



Social Impact Framework

Purpose of this Framework

This framework provides the conceptual foundation for the Social Impact Self-Assessment Tool used by the Network. It articulates how the Network understands social impact as a consumer-led peak body and explains the logic that connects activities, influence, and long-term change.

The framework supports governance oversight, strategic planning, outcomes monitoring, and external accountability, while remaining proportionate to the Network's size, role and advocacy mandate.

Guiding Principles

- **Consumer-led and rights-based:** Impact is defined primarily by consumers and grounded in human rights.
- **Systemic focus:** The Network's impact is primarily indirect, operating through influence on systems rather than service delivery.
- **Long-term change:** Impact often emerges over time and may not be immediately attributable.
- **Power and equity:** Impact includes shifts in power, voice, and inclusion, not only policy or program outcomes.
- **Integrity and independence:** Credibility and trust are core impact enablers, not by-products.
- **Learning-oriented:** Reflection, adaptation, and learning are integral to sustaining impact.

How the Network Creates Impact (Narrative Theory of Change)

The Network creates social impact by representing and amplifying the collective voice of mental health consumers in the ACT. Through independent, consumer-led advocacy, relationship-based influence, and the development of

consumer leadership, the Network seeks to shift policies, systems, cultures and power structures that affect people with lived experience.

Rather than delivering direct services, the Network influences decision-makers, institutions and system norms. Its impact is therefore visible in changes to how systems behave, whose voices are heard, and how rights, dignity and safety are upheld for consumers over time.

Levels of Impact

- **Inputs and enablers:** governance arrangements, lived experience leadership, independence, relationships and capability.
- **Activities:** advocacy, representation, policy input, engagement, education and collaboration.
- **Immediate outcomes:** increased visibility of consumer perspectives, improved decision-maker awareness, strengthened consumer confidence and leadership.
- **Intermediate outcomes:** changes to policies, practices, language, priorities or resourcing decisions.
- **Long-term impact:** fairer, safer, more inclusive mental health systems where consumer rights and voice are embedded.

Impact Domains

The social impact self-assessment tool is structured around seven domains. These domains reflect areas where a consumer-led peak organisation can reasonably expect to generate and evidence impact.

- Consumer voice and representation
- Systemic influence and advocacy
- Change in systems, culture and power
- Consumer leadership and capability
- Equity, inclusion and diversity
- Organisational integrity and independence
- Learning, adaptation and sustainability

Understanding Evidence of Impact

Evidence of impact for the Network may be qualitative, narrative and relational, as well as quantitative. Examples include policy influence, formal recognition of consumer perspectives, invitations to contribute to decision-making, changes in language or practice, consumer feedback and reflective governance records.

The framework recognises that contribution, rather than attribution, is often the most realistic and ethical way to describe impact in systemic advocacy contexts.

Role of the Board

The Board is responsible for stewarding the Network's social impact. This includes:

- testing whether the Network's activities align with its purpose and values
- assessing whether advocacy priorities reflect consumer need
- monitoring impact across the seven domains
- using reflection to guide strategic choices and risk management
- ensuring the Network maintains independence and legitimacy.

Relationship to the Self-Assessment Tool

This framework underpins the Social Impact Self-Assessment Tool by providing a shared understanding of what impact means for the Network and how it can be recognised. The self-assessment translates this framework into structured reflection questions and maturity indicators that can be revisited over time.

Use and Adaptation

This framework may be reviewed and refined as the Network evolves, including during strategic planning cycles or in response to changes in the mental health system. It is intended to remain practical, values-driven and consumer-defined.