel for social connection
- delivering peer support groups for people experience chronic disease to connect
- supporting people who are new to the ACT including migrants to form social connections
- supporting older Canberrans to remain socially connected, including through inter-generational initiatives such as connecting aged care facilities with school students.

Prevention of infectious diseases

Prevention of infectious diseases such as the flu or COVID-19 can help to prevent long-term health issues associated with these diseases. We heard that people want more action to address the impacts of COVID-19 and other infectious diseases in our community.

Suggestions to address these challenges included:

- reducing the spread of respiratory illness in childcare and education settings by providing air filters, improving ventilation and implementing air quality standards
- continuing to promote access to vaccination and testing for COVID-19
- increasing use of masks in high-risk environments such as schools and health care settings
- supporting people to take leave from work or not attend school if they have an infectious disease.

"We must provide healthy spaces for our children where they aren't exposed to toxins or pollutants or unnecessary illnesses. Infections, including covid, don't have to be an inevitable part of childhood. Air quality standards and better ventilation and outdoor time in childcare centres and schools would go a long way towards improving the health of our children."

Reducing harms from alcohol, tobacco and other drugs

We heard that more could be done to reduce harms from alcohol, tobacco, e-cigarettes and illicit drugs in our community. We heard that many young people are using e-cigarettes, not aware of the harms and can buy them easily. People are also concerned that not enough is being done to address the harms of illicit drugs. We also heard there are concerns around the lack of mental health supports contributing to high-risk use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs.

Suggestions to address these challenges included:

- creating more dedicated zones which are free from smoking, alcohol and e-cigarettes
- increasing regulation around the advertising and sale of e-cigarettes, tobacco and alcohol
- providing targeted trauma-informed support to people who want to reduce or quit using alcohol, tobacco, e-cigarettes or illicit drugs which seeks to address the root cause
- doing more to prevent harms from illicit drug use including investing in targeted place-based initiatives to reduce harm, reducing stigma and consulting people with lived experience
- addressing drink-driving through increased policing and education
- ensuring e-cigarettes remain available therapeutically to support smoking cessation
- educating people about alcohol, tobacco, e-cigarettes and illicit drugs including risk of harm, supports available and health benefits of not using them
- reducing alcohol sponsorship at sports or community events
- providing incentives for venues and events to provide more non-alcoholic drink options
- providing mental health support for people experiencing substance abuse issues
- providing safe injecting spaces to reduce the spread of blood borne viruses
- providing more drug rehabilitation facilities which are affordable and accessible
- continuing to offer pill testing facilities to reduce drug-related harms.

"Families are crippled and left struggling as a result of addiction. There is no help in navigating the system, rehabs do not have capacity to help people when they want help."

"Investigate whether the availability of evidence-based e-cigarette use cessation programs for young people in the ACT meets current and anticipated demand, particularly in light of upcoming increased regulation, and invest accordingly."

Promoting sexual health

We heard that more could be done to promote sexual health and educate people about how to prevent the spread of sexually transmitted infections.

Suggestions to address these challenges included:

- providing free condoms in public places
- providing free checks for sexually transmitted infections
- reducing stigma around accessing sexual health services
- increasing investment in the sexual health service sector
- delivering targeted sexual health education campaigns to different cohorts.

“Include education on consent and safe sex practices for more than heterosexuals.”

Government coordination and processes

Some community feedback was focused on the wording of the action plan and how the actions will be delivered and measured. We heard that some actions were not specific enough and it was unclear how this action plan intersects with other government policy. We also heard there was a lack of visibility and clarity around how actions will be implemented, monitored and evaluated.

Suggestions to address these issues included:

- improving communication and collaboration between ACT Government directorates
- improving government funding models, for example by combining funds across directorates
- increasing clarity and specificity of actions to make them more tangible
- providing more information about how the plan will be implemented, monitored and evaluated
- making it clearer how policies and programs across government intersect
- improving communication and consultation between government agencies and the community sector.

“There are a lot of strategic plans, however services are siloed, fragmented and disconnected.”

