



MEDIA RELEASE

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Urgent funding call for youth mental health framework

The long-awaited Young People Priority Framework recently announced by the Government after the death of another young person has no funding attached to it prompting the Western Australian Association for Mental Health (WAAMH) to say it expects it to be included in the upcoming October budget.

WAAMH CEO Taryn Harvey made the call given the well documented mental health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on young people especially.

Ms Harvey said the framework was recommended as a strategy to the Government five years ago who must now make youth mental health a priority given 75 per cent of mental health challenges manifests prior to the age of 25 years, and suicide is the leading cause of death for people aged 15 to 24 years in Western Australia – risks that have been exacerbated by COVID-19.

“We are calling on the Government to immediately include a first stage of funding for implementation of the Youth Priority Framework and safe places to stay for children, adolescents and young people in the 2020/21 State Budget,” she said.

“Children, adolescents and young people, their families and carers and service providers are crying out for the Government to hear them, that youth mental health services are fragmented and confusing and difficult for young people to access unless they have reached crisis point.

“We are now seeing a 24% increase over the last four years in young people presenting to emergency departments, to which the Government has only announced a telehealth line with no early intervention or prevention announcements to compliment the service.”

Ms Harvey welcomed the independent review by the Chief Psychiatrist into how the public mental health system cared for 13-year-old Kate Savage, who tragically passed away recently. She added the announcement of the Young People Priority Framework was already outlined in the 10 Year Mental Health & Alcohol and Other Drug Services, Plan published in 2015.

“The WA State Government has been aware of the critical pain points of WA’s mental health system for young people system for at least five years – and the McGowan Government since coming into power in 2017. This framework announcement has been too long in the making,” she said.

“The plan identified for the need for a specific youth mental health stream, to improve access to appropriate and timely services and better outcomes for young people and community treatment for children and adolescents.

“We are now five years into the Plan and the Youth Priority Framework has only just been announced.

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WAAMH

Western Australian Association
for Mental Health



“Early intervention and ongoing clinical and non-clinical support for young people should be the overriding priority of our government’s mental health response.”

“The social and economic impacts of COVID-19 will have a very significant impact on young people – with WA youth most affected by unemployment and underemployment, and predictions of career scarring for a decade or more.” Ms Harvey said.

Ms Harvey said the WA mental health system needed to be much more focused on getting things right for children and young people, and services need to be better informed by children and young people, especially those experiencing disadvantaged or living in rural and remote areas.

“Given the strong links between low income, unemployment and mental health – and the heightened impacts on young people - we must focus on building opportunities for young people and supporting their mental health and wellbeing – now more than ever,” she said.

“YACWA’s COVID-19 Youth Survey, conducted in April 2020, found that 88% of all respondents were concerned about their mental health. While mental health was the chief concern for young people in YACWA’s survey, this was closely followed by employment, with 78% of young people fearful for the global economy and job market, and linked these concerns to the decline in their overall wellbeing.”

WAAMH calls on the Government to:

- Announce funding for the framework – in the 2020/21 State Budget
- Increase investment in prevention from 1% to 5% of the mental health budget
- Invest in non-clinical community recovery supports for children, adolescents and young people, including for those living in regional, rural and remote areas
- Increase community treatment for children and young people
- Finalise the Suicide Prevention Action Plan 2012 – 2025 as a matter of urgency and develop within or alongside it a whole of government youth specific suicide prevention strategy
- Establish a State-wide intellectual, cognitive and developmental disability service, to support and treat individuals with co-occurring mental illness.
- Establish a new specialised state-wide youth and adult ADHD service which provides direct services to individuals with complex ADHD, and consultation and liaison to treatment and support services throughout the State.

The campaign website: preventsupportheal.org.au

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Fact Box:

- Funding to community mental health services to increase five-fold – from \$48 million to \$250 million
- We need five times as much community support as we have now.
- Community support can only meet 20% of demand
- Only 1 in 5 people who need community support can access it
- In a balanced MH system, community support would make up 19% of the service mix (services) – now it sits at just 8%
- If we had the optimal mix of mental health services, prevention would make up 7% of all service delivery
- In a balanced MH system, community support would make up 19% of the service mix (services) – now it sits at just 8%
- If we had a balanced mental health system, we would rely less on hospital beds – instead of making up 38% of services now, we'd need only 26% because people would be supported to live well in the community and avoid mental health crisis.
- If we had the right mix of services, we would have better mental health outcomes for our community – and save \$504 million over 12 years.
- 'Community treatment' and 'community supports' are not the same thing: community treatment is for the symptom management of mental illness, while 'community supports' work alongside people to transform their lives through employment, connections, and personal recovery.
- Sometimes step-up, step-down services are referred to as 'community-based services', but again it's important to remember that step-up-step-down services – although one important part of a balanced mental health system - are simply a short term 'bridge' between people being in hospitals and re-joining the community. They don't provide long term follow up once people are back at home to help them build self- direction, resilience and independence – all the key building blocks to keeping people well, standing on their own feet and avoiding the need for acute services going forward.
- Read here: [the Government's Mental Health Plan](#)

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