



WAAMH

Western Australian Association
for Mental Health

MEDIA RELEASE

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New report provides lived experience-informed models of community mental health supports

Young people aged 16-24 want immediate contact via phone, text and physical drop in centres to manage their mental health distress, according to new modelling work conducted by the Western Australian Association for Mental Health (WAAMH) and the Centre for Social Impact UWA (CSI UWA).

In a Western Australian first, the report, *'Increasing and Improving Community Mental Health Supports in WA'*, engaged more than 150 consumers, family members, service providers and supporters and carers, to understand their experiences of community mental health supports to inform public policy and State Government spending ahead of the WA State Election.

The report released today, also revealed that high school aged children aged 12 -16 years want informal drop in spaces, near their school or public transport offering group activities and positive programs that build social and emotional wellbeing.

WAAMH Chief Executive Officer Taryn Harvey said the feedback from the workshops revealed that young people need immediate access - 24/7 or at least until the early hours of the morning – as a suicide prevention strategy because young people may be at risk and not be able to access other options.

"We heard directly from people that having the ability to self-refer without consent of a parent or guardian was really important," she said.

"They also expressed a desire that staff included peer workers, social workers and youth workers as the basis for engagement. Young people want to feel heard with 'deep listening' and to feel like equals as a useful tool for their recovery.

"Families and carers also expressed a need for centre-based, drop in spaces to engage informally with peers, plus a structured peer mentoring program that was convenient and accessible with home visits offered during school hours and out of hours support."

The co-design project developed six models and focussed on rural and remote people, young people aged 12-16 years, young people aged under 24 years, families and carers and people experiencing multiple unmet needs – often including co-occurring alcohol and other drug use.

The community co-designed 6 models, which define the services and supports needed to address the glaring gaps in community support and move towards the balanced mental health system targets set out in the 10-year plan, Better Choices, Better Lives.

WAAMH is seeking election commitments from the major political parties to invest in these models, and other community supports, through the Prevent Support Heal campaign, so that people can access supports that meet their needs for recovery and community connection.

"This exciting project provides rich information and in depth lived experience insights to support the State Government to initiate and implement new support options for consumers across the State who are currently missing out on services," Ms Harvey said.

"It paves the way for WA to establish new, informed ways of supporting people using peer-led services that enable recovery.

“These models are relatively cheaper than hospital-based services and also deliver a strengths-based approach that is longer term to support a person’s recovery or to prevent that person reaching crisis.”

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