Appendix 1: YourSay survey results

We received 214 survey contributions from 209 individuals and 5 surveys completed on behalf of someone else. The majority of respondents were female and almost a third identified as having a disability. Just over a quarter were aged over 65 years while just over a tenth were aged under 34.

The survey had 5 sections for each priority area of the plan. Participants were given an option to respond to questions relating to some or all of these sections. For each priority area, we asked survey respondents:

- how important the priority area was to them
- how important the actions within the priority area were to them
- whether ACT Government should include any other actions to deliver on the priority area
- whether people experience barriers in relation to the priority area
- what ACT Government could do to remove these barriers.

People were also asked how important it is for ACT Government to take action to prevent chronic disease and whether there were any actions outside the priority areas that could be considered.

When asked how important the priority areas were to people, a scale of 1 to 10 was given with 1 indicating not important at all and 10 as extremely important. For the below analysis, a rating of 9 or 10 is referred to as extremely important.

Three-quarters of people indicated that the ACT Government taking action to prevent chronic disease was extremely important to them. No one rated it as not at all important. This indicates a high level of support for preventive health action to be taken by government.

The YourSay consultation page allowed people to post ideas on a virtual board displayed on the web page like 'post-it' notes. Others could 'up'-vote or 'down'-vote these ideas and add more ideas.

A total of 78 virtual notes were posted. The most popular idea suggested was for ovals to have lights on in winter so more people can exercise in the evenings. Other ideas included: This idea was suggested in 19 notes which were up-voted a total of 205 times.

Other ideas included :

Incentivise food outlets to sell healthier food options and smaller portions.

Fast-track implementation of a 4-day working week as standard to improve health and wellbeing.

Support those doing it tough by providing free access to sport memberships and equipment, and vouchers to access nutritious foods.

Ensure everyone has a warm, safe, affordable and comfortable house, and that they can afford to seek healthcare when necessary.

Ban wood heaters & firepits so homes aren't polluted. Toxic air pollution and PM2.5 entering bloodstream has serious health and cost implications.

Sensible COVID prevention action e.g., encouraging wearing face masks, good quality air filters in all enclosed venues & public.

Bring back cooking classes to schools to educate children and young people how to prepare healthy food and fund school veggie gardens.

More free community events. They support mental health and community connection. And are particularly important for low socio-econ families.

Supporting children and families

122 people responded to this priority area, with approximately 80% rating this priority area as extremely important.

Action	Rating
Deliver earlier and better supports for children and families during the first 1000-day period and increase awareness about the importance of the first 1000 days for child development	Important: 89% Neutral: 9% Not important: 2%
Ensure all children have affordable access to quality early childhood education and care so they can successfully transition to school, and experience improved lifelong education and wellbeing outcomes	Important: 90% Neutral: 9% Not important: 1%

Increasing healthy eating

144 people responded to this priority area with approximately 72% of respondents rating this priority area as extremely important.

Action	Rating
Implement evidence-based strategies to support healthier food and drink environments in the wider community	Important: 88% Neutral: 11% Not important: 1%
Implement evidence-based strategies that support a whole-school approach to creating and maintaining healthy food and drink environments in and around schools	Important: 80% Neutral: 15% Not important: 5%
Improve the availability and promotion of free drinking water in public places, sports facilities and food outlets	Important: 85% Neutral: 11% Not important: 4%
Continue to implement and monitor ACT healthy food and drink marketing policies on public buses and light rail; and explore opportunities to limit unhealthy food and drink marketing and sponsorship in ACT Government facilities and community settings including junior sports	Important: 75% Neutral: 22% Not important: 3%
Strengthen urban design to enable easier access to community gardens, fruit and vegetable outlets, and healthy food and drinks in Canberra residential areas and limit the number of fast-food outlets around children's settings	Important: 84% Neutral: 13% Not important: 3%
Undertake collaborative research to establish the prevalence and profile of households at risk of food insecurity in the ACT	Important: 84% Neutral: 13% not important: 3%

Enabling active living

173 people responded to this priority area with approximately 67% rating this priority area as extremely important.

