

Action-packed Mental Health Week starts tomorrow

MENTAL Health Week starts Saturday 8 October, and although this annual event's reach and size has grown significantly over its 49-year span, the community focus has remained the same.

There is so much to do and be part of this year.

Mental Health Week allows people to discover where to access the right support; increase their awareness and access to community mental health services; talk to mental health professionals; participate in fun activities to relax the mind, such as art, dance and sport; plus pick up fun freebies to encourage mindfulness, such as colouring in books and other resources.

WAAMH president Alison Xamon said the nature of events in Mental Health Week were accessible to people from all walks of life, and made seeking advice, resources, help and connecting with the community easier.

"Many people don't know where to begin when navigating the mental health system or looking for community supports and services," Ms Xamon said.

"Mental Health Week creates a social environment which aims to break down these walls of silence, shame and stigma around mental health issues, and reach out to people in a non-intimidating way."

This year's Mental Health Week will again feature more than 100 events and activities across the State to increase community awareness and education.

WAAMH also donated up to \$20,000 in grants to regional and Aboriginal-focused community organisations across rural WA so they can host their own events and activities to better support their local communities.

Perth's biggest mental health care units will also be visited by community not-for-profits spreading a message of hope to people who need it most.

Perth Wildcats vice-captain Greg Hire is official Ambassador

Greg Hire will play in the Mental Health Week Opening Ceremony Perth Wildcats home game on Saturday 8 October, promoting physical activity and belonging to a team as positive measures to protect our mental health.

Our ambassador will also feature at other events from 8 to 15 October, including the free, all-ages Family Fun Day at Elizabeth Quay on Sunday 9 October featuring hula hooping, yoga, netball, volleyball and giant knitting.

Theme

Act-Belong-Commit is a key theme this year and will facilitate mentally healthy activities at most events, such as the famous pledge wall which encourages people to identify and share one measure they'll take to protect their mental health going forward.

"Everyone has the ability to adopt the Act-Belong-Commit approach to suit their lifestyle and to build and maintain better mental health," Ms Xamon said. "Many of the events during Mental Health Week will provide examples of everyday activities people can undertake to maintain good mental health."

Suicide prevention, 'Together We Can Save Lives' is also a major theme of Mental Health Week 2016. WAAMH is hosting a Suicide Prevention Forum with industry leaders, including Dr Neale Fong focusing on youth initiatives; and a creative, healing workshop with James Berlyn for people touched by suicide in their own lives.

"I encourage people to get along to as many events as possible during Mental Health Week," Ms Xamon said. "There are many public and community-based services out there ready to provide support."

Minister for Mental Health The Hon Andrea Mitchell will be speaking at the Opening Ceremony Perth Wildcats game on 8 October and the Family Fun on 9 October, while you can catch Mental Health Commissioner Timothy Marney at the Closing Ceremony Stand Up! For Comedy night on 15 October.

For all Mental Health Week events on 8-15 October, go to: mhw.waamh.org.au

2016 Mental Health Week Sponsors and Supporters

- Lotterywest
- Black Swan Health
- WA Primary Health Alliance
- MercyCare
- HelpingMinds
- UnitingCare West
- Rise Network
- Mission Australia
- St Bartholomew's House
- Southern Cross Care (WA)
- Neami National
- The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists
- Anglicare WA
- Perth Theatre Trust
- ECU
- City of Perth

About WAAMH

In 2016, Western Australian Association for Mental Health (WAAMH) is celebrating 50 years of developing, promoting and representing the community mental health sector in WA. WAAMH is the peak body for community mental health and represents 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. Further info at waamh.org.au

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