



WAAMH

Western Australian Association
for Mental Health

MEDIA RELEASE

21 March 2019

NDIS funding extension welcome but delays still cast doubts in WA

WESTERN Australia's peak body for mental health, the Western Australian Association for Mental Health (WAAMH) welcomes today's announcement from the Federal Government to extend funding for community mental health programs, which support thousands of people with psychosocial disability, while the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is rolled-out in WA.

However, WAAMH remains deeply concerned this injection still won't tackle other serious underlying issues with the introduction of the NDIS in WA for people with psychosocial disabilities given huge delays to date, our vast geography, and the unique situation and needs of the State.

WAAMH CEO Taryn Harvey said while funding arrangements have extended support until 30 June 2020 - which was greatly appreciated providing welcome relief to help many people in need - previous experience has shown 12 months would not be long enough to roll-out such a complex reform.

"We are in the sixth year of the roll-out across Australia and we are still seeing significant problems with enabling people with psychosocial disability to get support," Ms Harvey said.

"The last quarterly report showed that 18,700 people nationally in the NDIS had psychosocial disability, representing only eight per cent."

Due to significant delays, WA is lagging behind the other states in Australia, with 7,225 people with psychosocial disability in NSW now with an NDIS plan, compared to only 696 people with psychosocial disability in WA with plans in place.

"We hope that a significant proportion of the funds will be dedicated to WA – especially to support people to transition in country areas," Ms Harvey said.

"We'll also need a minimum two-year extension to smooth the huge gap between these programs and the NDIS. We look forward to further details to identify where other additional gaps may be."

The amount of funding and the sketchy details surrounding program design are also particularly problematic given the size and remote nature of many Western Australian communities where service delivery is complex and costs are high.

"What we are seeing with the low amount of funding for these programs compared to what was previously in place as not taking into consideration the long distances and remoteness factors at all," Ms Harvey said.

"How are we going to attract specialist services and experienced staff to regional areas if we can't afford them? It appears the east has little understanding of WA's geographical and service layout."



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In WA, the community mental health programs – PiR, PHaMs, and D2DL support an estimated 3,500 - 4,000 people in WA each year but unfortunately only a fraction of these people be eligible for the NDIS. And those that are, may have to wait around 8-12 months for their plans to be in place.

Based on reports from WAAMH’s member organisations, which provide these services, less than 20% of the people that currently access these programs in WA have been accepted into the NDIS and are receiving support.

These programs still remain underfunded and, like the NDIS, only assist a small number of individuals relative to those supported through the Commonwealth programs.

“We are very concerned about the disastrous implications this could have for people living in rural and remote areas of WA, when they already face barriers to accessing support as it is,” Ms Harvey said.

“People with enduring and persistent mental health challenges often require specialised and personalised support and smooth transitions when changes occur - if this doesn’t happen it’s the most vulnerable members of our society that will suffer further.

“We are deeply concerned support gaps will result in an escalating mental health crisis and place additional pressure on our state mental health system, which is already inadequate to meet demand and to foster good outcomes for people.”



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Fact file:

- The NDIS provides psychosocial support to people with an enduring mental illness, resulting in severe functional limitation – it will only address 10% affected by severe mental illness.
- We have around 2,500 to 3000 people with mental health issues in WA who currently access Partners in Recovery, Personal Helpers and Mentors Service, Day to Day Living in the Community, and Mental Health Carer programs that still needing to transition to the NDIS, along with another 20,000 or so people with other disabilities.
- Almost 100,000 people are accessing the NDIS in NSW but only about 9000 in WA.
- Only 7% of these 9000 people in WA have been identified as having a psychosocial disability when we should be seeing about 14% of NDIS participants.
- Providers have already been working with participants for months but we have less than 20% of people transitioned to NDIS.
- Read full announcement from Minister Fletcher's office here:
<https://www.paulfletcher.com.au/media-releases/joint-media-release-morrison-government-continues-funding-to-support-people-with>

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