Action	Rating
Promote active travel through safer walking and cycling infrastructure, a better connected and maintained network, making active travel and bicycle parking easy and working with communities to support behaviour change	Important: 72% Neutral: 19% Not important: 9%
Increase and promote active recreation opportunities for all Canberrans, including identifying barriers to utilising open spaces, nature and amenities	Important: 86% Neutral: 13% Not important: 1%
Increase the quality and quantity of living infrastructure, including tree canopy cover and surface permeability, to reduce urban heat and support the use of public spaces, including along active travel routes	Important: 89% Neutral: 10% Not important: 1%
Implement policies and professional development activities in schools that create and maintain supportive physical activity environments.	Important: 75% Neutral: 20% Not important: 5%

Reducing risky behaviours

118 people responded to this priority area with approximately 75% rating this priority area as extremely important.

Alcohol

Action	Rating
Increase promotion of the National Health and Medical Research Council guidelines to prevent and reduce health risks associated with drinking alcohol	Important: 79% Neutral: 19% Not important: 2%
Build a better picture of where alcohol-related harms occur in the ACT through geospatial mapping of emergency department data from the Driving Change study	Important: 61% Neutral: 35% Not important: 4%
Investigate options to address impacts of online alcohol orders and home delivery on health and wellbeing of Canberrans	Important: 55% Neutral: 35% Not important: 10%
Support community and sports organisations to deliver health promotion programs and initiatives that prevent and reduce harms from alcohol	Important: 73% Neutral: 23% Not important: 4%

Tobacco and e-cigarettes

Action	Rating
Develop and implement approaches that educate and inform Canberrans, young people and school communities, to prevent and reduce e-cigarette use	Important: 87% Neutral: 11% Not important: 2%
Advocate for stronger national regulation of e-cigarette products and review ACT legislation to ensure current arrangements are contributing to minimising the harm caused by e-cigarettes	Important: 87% Neutral: 11% Not important: 2%
Increase support for women and their family to quit smoking during pregnancy, especially cohorts with high pregnancy smoking rates	Important: 86% Neutral: 11% Not important: 3%
Transition to a smoke-free Alexander Maconochie Centre	Important: 47% Neutral: 34% Not important: 19%
Investigate approaches to support people with mental illness to quit smoking	Important: 72% Neutral: 22% Not important: 6%
Review ACT legislation to ensure current arrangements are contributing to minimising the harm caused by tobacco and smoking across our community	Important: 80% Neutral: 15% Not important: 5%

Sexually transmitted infections and blood borne viruses

Action	Rating
Improve linkages between community STIBBV service providers and community organisations who support priority population groups (e.g. migrant support services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs)	Important: 83% Neutral: 17% Not important: 0%
Explore possibilities to improve data infrastructure so that service level data and pathology testing data is routinely available to inform health system and policy responses to STIBBVs	Important: 79% Neutral: 21% Not important: 0%
Engage service users and community members in the codesign of health promotion campaigns and education materials to reduce the health and social burden of STIBBVs	Important: 78% Neutral: 19% Not important: 3%

Promoting healthy ageing

187 people responded to this priority area with approximately 81% rating this priority area as extremely important to them.

Action	Rating
Engage and support quality research to build the evidence base for healthy ageing initiatives, with a focus on the secondary prevention of chronic disease (Personality and Total Health Through Life 'PATH' study)	Important: 86% Neutral: 13% Not important: 1%
Promote vaccination and cancer screening in the community	Important: 86% Neutral: 14% Not important: 0%
Deliver healthy homes for all ages by developing and implementing programs to improve the thermal comfort of homes and reduce energy hardship for low income or otherwise vulnerable households, including support for people with specific chronic conditions	Important: 89% Neutral: 10% Not important: 1%
Support physical and mental health and facilitate healthy lifestyle behaviours in the workplace.	Important: 86% Neutral: 12% Not important: 2%

Appendix 2: Community and Stakeholder Workshops

Overall, the key themes that emerged from the community workshops included the need to:

- address the social and commercial determinants of health
- improve health literacy through education and health promotion
- improve service delivery, integration, accessibility, affordability and availability
- support social connection
- provide more support for mental health and substance abuse
- provide inclusive and culturally appropriate supports and information
- increase investment in and support for community organisations and initiatives
- improve urban planning and infrastructure to support healthy living
- increase engagement and co-design with community sector
- support and promote access to community gardens.

