

WA LABOR

Mental Health and Mental Health Recovery Services



A Fresh Approach for WA

WA Labor Policy | February 2017

MENTAL HEALTH AND MENTAL HEALTH RECOVERY SERVICES

There isn't a person in WA who doesn't have a family member or friend who has experienced struggles with their mental health.

Wherever I go across the State, people always tell me there is simply not enough support and treatment options for people with mental health conditions.

It shouldn't be that way.

All the evidence suggests that a lack of access to mental health beds for people with mental health conditions often results in their condition getting worse.

In times of crisis, families need to know that there are beds available for their loved ones when they need them.

They also need to know that support is available when they have been discharged but still vulnerable.

That's why a McGowan Labor Government will increase the number of acute and sub-acute mental health beds across the State. We'll also build 'Step Up, Step Down' facilities in Kalgoorlie, Karratha and Bunbury.

It's important to do everything we can to remove the stigmas that are still associated with mental health conditions. We need to send a message, particularly to young Western Australians, that help is available.

We will address this by increasing mental health services for students in public schools.

This is just a snapshot of our vision for mental health in WA.

It is my hope that under a McGowan Labor Government, help will be available to those who need it most.



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MENTAL HEALTH AND MENTAL HEALTH RECOVERY SERVICES

A McGowan Labor Government will:

- Increase the number of acute mental health beds in Metropolitan and Regional Hospitals by 50 including 25-30 at Joondalup Health Campus, 12 at Geraldton Hospital and the balance to be allocated based on identified need.
- Increase the supply of sub acute mental health beds over the next four years, including eight sub acute beds in Geraldton, Step Up Step Down facilities in Kalgoorlie, Karratha and Bunbury, plus an additional 20 beds to be allocated based on need.
- Provide new innovations in mental health services through the introduction of Recovery Colleges, one based at Wanneroo and one around Royal Perth Hospital.
- Introduce a Mental Health Observation Area at Royal Perth Hospital and Geraldton Hospital.
- Review the provision of mental health services as part of the Sustainable Health Review.
- Tackle mental health issues at a school level by providing additional staff resource time that will allow schools to implement the mental health program that best fits their school requirements.
- Work with Lifeline WA to ensure a sustainable future for the service provider in WA.

It is also recognised that the use of drugs including the use of methamphetamine can result in ongoing mental health issues. WA Labor has announced a comprehensive Methamphetamine Action Plan which includes the following:

- Invest an additional \$2 million per annum into treatment facilities to respond to early intervention and severe methamphetamine dependence.
- Expand specialist drug services into rural and regional areas of need and open two specialised rehabilitation centres, one in Bunbury and one in Broome.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mental Health Services

Mental health is a critical area of State Government responsibility and community concern. These concerns arise out of a high level of unmet need for Western Australians with mental health conditions that require, but are unable to access appropriate mental health beds, support and services.

These services can be integrated with acute beds to provide for a better continuum of care for those at risk of requiring acute care or those stepping out of an acute service after an acute mental health episode. The framework will include operational guidelines for governing residential community based services and their relationship with inpatient care.

They also arise from the widespread experience and family management of mental health issues. One in five (20%) Western Australians aged 16 to 85 experience mental illness in any year. For Western Australia this equates to 395,000 people per year. Almost half (45%) of Western Australians will experience a mental health issue or illness in their lifetime.¹

Acute Mental Health Beds

In Western Australia there is evidence to show that a lack of access to mental health support in the community and to community mental health beds resulted in people with mental health conditions being more likely to have their condition deteriorate, further increasing the demand for acute mental health beds.

- **A McGowan Labor Government will increase the number of acute mental health beds in Metropolitan and Regional Hospitals by 50 including 25-30 at Joondalup Health campus, 12 at Geraldton Hospital and the balance to be allocated based on identified need.**

Currently only 80 per cent of those requiring an acute care mental health bed are able to access one.

Hospital and community based sub acute beds

In Western Australia there is evidence to show that a lack of access to mental health support has resulted in people who are mentally unwell being more likely to have their health deteriorate and therefore increase further the demand for an acute mental health bed.

- **A McGowan Labor Government will increase the supply of sub acute mental health beds over the next four years including eight sub acute beds in Geraldton, Step Up Step Down facilities in Kalgoorlie, Karratha and Bunbury plus an additional 20 beds to be allocated based on need.**

A lack of supply also corresponds with a lack of capacity to step up and step down the care of acute patients as required. The critical importance of these issues has also been highlighted by media attention given to a number of preventable deaths by suicide of people who could not gain access to an acute care bed or who were discharged while vulnerable, in the early stages of recovery and without access to appropriate ongoing support.

¹ <http://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/docs/Factsandfiguresaboutmentalhealthandmood-disorders.pdf>

The Liberal Government announced at the 2013 State Election that they would build sub acute facilities in Karratha and Bunbury with work to commence in 2013/14. Neither was built. Ahead of the 2017 State Election the Liberal Government has again announced funding for these two facilities with work to commence in 2017.

