



MEDIA RELEASE

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New polling shows support for mental health prevention not hospitals

EIGHTY-FIVE per cent of Western Australian voters want the major parties to increase investment in mental health programs that reduce pressure on ambulance calls outs and emergency department presentations, according to new polling released today.

The research conducted by Painted Dog for the WA Association for Mental Health (WAAMH) also found that 83 per cent of people want alternatives to hospital for their mental health distress and 75 per cent of people agree that the government needs to increase investment in community support programs which help people to live well at home and out of hospital.

The polling data also showed 77 per cent of people believe the COVID pandemic has made the issue of mental health worse in WA.

WAAMH CEO Taryn Harvey said the figures showed how the current Labor Government must do more to listen to the people who access mental health services in Western Australia, who do not want hospital emergency department to be their first port of call for care.

“We have heard consistently from the Labor Premier Mark McGowan that mental health presentations are contributing to ambulance ramping, so the best solution for that is to invest in the kinds of programs that keep people away from emergency departments, not drive them there,” Ms Harvey said.

“The simple fact of the matter is that people don’t want to go to hospital and this polling we have released proves that. It is now up to the WA Labor Government to invest in mental health prevention and community support and all political parties to put pressure on the government to make sure they do.

“Mental health is shaping up to be a contest of ideas this State election, where we now have two of the major parties already release their mental health election commitments in line with the ten-year plan and one that doesn’t.”

Yesterday, the WA Labor Government announced its mental health election commitments, which remain treatment-focused, and lacking in crucial community support and preventative mental health programs which keep people well and out of hospital. Instead, it continued to drive people to the acute end of care.

WAAMH will be releasing an election scorecard next week assessing each party’s mental health policies in line with the Better Choices, Better lives, ten year plan for mental health and alcohol and other drugs 2015-2015.



Full list of polling statistics on behalf of Painted Dog research for WAAMH:

1. When asked to what extent do people agree or disagree with the following statement: The government needs to increase investment in community support programs that provide people with mental health support to live well in the community.

- Overall an average of 75% of survey participants agreed with the statement.

Of all the people surveyed:

- 78% of females agreed
- 72% of males agreed
- 79% of people aged over 55 agreed
- 81% of people aged 60-69 years agreed
- 80% of young families agreed
- 80% of mature families agreed
- 81% of people who live Inner City agreed
- 91% of people who live in the Western Suburbs agreed
- 76% of people who live in the North East Metro area agreed
- 72% of people who live in the South East Metro area agreed
- 78% of people who live in the South West Metro area agreed.

2. To what extent would you support or oppose a political party that increased investment in mental health support programs and initiatives focused on:

• **Offering an effective alternative to hospitals**

- Overall an average of 83% of people would support a party which offered this.
- 85% of female would support
- 86% of 35-54 years olds would support
- 86% of young and mature families would support

• **Preventing people from developing a mental health issue**

- Overall an average of 82% of people would support a party which could prevent this.
- 83% of female would support
- 87% of mature families would support

• **Reducing the pressure on ambulance call outs and emergency departments services**

- Overall an average of 85% of people would support a party which could reduce this.
- 86% of female would support
- 88% of young families would support

• **Help prevent hospital admissions**

- Overall an average of 80% of people would support a party which could help prevent this.
- 86% of 60-69 year olds would support
- 83% of young families would support

3. To what extent would you agree or disagree the COVID-19 pandemic had a negative impact on people's mental health as a whole?

- Overall, an average of 77% of survey participants agreed with this statement.

Of all people surveyed:

- 81% of females agreed with this statement
- 82% of 30-39 year olds agreed
- 87% of young families agreed
- 79% of mature families agreed
- 81% of people who are working agreed
- 81% of people living in the Inner City agreed.

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Balance the mental health system

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