Workshop 1 – Supporting children and families

This workshop was held on 22 June 2023 with 20 people from 10 organisations in attendance and included Baringa Early Learning Centre, Yerrabi Yurwang Child & Family Aboriginal Corporation, University of Canberra, Association for the Wellbeing of Children and Healthcare, Child and Family Services, Libraries ACT, Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth, Canberra Health Services, Community Services Directorate and ACT Education Directorate.

Key themes heard from participants throughout the workshop included the need to:

- support social connection and mental health, particularly among priority populations
- enable increased knowledge among families and service providers about preventive health including healthy living behaviours, healthy ageing and how to access services
- provide early, inclusive and culturally appropriate support for families from all backgrounds
- address socioeconomic factors including access to housing, income, work, transport and nutritious food and drink
- support healthy development in school and early childhood education settings including by providing professional development
- provide access to well-maintained infrastructure including ovals and public transport
- increase availability, accessibility and integration of health and community services.

“Families don't know what we don't know.”

“Get the foundations, i.e., Social determinants of health first, then you can move on to preventive actions.”

Participants also provided feedback that actions should be informed by and address the needs of priority populations including:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- culturally and linguistically diverse communities
- children and young people
- people experiencing domestic and family violence
- people experiencing mental health issues.

“Across government agreements on pathways and how we deliver to 'out of scope' families when their needs are out of scope of the system”

Workshop 2 – Reducing risky behaviours

This workshop was held on 28 June 2023 and included Canberra Region Community Services, Canberra Alliance for Harm Minimisation and Advocacy, University of Canberra, Cancer Council, Alcohol and Drug Foundation, Meridian, Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education, Tedd Noffs Foundation and Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Association ACT.

Key themes heard from participants throughout the workshop included the need to:

- increase knowledge about risky behaviours and service availability by tailoring information and campaigns to specific audiences, particularly priority populations and pregnant people, using non-stigmatising and plain English language
- provide trauma-informed and well-integrated supports and services for people experiencing with alcohol, tobacco and other drug addiction to reduce harm
- further regulate the sale and advertising of alcohol, tobacco and e-cigarettes
- reduce stigma around addiction, blood borne viruses, sexual health and accessing services
- reduce exposure to marketing related to risky behaviours such as alcohol and junk food
- help people stay connected through community initiatives and removing barriers to travel
- address socioeconomic factors including cost of living and access to health services
- make actions more specific and tangible.

Participants also provided feedback that actions should be informed by and address the needs of priority populations including:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- children and young people
- culturally and linguistically diverse communities
- people living with disability
- LGBTQ+ community members
- older community members

“Need simpler and appealing information to young people - NHMRC guidelines aren’t accessible info.”

“Reducing stigma - barriers to access services and screening (AOD/BBV/STI).”

“Sports funding tied to no alcohol and unhealthy food and beverage promotion and advertising.”

Workshop 3 – General community members

This workshop was held on 18 July 2023 and included representatives from Pedal Power ACT and Landcare.

Key themes heard from participants throughout the workshop included the need to:

- improve infrastructure to support healthy living including walking and cycling paths, pools and green spaces which are accessible to people living with disabilities

- support social connection to reduce the impacts of isolation on health, for example through community programs and intergenerational connection
- support mental health and wellbeing of parents and caregivers
- support for older communities in the context of retiring at a later age
- increase knowledge around prevention topics including healthy eating, diabetes and cycling
- educate people about drug, tobacco, e-cigarette and alcohol addiction including information about alternatives to risky behaviours.

"Our open spaces aren't accessible by public transport. Can't get a bus to the arboretum. If there are barriers to entry, it discourages access."

