

MEDIA RELEASE

15 May 2016

Ten Year Mental Health Services Plan Derailed by NGO Cuts in Budget

WESTERN Australia's peak body for mental health, the WA Association for Mental Health (WAAMH), believes the Ten Year Mental Health Services Plan has been derailed by savage cuts to the most under-resourced segment of the WA's mental health system following the release of the state budget this week.

The ten-year plan identified that WA spent too high a proportion of its mental health expenditure on hospital based services and committed to shifting the priority to prevention and keeping people connected and closer to home. Community support services were identified as the most under-resourced segment of WA's mental health system, with just 20 percent of demand for these services being met in 2014.

But Thursday's state budget detailed a \$6 million cut to community support services in 2016/2017 and a 5 percent cut over the forward estimates, the result of the Agency Expenditure Review process that required the Mental Health Commission to find \$8 million per annum in savings from outside the public mental health system.

WAAMH's Chief Executive Officer Rod Astbury said community support services kept people living well in the community by connecting them to housing, education, employment and training, and by providing personalised support, family and carer support, counselling, advocacy, mutual support and self-help.

"Woefully inadequate community support services result in people being discharged from hospital to unsupported and unstable environments such as back-packer hostels," Mr Astbury said. "This not only increases the likelihood that their acute mental health issue will recur, bringing them back into the hospital system, but also that they will be at risk of suicide, experience homelessness, drug and alcohol problems and come into contact with the justice system," Mr Astbury said.

The planned Goldfields sub-acute service has been cut and the Assertive Community Intervention Initiative, which provides critical support to families whose children experience serious mental illness, has not been provided for in the state budget after the commonwealth announced it will withdraw its share of funding for the initiative on 30 June 2016.

The budget provides for hospital and community treatment services to grow in line with population and CPI; \$51m (6.7 percent) over four years. Over the same period, investment in community accommodation and community support services will grow by just \$2.7m or 2.7 percent and prevention services are forecast for a \$6.5m cut in 2019/2020.

Peak body representing the community-based mental health sector in WA.
2 Delhi Street, West Perth WA 6005 • T: (61) 08 9420 7277
• E: info@waamh.org.au • W: www.waamh.org.au • ABN: 15 165 640 637

Follow us:



The future set out in the budget is one in which the public mental health system will expand in response to the increased demand driven by population growth but community services will not expand to keep pace, which will compound the problems the plan accurately identified.

“The practical impact of these cuts was identified by the Stokes Review into post-discharge suicides in WA which found that a common cause of these suicides were people being discharged from acute services without adequate support,” Mr Astbury said.

“The Ten Year Plan was developed in broad consultation with mental health stakeholders and has strong support. In the lead up to the state election in 2017 the sector will be asking the parties contesting the election what they will be doing to get the plan on track.”

About WAAMH

The Western Australian Association for Mental Health (WAAMH) was incorporated in 1966 and is the peak body representing WA’s community-managed mental health sector and around 100 organisational and individual members. Our vision is that as a human right, every one of us who experiences mental health issues has the resources and support needed to recover, lead a good life and contribute as active citizens. WAAMH advocates for effective public policy on mental health issues, delivers workforce training and sector development, and promotes positive mental health and wellbeing. In 2016, WAAMH is celebrating 50 years of involvement in the community mental health sector.

Media Contacts

Rod Astbury

CEO

WA Association for Mental Health

T:08 6246 300 M:0407 386 238

rastbury@waamh.org.au

Sarah Cooper

Public Relations

WA Association for Mental Health

T: 08 6243 000 M: 0416 228 722

Scooper@waamh.org.au

Peak body representing the community-based mental health sector in WA.

2 Delhi Street, West Perth WA 6005 • T: (61) 08 9420 7277

• E: info@waamh.org.au • W: www.waamh.org.au • ABN: 15 165 640 637

Follow us:

