

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### Mental health must retain its own ministerial portfolio

WESTERN Australia's peak body for community mental health, the WA Association for Mental Health (WAAMH) is urging the WA State Government to retain a dedicated Mental Health Minister separate from the health portfolio despite the Australian Medical Association's (AMA) push to combine the two.

WAAMH's President Alison Xamon said Mental health requires its own portfolio to ensure the state's approach to mental health comes not only from the perspective of health care, but addresses the social determinants of poor mental health including housing, employment, education, the workplace and cultural factors, and also to enable the implementation of vital, sector-wide reforms.

"The creation of a dedicated Mental Health Minister and the establishment of the Mental Health Commission in 2010 enabled the start of a long-awaited reform agenda for the sector, and this reform must continue," Ms Xamon said.

"The recent introduction of the Mental Health Act 2014 and the launch of the Western Australian Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drugs Services Plan is just the beginning of the systemic reform required to ensure meaningful and lasting changes for people with mental illness, their family and carers.

Ms Xamon said WA still had the worst legislation in Australia for the mentally impaired accused under the Criminal Law Mentally Impaired Accused Act and hoped the Act would remain on the reform agenda.

"There is still a long way to go to ensuring these legislative changes translate into actual improvements to the lives consumers, and without a dedicated Minister and the Commission, it is unlikely these reforms would be realised."

#### 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 to lead the way in supporting and promoting the human rights of people with mental illness, their families and carers, through the provision of inclusive, well-governed community-based services, focused on recovery. We advocate for effective public policy on mental health issues, deliver workforce training and sector development, and promote positive mental health and wellbeing. WAAMH is celebrating 50 years of involvement in the community mental health sector in 2016.

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