Participants also provided feedback that actions should be informed by and address the needs of priority populations including:

- older community members
- people living with disability
- children and young people.

"Increased social connection and decrease social isolation - important across all cohorts not just ageing."

Workshop 4 – Older community members

This workshop was held on 20 July 2023 and included community members and representatives from ACT Disability, Aged and Carer Advocacy Service (ADACAS), Dietitians Australia, Health Research Institute University of Canberra, Erindale Active Leisure Aqua Aerobics and Low Impact.

"Reduce emphasis on individual change and enhance systems change e.g., limit hours of operation of alcohol vendors."

Key themes heard from participants throughout the workshop included the need to:

- improve local infrastructure to support active living including walking and cycling paths, free parking, drinking water stations and swimming pools
- support social connection through intergenerational and community activities
- increase knowledge around preventive health including nutritional needs, chronic diseases and healthy behaviours, particularly from aged 45
- address social and commercial determinants of health including housing and cost of living
- better support parents and families to support healthy child development.

Participants also provided feedback that actions should be informed by and address the needs of priority populations including:

- people living with disability
- older community members.

"Include universal design into home developments so that people can age safely in their own homes - and provides access for people to visit."

Workshop 5 – Culturally and linguistically diverse community members

This workshop was held on 20 and included community members and representatives from HelpingACT, Capital Region Community Services and Canberra Multicultural Forum Inc.

Key themes heard from participants throughout the workshop included the need to:

- improve cultural safety and accessibility of healthcare and community services for culturally and linguistically diverse community members
- improve information about how to use public transport for culturally and linguistically diverse community members
- support increased knowledge among culturally and linguistically diverse communities about availability of services and supports through tailoring information and providing it at locations people already visit
- support community champions who understand the needs of migrants and culturally and linguistically diverse communities to help connect them with supports and services
- support social connection including through community gardens and group programs.

"People from CALD communities may find it difficult to use public transport during the weekend or on public holidays if they are unable to drive or just learning to drive. They may also face difficulties in navigating public transport or fear of discrimination/racism."

"Addressing mental health stigma through working with community leaders."

Participants also provided feedback that actions should be informed by and address the needs of priority populations including:

- culturally and linguistically diverse communities
- older community members.

Workshop 6 – LGBTIQ+ community members

This workshop was held on 25 July 2023 and included representatives from the ACT Government Office of LGBTIQ+ Affairs, ACT Disability Aged and Carer Advocacy Service, ACT Health Directorate and Meridian.

Key themes heard from participants throughout the workshop included the need to:

- ensure services are culturally safe and inclusive for people identifying as LGBTIQ+, including education, healthcare and community services
- improve safety in public spaces by providing adequate lighting at night, designing inclusive facilities like changing rooms and resolving housing issues
- increase knowledge around diversity and representation through health promotion and education campaigns
- reduce stigma experienced by LGBTIQ+ groups and other priority populations, including through wording of actions
- create positive and safe opportunities for social connection for LGBTIQ+ community members including fitness groups or inclusive community events

"Representation matters - let's see diversity in what a family looks like, celebrated and thriving."

Participants also provided feedback that actions should be informed by and address the needs of priority populations including:

- LGBTIQ+ community members
- people living with disability
- culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

"Create safe spaces for recreation activities - e.g., Fund LGBTQIA+ group-based fitness opportunities or 'come and try' days across different sporting codes."

Workshop 7 – People living with disability and carers

This workshop was held online on 25 July 2023 with members of the community in attendance.

Key themes heard from participants throughout the workshop included the need to:

- ensure health and community services meet the needs and demands of users, particularly those living with disability and carers
- increase accessibility of healthy living infrastructure in the community including public toilets, playgrounds and paths, including consideration for people with sensory sensitivities
- promote increased knowledge about how to increase accessibility for people living with disability in healthcare, school and community settings
- include targeted actions to support people living with disability and carers
- address physical barriers to inclusion in the community by using universal design
- provide support for parents and families to support healthy child development

“If talking about disability, it is not recognised at all. It isn't acknowledged throughout the actions.”

