



Media Release

2 October 2018

## Mental health starts with a record number of community events

WESTERN Australia's peak body for community mental health, the Western Australian Association for Mental Health (WAAMH) - with support from the Mental Health Commission and the State Government through Lotterywest - received a record number of 130 community grant applications to run events during WA Mental Health Week this year, from 7-14 October.

It's fitting as this year is all about community and the various settings we go to every day where we can support the wellbeing of others, with the theme: 'Mental health starts where we live, learn, work and play'.

WAAMH chief executive officer Taryn Harvey said the importance of the theme's 'live' element indicated how housing, neighbourhoods and community all played vital roles in our mental health.

"How we interact, how we spend time and connect with each other in a friendly, supportive community are important protective factors for our mental health," Ms Harvey said.

"Safe homes, stable relationships, and community supports close to where we live all set a critical foundation for good mental health – unfortunately we know there is an unmet need for community mental health services, as identified in the State Government's 10 Year Mental Health Plan – so there is still much to do."

Ms Harvey said the correlation between homelessness and mental health issues were also at staggering levels, but there were some excellent community services out there demonstrating success at tackling this issue.

"We know that home is where the health is, and people can avoid hospitals, expensive acute care and ending up at Emergency Departments if they have supports in place in their homes or close to their homes," Ms Harvey said. "It also helps if people seek help early on, talk to their GP or a loved one, and can prevent issues spiralling out of control towards crisis level."

Community groups, recreation clubs, families, schools and workplaces all have a vital role to play in creating mentally healthy environments.

Mental Health Week raises awareness about where to find a range of supports people can access in their community, recognising it's a combination of factors in our lives that contributes to our overall sense of mental wellbeing.

"It's encouraging to see more people are confident speaking up about mental health issues than ever before, but WA must be prepared to meet increasing demand with the right infrastructure in place to support these people," Ms Harvey said.

"Four out five people who need community mental health support in WA are currently unable to access the support they need.

"That's why further investment in, and expansion of, community services and supports will prevent the over-reliance and unsustainable pressure on hospital settings and keeps people well, in their own homes, for longer."

Mental Health Week 2018 will again include a comprehensive and inclusive program of free community events spanning across Western Australia – with thousands of information resource packs being handed out at Perth transport hubs on World Mental Health Day (10 October) and at more than 40 regional events and around 80 Perth Metro events.



## Fact file

- Mental Health Week is being held from October 7-14, 2018
- For more events and information, visit [mhw.waamh.org.au](http://mhw.waamh.org.au)
- Events located around WA detailed here: <https://mhw.waamh.org.au/events.aspx>
- Find us on Facebook: [@mentalhealthweek](https://www.facebook.com/mentalhealthweek) Instagram: [@mentalhealthweekwa](https://www.instagram.com/mentalhealthweekwa)
- Social Media hashtag: [#mentalhealthstartshere](https://twitter.com/mentalhealthstartshere)
- In WA, Mental Health Week is presented by the Mental Health Commission in partnership with the Western Australian Association for Mental Health
- Deputy Premier; Minister for Health; Mental Health The Hon. Roger Cook, Parliamentary Secretary The Hon. Alanna Clohesy and Mental Health Commissioner Timothy Marney will also appear at various events throughout the week.
- One in five people experiences mental health issues
- Mental health issues cost the Australian economy \$60 billion per annum

## About WAAMH

The Western Australian Association for Mental Health (WAAMH) is the peak body representing WA's community mental health sector, with close to 200 organisational and individual members. WAAMH advocates for effective public policy on mental health issues, delivers workforce training and sector development, and promotes positive mental health and wellbeing. Further information at: [waamh.org.au](http://waamh.org.au)

## Media contacts

To organise an interview with Taryn Harvey regarding the state of mental health in general in WA or the theme and activities relating to Mental Health Week this year, please contact us:

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