

Mental health minister is needed

IN response to the article "Health tussle on for young and old" (*TST*, February 7) about joining WA's health and mental-health ministerial portfolios, the WA Association for Mental Health (WAAMH) urges the Government to retain a minister for mental health separate from the Health portfolio. The creation of a dedicated Mental Health Minister and establishment of the Mental Health Commission in 2010 began a long-awaited reform agenda. Mental health continues to require its own portfolio to ensure a broad integrated approach that addresses the social determinants of poor mental health, including

housing, employment, cultural issues, education and the workplace.

The introduction of the Mental Health Act 2014 and the launch of the Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drugs Services Plan is just the beginning of the systemic reform required to ensure meaningful and lasting changes for people with mental illness, their families and carers. There is still a long way to go to ensure recent legislative changes translate into actual improvements to people's lives, and without a dedicated minister and the commission, it is unlikely these reforms would be realised.

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