



WAAMH

Western Australian Association
for Mental Health

MEDIA RELEASE

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WAAMH welcomes some aspects of Labor's mental health policy but crucial reforms still missing

The Western Australian Association for Mental Health (WAAMH) welcomes several elements of Labor's mental health policy, but would like to see a more solid commitment to community services, housing, prevention, recovery-focused, person and family-centred services.

Following the release of Labor's mental health policy, WAAMH welcomes its support of community connectedness and recovery; the recognition of the need for mental health programs in schools; and the need for crisis support and suicide prevention.

"We all agree with Labor leader Mark McGowan that without access to community mental health support, people's mental health can worsen leading to an increase in demand for acute services," WAAMH chief executive officer Rod Astbury said.

Unfortunately, what is missing from the Labor policy is a focus on how to build and expand these vital community-based supports and to rebalance the mental health system so that it works to keep people living well in the community – reducing the demand for these acute, expensive beds – and improve their mental health outcomes.

By expanding community support services across, the state from the current 842,000 hours of support to 3.2 million hours by the end of 2020, as detailed in the Ten Year Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drugs Plan, would save between \$45,000 - \$674,000 per person, over nine years with early treatment.

Also missing from Labor's policy was real community based housing options with linked mental health supports.

"We know that this reduces demand for acute beds. In fact, recent UWA research shows it can save the health system \$84,000 per person per year," Mr Astbury said.

"We hope to see the need for community based housing addressed in Labor's housing policy, which is yet to be announced."

Mr McGowan's openness about his own family being touched by mental illness was also a refreshingly honest example to hear at a senior level of politics.

Peak body representing the community-based mental health sector in WA.

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“When leaders are open about their own or their family’s experiences it helps reduce the widespread stigma about mental illness in our community,” Mr Astbury said.

WAAMH welcomes Labor’s commitment to introduce community-based recovery colleges in WA as these can transform the lives of consumers, however it is concerned that Labor appears to have identified an eastern state-based provider, when a local model is already in development.

By expanding the supply of community-based housing and services, implementing person and family-centred reforms, and focusing on early intervention and prevention, the State will get better value for money, better outcomes for people affected by mental health issues, and decreased social, economic and personal costs.

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