



**WAAMH**

Western Australian Association  
for Mental Health

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**MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Increasing beds only a short term solution to mental health issues**

THE peak body for mental health in the State, the Western Australian Association for Mental Health (WAAMH) has responded to concerns raised about the number of hospital beds available for people presenting with serious mental health issues in emergency departments.

WAAMH president Alison Xamon recognised emergency response departments were stretched and feeling high levels of pressure, however simply increasing bed numbers was not the only solution, nor in the long term, the highest priority.

“Although, of course there is a need for more beds for people in deep crisis, it really isn’t the highest level of where investment is needed for mental health reform,” Ms Xamon said.

“The primary focus needs to be on early intervention, prevention and community education. This is the big picture for mental health and where the bulk of financial resources need to be directed.”

“The greatest urgency is to ensure we prevent mental health issues escalating to the point where they require emergency department intervention.

“Investment in community mental health services, suicide prevention initiatives, and mental health education in primary settings, such as schools and workplaces, are paramount.”

To support these points, key findings outlined in the recommendations by Professor Bryant Stokes included the need for more recovery programs and non-government organisation services to be established.

The Stokes Review said non-government organisations provided very satisfactory community services, including personal helpers and mentoring programs, carer education aimed at broadening carers’ capacity to manage patient behaviour in-home, community support groups, help with drug abuse, employment services, and prevention and health promotion activities.

Stokes also recommended non-specialists in mental health provide development opportunities that promote mental health and wellbeing, initiate prevention strategies, identify mental health problems early and refer children for assessment.

“WAAMH is very hopeful that the 10 Year Services Plan, due to be announced anytime now, will address these broader concerns, as outlined in the Stokes Review,” Ms Xamon said. “Certainly everyone can agree that serious investment in mental health is long overdue.”

#### **About WAAMH**

The Western Australian Association for Mental Health is the peak body representing the community-managed mental health sector in WA. Through our members, our vision is to lead the way in supporting and promoting the human rights of people with mental illness and their families and carers, with inclusive, well-governed community-based services focused on recovery. More at <http://www.waamh.org.au>

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