Participants also provided feedback that actions should be informed by and address the needs of priority populations including:

- people living with disability and carers
- children and young people
- culturally and linguistically diverse communities
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- older community members.

“A lot of disabilities are hidden, there should be inclusion for people without them having to openly disclose needs.”

Workshop 8 – Young people

This workshop was held on 27 July 2023 with members of the community and a representative from Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth.

Key themes heard from participants throughout the workshop included the need to:

- increase knowledge among young people about the importance of preventive health early in life, including available services and supports
- address challenges related to cost-of-living and housing stability
- improve social connectivity among young people and between generations through community initiatives such as sports, cooking classes and community spaces
- improve local infrastructure to support healthy living including bike paths and public transport
- reduce harm and addiction relating to e-cigarettes, tobacco, alcohol and other drugs
- focus on supporting healthy early development of children including by addressing literacy and numeracy and healthy eating habits.

“Voices of young people report main barriers to accessing health services - cost, opening hours incompatible with school, stigma and embarrassment, not knowing how to navigate health services.”

Participants also provided feedback that actions should be informed by and address the needs of priority populations including:

- culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

“College experience is not the same without alcohol, event revolve around alcohol. Need to provide meaningful experiences that aren't alcohol based.”

Workshop with Australian National University (ANU)

This workshop was held on 10 August 2023. The aim of the workshop was to receive expert advice and commentary on the draft actions. We asked participants the following questions:

1. Does the scholarly literature provide a compelling case for additional actions?
2. Are any of the actions NOT supported by the scholarly literature?
3. Two priorities for the preventive health plan are health equity and priority groups. Based on your expertise would you recommend any of the actions over others, based on their likelihood to improve health equity (consider actions provided and add additional if required)?

All draft actions were supported and additional actions or focus areas were offered across each priority area including:

- modifying risky behaviours to:
 - include e-cigarette use especially in young people and women
 - split the objective into a) prevention and b) detection/access to treatment
 - increase focus on behaviour change.
- modifying promoting healthy ageing to:
 - adopt a life course approach to healthy ageing, not just starting at 45 plus
 - focus on social engagement particularly for more vulnerable adults
 - explore and act on evidence for social isolation among migrant populations
 - support social connections and active engagement with diverse groups
 - address loneliness and isolation especially resulting from increased use of technology
 - address social fragmentation and mental health of the elderly.
- modifying enabling physical activity to:
 - include more showers and facilities in workplaces
 - acknowledge that e-scooters may reduce physical activity and walking
 - deliver more subsidised sporting and active recreation facilities.

Actions seen as addressing equity focused on:

- targeting priority groups such as migrants and refugees
- ensuring a gender-based lens is applied
- adopting codesign and consultative approaches to programs/initiatives
- taking a rights-based approach to healthy food and food systems.

The key issues raised relating to how we can strengthen equity in the plan included the need to:

- increase regulation to ban smoking and e-cigarette use in all public places and public transport to change behaviour
- apply community consultation and co-design principles to healthy ageing and tap into wisdom
- consider cost and availability of and support for healthy foods and community markets
- take a rights-based approach to healthy food
- adopt a family centred approach to supporting children and families
- support fathers
- provide targeted support for refugee families
- consider gendered time constraints against participating in physical activity
- consider child support and reduce caring responsibilities so people especially women have more time for physical activity

Additional overarching comments included the need for:

- investment in research, monitoring and evaluation

- judicious focus on measurable impact and feasibility
- consideration of mental health as a determinant and outcome of chronic disease
- awareness that one healthy food approach does not fit all ages
- a balance between climate and physical activity (i.e., e-scooters).

Appendix 3 : Written submissions

We received a total of 31 written submissions (see Attachment 1).

The key themes that emerged from the submissions included the need to:

- address social and commercial determinants of health
- improve health literacy through education and health promotion
- address environmental impacts on health including air quality
- improve health and community service delivery, integration, accessibility, affordability and availability
- increase investment in and support for community organisations and initiatives
- increase engagement and co-design with community sector
- provide more support for mental health
- improve clarity and specificity of actions within the plan
- reduce harms of e-cigarettes through further regulation, education and cessation support.

