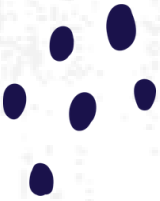




# **Mental Illness Education ACT**

## **2026 - 2027**

### **Pre-Budget Submission**



## PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION SUMMARY: MIEACT

For more than 25 years, Mental Illness Education ACT (MIEACT) has been a leader in advancing mental health prevention and wellbeing across Canberra. Building on this legacy, MIEACT developed the DoNOHarm Communication Training, an evidence-informed framework that empowers leaders to create psychologically safe workplaces and shapes all programs and the foundation of MIEACT. This dedicated program equips ACT Public Service executives and staff with the skills to reduce psychosocial risks, foster supportive work environments, and champion mental health as a core community priority.

As the exclusive provider of DoNOHarm training, MIEACT delivers targeted solutions focused training on building resilient leadership within the ACT Public Service. By prioritizing upstream prevention and communication strategies, the training aligns with the ACT's outcomes-based commissioning approach, resulting in measurable improvements in psychological safety, stigma reduction, and timely access to support for staff across all levels.

In 2025, MIEACT expanded the reach of DoNOHarm, engaging leaders and public servants. This investment is directed by clear outcomes: enhanced mental health knowledge, increased confidence to identify and respond to distress, and strengthened pathways to early support. By equipping leaders with practical tools to foster psychologically safe teams, DoNOHarm helps prevent escalation of mental health needs and supports the ACT Government's commitment to safeguarding its workforce.

The lived experience workforce at MIEACT further reinforces the effectiveness of DoNOHarm training. By sharing authentic, recovery-focused stories, over 225 in 2025 alone, these educators drive attitudinal change and promote positive help-seeking within workplaces, supporting the ACT's strategic outcomes and reducing stigma.

Collectively, DoNOHarm initiatives strengthen protective factors, expand early intervention, and alleviate demand on downstream clinical services. Yet, the wellbeing of leaders and public servants is essential to Canberra's resilience. MIEACT calls for ACT Government investment to scale DoNOHarm Communication Training, ensuring every leader is equipped to build robust, psychologically safe workplaces and reduce psychosocial risks across the ACT Public Service.

Now is the time for action. By partnering with MIEACT to expand DoNOHarm training, the ACT Government can secure a stronger, healthier, and more resilient workforce, protecting mental health wherever people work, live, and learn.

Submission by:

Sheryle Moon | MIEACT President  
sheryle.moon@gmail.com | 0419 543 837

Prudence Slaughter | CEO, MIEACT  
Prudence.Slaughter@mieact.org.au | 0421 175 645

## SUMMARY OF MIEACT RECOMMENDATION

*Invest in empowering ACT Public Service leaders to create psychologically safe, resilient workplaces through DoNOHarm training.*

**That the ACT Government invests in DoNOHarm framework and training for ACT Public Service (ACTPS) Executive Staff. This investment will equip leaders with the skills and confidence to foster psychologically safe workplaces, help prevent psychosocial harm, and safeguard employees experiencing mental health conditions from stigma and discrimination.**

### **DoNOHarm: Empowering leaders with the skills and confidence to create psychologically safe workplaces.**

For decades, MIEACT has empowered its lived experience educators to share personal journeys with mental illness, creating powerful impact in schools and the broader community. In 2011, this commitment culminated in the development of the DoNOHarm Framework, an innovative, evidence-informed model that has set new standards for effective, safe workplace communication. Designed to empower safe conversations around mental health and wellbeing, the Framework has evolved into a universal resource now adopted by executives, educators, frontline managers, government agencies, HR professionals, and entire communities.

Investing in DoNOHarm training for ACT Public Service executive staff will deliver direct, tangible benefits. The Framework establishes a benchmark for effective workplace communication, equipping leaders with the skills to foster psychologically safe environments and drive meaningful engagement. By prioritising clear, empathetic communication, it empowers leaders to cultivate a culture that supports mental health and maximizes positive outcomes across teams. Ultimately, this investment will strengthen the ACT Public Service’s capacity, resilience, and reputation as a leader in workplace mental health.

By providing DoNOHarm communication training, the ACT Government will equip its leaders with practical, actionable tools to foster safe, open conversations around mental health. This investment will empower executive staff to establish and maintain supportive work environments, directly inform psychosocial safety practices, and implement robust risk mitigation strategies. The results are measurable: organisations see reduced staff turnover, increased engagement, and improved productivity. Evidence demonstrates that for every \$1 invested in mental health programs, there is a return of up to \$15<sup>1</sup>, driven by fewer workplace injuries, reduced absenteeism<sup>2</sup>, and substantial cost avoidance for government through early intervention and prevention.

<sup>1</sup> ReturnToWorkSA, Mentally healthy workplaces, viewed 9 February 2026 via <<https://www.rtwsa.com/insurance/injury-prevention/mentally-healthy-workplaces>>.

<sup>2</sup> Chandler Macleod, *The importance of identifying and mitigating workplace psychosocial hazards to foster psychological safety*, 11 October 2024, viewed 9 February 2026 via <<https://www.chandlermacleod.com/the-importance-of-identifying-and-mitigating-workplace-psychosocial-hazards-to-foster-psychological-safety>>.

