



WAAMH

Western Australian Association
for Mental Health

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MEDIA RELEASE

Community mental health services vital to ease hospital pressures

THE peak body for the community mental health sector welcomes the State Government's acknowledgement of the correlation between community services and its impact on acute demand, after stating on any given day nearly a third of inpatients occupying a mental health hospital bed are unable to be discharged because there are not enough supported accommodation or suitable mental health services based in the community.

This figure was recently highlighted in the State Government's *WA State Priorities: Mental Health and Other Drugs Services 2020-2024* report released yesterday, which further emphasised the aims of WA's ten-year plan to balance the system between hospital and community-based mental health services.

In light of this, the Western Australian Association for Mental Health (WAAMH) now calls on the McGowan Government to include a provision in the upcoming May Budget for immediate funding into supported accommodation as a first step to support people with serious mental health issues to live well in the community.

"We know if the Government invested more in community-based mental health support services, it would free up around 150 mental health hospital beds," WAAMH chief executive officer Taryn Harvey said.

"The ten-year plan stated this and we are pleased the Government has released its priorities which reinforces it. The time to act is now – we are five years into the plan and have waited long enough."

Emerging from the Government's report, this need was affirmed in the following excerpt (on page 5):

"Government funding and available services are currently skewed towards costly, acute care, rather than more inexpensive support services in the community."

"As a result, some people are in hospitals and are attending emergency departments, when they don't need to be there. 27% of mental health hospital beds are currently filled with people who could be discharged into community services, if they were available."

"Without investment in a range of accommodation options outside of hospitals, the system will continue to be blocked at an unacceptably high rate."

Ms Harvey said while the Minister had a plan for balancing the mental health sector into more community-based support - which not only transitioned people out of hospital but prevented readmission -the funding didn't match the intent.

"We all know community mental health supports keep people living well and connected to their families and friends in their communities, while lowering their reliance on bed-based hospital services," she said.

"WAAMH will be raising this as an election priority over the next twelve months as we bring people with lived experience, their families, friends and carers together across the State to call for increased funding into mental health community supports and prevention services to finally realise WA's bipartisan reform vision for mental health."

Fast Facts

- Of the 656 mental health inpatients occupying a bed at the time of the Inpatient Snapshot Data detailed in the report, 178 (27%) were deemed unable to be discharged because of a lack of suitable community-based accommodation and/or mental health support services. This included:

- 147 (22.4%) inpatients reported as requiring community-based accommodation with mental health support services.
- 12 (1.8%) inpatients reported as requiring accommodation only, without mental health support services.
- 19 (2.9%) inpatients reported as requiring community-based mental health care, treatment or rehabilitation, but no accommodation.

- The Government's own policy is to spend at least 5% of overall expenditure towards Prevention, however we are currently at 1.4%.

- Community services providing mental health supports currently receive less than 20% of what they will need by 2025 in order to adequately support the community's needs and ensure people can live quality, fulfilling lives.

Read the Government's WA State Priorities: Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drugs 2020-2024 full report here:
<https://www.mhc.wa.gov.au/media/2951/wa-state-priorities-mh-aod-2020.pdf>

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