22 submissions spoke to the importance of addressing inequities to improve health outcomes. Many submissions also identified the need to do more for priority populations including:

- people living with disability
- carers
- older Canberrans
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- children and young people
- LGBTIQ+
- culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

"Trauma is known to be highly correlated to chronic disease and it is known that trauma is part of the experience of many in the LGBTIQ+ community. It is therefore important to ensure that in diagnosing, treating and managing chronic disease a trauma informed and trauma inclusive practice is embedded."

"There is a missed opportunity in the Action Plan for actions which support older people and people with disabilities to navigate and use the systems which are gateways to care packages, and manage and support their own health, including their chronic conditions."

"Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples require culturally appropriate supports that recognises the connection between physical health, mental health, spiritual needs and social and emotional wellbeing."

"Include people with disability, not just in the preamble, but consider them more broadly within the action plan, highlighting opportunities for improving access, choice, and control, particularly in terms of preventive health actions, and navigating public spaces, and health care services and infrastructures."

"The community sector has noted particular vulnerabilities for already marginalised cohorts, particularly people experiencing poverty, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples and people with disability. Cohorts at a higher risk of chronic disease require specialised supports and preventative health strategies including dedicated funding for expert community organisations."

"Multicultural organisations from the Chronic Conditions Network have agreed that the availability, uptake, and effectiveness of interpreter services, and translation of resources, in the health care system could be improved."

Appendix 4: Sense-making workshop

A sense-making workshop was held at the conclusion of the consultation period. The workshop's purpose was to bring together key preventive health partners to collectively analyse, make sense of the consultation feedback and develop key recommendations to be considered for the next action plan.

A total of 19 participants attended from across ACT Government directorates, peak body organisations, community sector organisations and research institutions.

Key themes and recommendations discussed during the sense-making workshop included:

- the action plan should:
 - contain actions that are specific, strengths-based and tailored to community needs
 - seek to engage with communities that experience higher levels of vulnerability and need
 - address the identified gaps between social connectedness, infrastructure and government services
 - focus on understanding the barriers that are currently impeding access to services and addressing these in future plans
- cross-government collaboration and intersectionality of policies and programs is needed including:
 - an effective, collaborative whole of government approach as it aligns with a range of existing key government strategic plans and priorities
 - improved communication and information sharing across directorates to leverage existing programs and services
 - exploring joint business cases to deliver efficiencies in implementing actions.
 - Increased clarity around how actions in the plan would be delivered in alignment with strategies and policies of the relevant directorates responsible for delivering them
- focus on monitoring and ongoing evaluation is needed including:
 - a clear set of desired shared outcomes to assist all stakeholders to identify if their programs and initiatives are contributing to improvements in preventive health
 - having health outcomes measures in other directorates (e.g., wellbeing indicators) given the intersections of delivery across the directorates
- the role of the community sector and academic institutions needs to be more visible throughout the action plan
- priority groups should be a focus of the plan noting that:
 - there needs to be research into how to re-engage with harder to reach population groups
 - participants wanted children to be engaged in the action plan development process, as well as communities within identified priority groups to be targeted with tailored and culturally appropriate information, engagement, and education
 - other groups as populations of need and potential vulnerability were noted throughout the consultation workshops.

"Ensure there is explicit alignment with national and local strategic frameworks (e.g., Closing the Gap and the National Preventive Health Strategy)."

"The community sees health as a result of a complete system of cross-government action with many issues in the plan outside of the Health Directorate's role"

"Focus on monitoring and ongoing evaluation."

"To ensure equity, explore ways to meaningfully engage with groups/demographics who don't/haven't traditionally engaged with government processes (consultation/participation)."

"CALD communities and LGBTIQA+ communities are not one community there are communities within communities and no single segment can speak on behalf of all."

ACT Health Directorate
2023

