



**WAAMH**

Western Australian Association  
for Mental Health

**MEDIA RELEASE**

**16 April 2019**

### **National report exposes further holes in NDIS transition for Western Australia**

THE Western Australian Association for Mental Health (WAAMH) has raised concerns based on report findings released today by The University of Sydney and Community Mental Health Australia showing a significant inadequacy of support for thousands of people living with serious mental illness, outside of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), when three Commonwealth-funded mental health programs cease in 2020.

The report titled, *Commonwealth Mental Health Programs Monitoring Project: Tracking transitions of people from Partners in Recovery, Personal Helpers and Mentors and Day-to-Day Living into the NDIS*, demonstrated that only 50% of the 8162 people currently accessing these programs had applied for the NDIS and even more worryingly, only half of those who had applied were deemed eligible to access the scheme.

Despite the Federal Government's recent announcement to extend funding of these programs until June next year, while the NDIS is rolled-out, this report has reinforced that due to major delays, many people will not be transitioned to the scheme in time, if at all, leaving a life-altering gap in the support structures in place. This is particularly the case in WA where relatively few people have had the chance to apply and gain the certainty that their support needs will be met.

WAAMH chief executive officer Taryn Harvey said the report underscored substantial concerns people with a psychosocial disability faced with the NDIS, including a higher than expected rate of people who are deemed ineligible.

"It's incredibly important that West Australians living with severe and persistent mental health challenges, together with their families, aren't losing the level of supports they had been receiving prior to the NDIS," Ms Harvey said.

"Is it fair and reasonable to expect people to go through a complicated and arduous process to keep getting what they already have?"

"The application process continues to present hurdles for people with psychosocial disability - surely there is a better way to minimise any distress for people while their applications are being assessed - particularly if it is going to take months and potentially more than a year.

"The Government must act in the best interests of these people in the current mental health programs and take note of the transition rates and current challenges, which will be vital to ensuring the NDIS roll-out leaves no one behind."



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The University of Sydney project lead Dr Nicola Hancock said the report presented a large set of national data that evidences the barriers people living with mental illness are experiencing as they apply to transition into the NDIS.

“The report highlights a very real risk that many people with serious mental illness will lose much needed supports when current Commonwealth programs close in June next year to fund the NDIS,” Dr Hancock said.

The nationwide picture shows only 25% of currently active PIR, D2DL and PHaMs clients are now supported through the NDIS - 75% are not. While the statistics provided a staggering snapshot nationally, at a local level, it appears WA is actually tracking even worse.

In WA the rate is worse due to delays with the roll-out causing an impending crisis.

Less than 50% of PiR’s clients in WA have applied for the NDIS, compared to 84% of clients who have applied nationally.

Unless WA lifts its NDIS application and approval rating, vulnerable people won’t be able to access their supports in time or at least determine what options they can depend on should they be found ineligible.

The report also showed that of the 86 PHaMS consumers who had applied for the NDIS in WA, only 13% had been found eligible, while 35% were found to be ineligible, and 52% were still awaiting a decision.

This contrasts to the 980 people who had applied from PHaMS nationally, of which 30% were found to be eligible, 38% were ineligible, and only a further 30% were awaiting a decision.

Ms Harvey said unless both funding for these programs was immediately extended by another one to two years, and plan approvals increased, WA would still be in the same position it was now - with a large proportion of people still pending, not yet knowing whether they’ll have supports through the NDIS, and therefore at risk of losing crucial support.

“The recently announced funding injection in March will not be enough to address this crisis,” Ms Harvey said. “This report highlights the need for prompt further action.”

“Our call for longer funding was heeded by a recent Parliamentary committee, however we are yet to see Federal Labor’s position on this issue, and will continue to push for a two to three-year commitment in response to the growing crisis in WA.”

### Fact file:

- 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.
- In WA, community mental health programs – Partners in Recovery (PiR), Personal Helpers and Mentors PHaMS), and Day-to-Day Living (D2DL) support an estimated 3500 - 4000 people each year but unfortunately only a fraction of them will be eligible for the NDIS. And those who are, may have to wait around 8-12 months for their plans to be in place.
- Support gaps will result in an escalating mental health crisis and place additional pressure on WA's mental health system, which is already inadequate to meet demand and foster good outcomes.
- 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.
- Almost 100,000 people are accessing the NDIS in NSW compared to 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.
- Read full report from Community Mental Health Australia and The University of Sydney here: <https://cmha.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/CMHA-and-University-of-Sydney-NDIS-Tracking-Transitions-Phase-2-Report-version-3.pdf>

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### Reporting on mental health in the media:

**Please include the following crisis support services for any story regarding mental health or suicide:**

Lifeline  
13 11 14

<http://lifeline.org.au>

Suicide Call Back Service  
1300 659 467

<http://suicidecallbackservice.org.au>

**More information on safely reporting on mental illness or suicide can be found at:** <https://mindframe.org.au/>