WA Labor is committed to delivering these long promised and much needed facilities.

Given the cost of an acute care bed is approximately \$1,384 per day and a community bed costs \$595 a day there is a strong argument to increase the supply of mental health beds in the community so that people have the support they need before they require a more costly acute mental health bed.¹

Recovery Colleges

Most people with mental health issues don't require hospitalisation but would benefit from an opportunity to spend time investing in and understanding their condition and developing skills to improve their mental health.

There is a significant and unfulfilled need for people to be able to come together to share their experiences and skills that are helpful to recovery as well as to improve community connectedness, which is also important in wellbeing. Importantly, there is a need to make less costly interventions accessible to a greater number of people to prevent an individual's condition from deteriorating and requiring costly acute inpatient services.

- **A McGowan Labor Government will provide new innovations in mental health services through the introduction of Recovery Colleges, one based at Wanneroo and one around Royal Perth Hospital.**

¹ LA QWN 780 12 October 2016

These colleges will provide a safe and welcoming place for people to be able to take time to invest in developing skills to improve their mental health at minimal cost.

Such a service will help close a significant gap in access to services for those who don't require hospitalisation but would benefit from an opportunity to focus on improving their resilience and recovery. Courses will be produced by people with a lived experience of mental distress, supported by people with additional professional learning and development skills.

Courses can be provided in a diversity of accessible locations in 'pop-up' venues and other premises such as Head Space or other community or therapeutic venues. Several Recovery Colleges operating successfully across Victoria, are currently looking to expand to other States.

Recovery College courses offer a more structured learning experience than a typical group program. They are designed with input from qualified and experienced educators based on contemporary learning theory.

Mental Health Observation Units

Currently patients presenting to emergency departments are treated in the general emergency department area. The open layout of emergency departments is not ideal for managing mentally ill or intoxicated patients. This can be disruptive to many patients and staff and at worst pose a security and safety risk. It means many mental health and intoxicated patients are being sedated, or forcibly restrained, including being physically restrained to a bed.

It can be stressful, scary and upsetting for other patients observing the behaviour of mental health and drug patients, which is often counter-productive to their own health and recuperation.

- **A McGowan Labor Government will introduce a Mental Health Observation Area at Royal Perth Emergency Department and Geraldton Hospital.**

Separating mental health and drug and alcohol patients from general emergency patients will result in improved clinical outcomes and improve the overall patient experience. Having an observation area dedicated for mental health and drug and alcohol patients may help improve emergency department waiting times, and ensure these patients are still given appropriate supervision until they are stable.

Observation areas may assist in reducing expensive readmissions and ensures that access to specialist mental health beds is reserved for those who are acutely unwell. Observation areas also mean that more appropriate clinical care can be provided. For example, specialist mental health nurses and staff with mental health expertise can be provided to the observation areas, rather than general nursing staff.

Appropriate care for mental health patients

Mental Health Observation Areas will be dedicated quiet, safe sections within hospital emergency departments to help patients with mental health conditions as well as those with drug and alcohol intoxication who are not acute enough to require admission, but who still need assistance and close supervision for up to 72 hours.

This model is based on the introduction of the mental health observation area at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital. Royal Perth has a high number of mental health emergency department presentations. Being the closest emergency department to the Perth CBD and entertainment precinct of Northbridge, RPH also has a high proportion of emergency department presentations associated with drugs and alcohol.

There is also a large homeless population in the inner city, many of whom also have mental health conditions.

Royal Perth Hospitals has Mental Health wards where patients can be transferred from the observation area to secure wards if required.

Mental Health Services

WA Labor will review the provision of mental health services and address the shortage of mental health specialists in regional WA by providing them with more certainty in employment through five year contracts and ongoing professional development. This will be done in consultation with the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatry.

- **A McGowan Labor Government will review the provision of mental health services as part of the Sustainable Health Review.**

As part of a Sustainable Health Review, Patient First Dialogues will be convened around the State. These will bring together consumer advocates, front-line staff, health leaders and administrators to contribute to a new vision of patient centered care.

Mental Health in Schools

WA Labor believes that children deserve the appropriate support to ensure they get the very best out of their education. A McGowan Labor Government will increase mental health services for students in public schools to support the public education system and the health of our children.

There is growing community recognition that many children are coming to school with far more mental health issues than ever before. Schools have become the front line in dealing with and managing these issues.

Education stakeholders raise mental health issues as the fastest growing problem facing schools. WA Labor recognises that WA teachers are broadly qualified in child development. However, the complexity of mental health issues that are present in the classroom need specialist attention and appropriate resources

A McGowan Labor Government will tackle mental health issues at a school level by providing additional staff resource time that will allow schools to implement the mental health program that best fits their school requirements.

