



WAAMH

Western Australian Association
for Mental Health

MEDIA RELEASE

27 OCTOBER 2020

WA Suicide Prevention Framework presents a welcome vision but lacks specific details

The Western Australian Association for Mental Health (WAAMH) has noted the long awaited Western Australian Suicide Prevention Framework 2021–2025, which includes approaches to suicide prevention, early intervention, support for aftercare, postvention, and Aboriginal people.

WAAMH chief executive officer, Taryn Harvey, said the vision of the framework was positive and inclusive and the narrative emphasises the need for cross-sectoral approaches and a focus on the social determinants of health.

“The framework recognises the value of lived experience and peer-led approaches which is welcomed, as is the recognition of valued innovation and trying new approaches, while respecting the need for evaluation,” she said.

“We also welcome the narrative around providing alternatives to emergency departments as a strong focus as this is a recurring need identified in the community.”

Ms Harvey said she looks forward to seeing the details on delivery and implementation of the framework.

“There is a strong message around the need to address the social determinants of health as part of approaches to suicide and cross-sector collaboration. The implementation of the framework will need specific actions that address these, for example, details on activities in the prevention and early intervention section about social determinants approaches.

“We know that other factors (including housing, employment and income) all have a role to play in mental health and suicide prevention. The narrative about social determinants is good, but the activities proposed in the framework do not demonstrate how this will play out in practice.”

There is a strong focus on the development of a WA Aboriginal Suicide Prevention Strategy including the recently announced regional Aboriginal suicide prevention plans and the role of Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services (ACCHSs) – this is strongly supported by WAAMH, however this will now need to be properly supported financially by government.

In the latest State budget, only \$10 million over 4 years is committed for activity on regional Aboriginal suicide prevention plans.

“That amounts to \$2.5m per year across the whole state. We need much more than this. The stream for Aboriginal people contains very little solid commitment in the activities of the framework that supports action on the social determinants of health or how such an approach will be undertaken,” Ms Harvey said.

“To implement the framework, we will need an ongoing and increased funding commitment by the next government at the 2021 election.

“While the framework has much stronger discussion about evaluation than the previous strategy, there is still no indication of timelines or targets for these evaluation measures. It would have been positive to have a commitment from the Mental Health Commission on when reporting of evaluation findings will take place and a commitment to public reporting.”

Fact Box

The release of the framework follows the recent budget announcement of \$46.9m allocated over 4 years to support suicide prevention in WA, including \$32.3 million to fund continuing operation of existing suicide prevention services and support the implementation of the keenly awaited WA Suicide Prevention Framework 2021-2025 over four years.

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