Independent research, including a University of Canberra review, has validated the effectiveness of the DoNOHarm Framework<sup>3</sup>. The findings confirm that the principles and practices underpinning DoNOHarm are strongly evidence-based, protecting both lived experience sharers and their audiences. This robust foundation gives the ACT Government confidence that investing in DoNOHarm is not only safe but also highly effective in practice.

Leading workplaces including the Department of Health and Aged Care, Canberra Foundations Collaborative, Snow Foundation, Australian Institute of Project Management, and Stride Mental Health, are already implementing DoNOHarm training in 2026 to strengthen their teams. These organisations are supporting diverse groups, from peer workers and advocates to frontline staff and leaders, all benefiting from enhanced communication, reduced risks, and more supportive workplace cultures.

In summary, an investment in DoNOHarm training for executive staff is a strategic, cost-effective decision that will yield significant returns for the ACT Government. It will advance psychological safety, improve staff engagement and retention, and deliver substantial cost savings through reduced psychosocial harm and improved organisational performance. This is a timely opportunity for the ACT Government to lead, by example, building a resilient and healthy public service.

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<sup>3</sup> Rickwood, D., Thomas, K., Brown, P., Prowse, H. International Journal of Mental Health Promotion 2021: *Mental illness education through stories of lived experience: validation review of the donoharm framework* accessed 18 February 2025 via: <<https://researchprofiles.canberra.edu.au/en/publications/mental-illness-education-through-stories-of-lived-experience-vali>>

## DoNOHarm training for ACTPS Executive Staff

In alignment with both the ACTPS Mental Wellbeing Policy and the broader policy position to upskill workers across public health services in understanding the impact of trauma on people's lives, including their mental health, offering this training to ACTPS Executive Staff through online and face-to-face workshops would demonstrate a strong commitment to the Government's focus on mental wellbeing, as well as the importance and significant value of lived experience. By providing this training, the ACT Government would further elevate the voices of people with lived experience and foster a workplace culture that supports psychological safety and wellbeing for all staff.

Investing in DoNOHarm training would:

- Guide leaders in establishing psycho-socially safe practices, conducting thorough risk assessments, and implementing robust risk mitigation strategies when engaging individuals with lived experience.
- Foster an inclusive and supportive workplace environment by promoting a shared understanding and use of best practice language, ensuring people with lived experience feel valued and respected.
- Empower people with lived experience, including advocates, leaders, employees, and volunteers, to share their stories and discuss mental health and adversity in a safe, effective, and supportive manner.
- Drive the development of positive, empathetic workplace cultures by transforming organisational attitudes and deepening collective understanding of lived experience.
- Shape and inform policies, procedures, and practices enable Lived Experience workers to safely leverage their experiences, benefiting themselves, their customers, and the broader public service.

# PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION: INVESTMENT IN DONOHARM TRAINING FOR ACTPS EXECUTIVE STAFF

MIEACT submits this pre-budget request to allocate annual program funding at a discounted rate for the DoNOHarm Training initiative. The State of the Service Report 2023–24 indicates that the ACT Public Service comprises 357 executive leadership roles. Investing in comprehensive DoNOHarm Training for ACTPS Executive Staff will support ongoing professional development and foster a safer workplace environment.

Activity	Annual Program Cost
<b>15 Face-to-face DoNOHarm training sessions</b>	30,000
<b>15 Online DoNOHarm training sessions</b>	30,000
<b>Administration and project expenses</b>	8,250
<b>Total Budget Submission</b>	<b>\$68, 250</b>

## Conclusion

MIEACT urges the ACT Government to invest in the delivery of DoNOHarm Communication Training for ACT Public Service Executive Staff as a targeted, upstream investment in psychologically safe leadership. This funding will equip senior leaders with the capability to reduce psychosocial risk, model safe communication, and ensure the ethical and effective engagement of lived experience across government.

We respectfully request that the ACT Government commit funding in the 2026–27 ACT Budget to embed DoNOHarm training as a core leadership capability within the ACTPS. MIEACT stands ready to partner with the ACT Government to deliver this program at scale and to support implementation from the first year of funding.

Submission by:

Sheryle Moon | MIEACT President  
sheryle.moon@gmail.com | 0419 543 837

Prudence Slaughter | CEO, MIEACT  
Prudence.Slaughter@mieact.org.au | 0421 175 645

ACT Government, State of the Service Report 2023–24, ACT Government, Canberra, 2024, viewed 9 February 2026, <[https://www.act.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0003/2617941/State-of-the-Service-Report-2023-24.pdf](https://www.act.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/2617941/State-of-the-Service-Report-2023-24.pdf)>



MIEACT acknowledges Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander peoples continuing connection to Country and their ongoing contribution to our community.



02 6257 1195  
admin@mieact.org.au  
www.mieact.org.au

Level 1, Room 10  
The Griffin Centre  
20 Genge Street  
Canberra, ACT 2601

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