A McGowan Labor Government will:

- **Provide schools with 0.1FTE of a Level 3 teacher time per school to oversee the delivery of evidence based mental health programs.**
- **Provide online support for school staff managing students with mental health difficulties.**

A McGowan Government will increase the amount of mental health support available in public schools by providing additional staff resource time to oversee the framework or program that their school chooses from a list of evidence based mental health/resilience programs.

Mental Health frameworks are ready for schools

The following programs have been identified by the Department for Education as being evidence based and rigorously tested.¹

These include for primary schools:

- KidsMatter (framework)
- KidsMatter Early Childhood (framework)
- Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS)
- PATHS Early Childhood
- Aussie Optimism
- Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (framework)

For secondary schools:

- MindMatters (framework)
- Friendly Schools Plus
- Resourceful Adolescent Program
- Aussie Optimism
- Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (framework)

Principals, teachers, and support staff all deserve to work in classrooms that are free from violence and we need to ensure they are provided with the training and assistance so they can appropriately deal with students with mental health issues.

¹ Parliament of Western Australia, Parliament Question, 22 April 2015, Mental Health programs

Cuts to school mental health programs are irresponsible

The cuts to education by the State Liberal Government have meant that much of the support that was available to students is no longer available. The School Support Program Resource Allocation (SSPRA) was cut by 30 per cent and pastoral care has been ripped out of public schools.

The National Children's Commissioner Megan Mitchell said there is a shocking 650 per cent increase in the number of deaths due to suicide between the 12-13 age groups to the 14-15 age groups*. The Commissioner says schools need to teach resilience building at a primary school level and that mental health literacy programs should be rolled out in all schools across the country.¹

Youth Focus says approximately one-quarter of WA's high school students experience anxiety and depression, reflecting the numbers in the adult population.² The complexity of mental health issues that are present in the classroom are often beyond the professional capacity of most teachers and dealing with these issues means less time to actually teach. Those students struggling with unresolved mental health issues are less ready to learn in the classroom.

A McGowan Government will support schools to provide mental health programs on the ground. Mental health support and education must start at a school level if we are to tackle the problems more broadly.

¹ <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/news/stories/national-children-s-commissioner-releases-data-child-self-harm-and-suicide>

² West Australian, "Websites help teens in trouble" 30 September 2015

Sustainability of Lifeline services

Lifeline is a national non-for-profit charity providing Australians access to a 24 hour crisis support and suicide prevention service. It relies on community support and some government funding.

Nationally, Lifeline receives around 1,800 calls each day, with around 50 calls from people at high risk of suicide.³

In 2015, 394 Western Australians suicided, pushing the suicide rate in WA to 15 per 100,000. Lifeline WA only has capacity to answer 51 per cent of the crisis calls generated by Western Australians. This gap is answered by the broader Lifeline network.⁴

- **A McGowan Labor Government will work with Lifeline WA to ensure a sustainable future for the service provider in WA.**

Treatment for Methamphetamine use

A McGowan Labor Government will implement a state-wide, coordinated and targeted Methamphetamine Action Plan (MAP) focussed on three key areas to reduce demand, reduce harm and reduce supply.

WA Labor will work with experts and stakeholders on early targeted prevention, better treatment services and effective withdrawal services. The MAP will build on what is currently seen as best practice, providing education, training, rehabilitation, coordination and research.

Over the last 12 months, WA Labor has sought advice from frontline service providers, stakeholders and the general community. The feedback received highlights the need for rehabilitation services to be available during

³ <https://www.lifeline.org.au/about-lifeline/lifeline-information/lifelines-living-history>

⁴ LifelineWA – Suicide in WA: Holding back the Tide, p1

that crucial moment when a person acknowledges they need help.

Currently there is a lack of residential and community based treatment facilities leaving some addicts waiting for treatment or travelling large distances from home to access rehabilitation services.

Methamphetamines initially give users a heightened sense of wellbeing and confidence which then converts after a period of time into paranoia and agitation often leading to violence. Amphetamine specific rehabilitation services need specially trained staff that understands the physical risk posed by meth affected patients.

- **A McGowan Labor Government will invest an additional \$2 million per annum into treatment facilities to respond to early intervention and severe methamphetamine dependence.**

The impact of methamphetamine addiction on regional communities in WA has been devastating. Earlier this year more than 40 former ice users and their families met in Bunbury to discuss how to best tackle the scourge of Methamphetamine use in regional WA.¹

There is a distinct lack of services available in regional communities. WA Labor recognises the importance of having these services available close to home where family and the community can remain connected.

- **A McGowan Labor Government will expand specialist drug services into rural and regional areas of need and open two specialised rehabilitation centres, one in Bunbury and one in Broome.**

Within the model of treatment, the MAP will include support services that cater for the long withdrawal and recovery period and high relapse rate associated with methamphetamine use. It is important to remain mindful that methamphetamine use may be in conjunction with

alcohol and other drug and mental health issues (co-morbidity). It is critical that services be flexible and holistic in the model of treatment.

¹ <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-04-04/call-for-more-drug-rehabilitation-in-the-regions/7297000>

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