



MEDIA RELEASE

10 NOVEMBER 2020

Rally for Mental Health today, 12pm at Parliament House

The most affordable, efficient and effective way to deal with over-representation of people presenting to hospital emergency departments with mental health distress is to invest in the community support and prevention sector, according to the Western Australian peak body for community mental health services.

The Western Australian Association for Mental Health (WAAMH) is taking its strongest action yet for the Prevent Support Heal campaign by gathering on the front steps of Parliament House at 12pm, today, Tuesday 10 November.

WAAMH will be joined by hundreds of people with mental health challenges, their carers; family, friends and supporters who will call on every member of Parliament and political party to immediately and significantly invest in mental health prevention and community supports.

WAAMH Chief Executive Officer Taryn Harvey said addressing a person's distress must not start with the most expensive acute services, it should be a last resort.

"We have seen story after story of ambulance ramping, an increase in people presenting to emergency departments for their mental health distress and an increase in young people needing hospital care," she said.

"But this is not helping people with their long term recovery and people are being bounced around the crisis end of care because there is a severe lack of investment in the kinds of supports that help people in the community, near their home or school."

Community support services help people through the least intensive supports and should they need more intensive care there is an existing and accessible pathway when they need it. This is both better for the person and cheaper for the community as a whole.

Ms Harvey said there is chronic underinvestment in prevention and community supports in WA which contributes to people having no choice but to go to ED.

"Historically we have seen lack of care for people in the community before they reach crisis, a lack of alternatives to Emergency Departments, a lack of places for people to be discharged from ED and walk alongside people in their recovery and a lack of investment in effective prevention and early intervention options in WA," she said.

"People with lived experience and the community are crying out for more options in the community, and the modelling in the Government's own ten-year plan addresses this lack of supports.

"That's why we are all gathering on the front steps of Parliament House so the decision makers can hear these people, their families and the people that care for them."

Prevent, Support, Heal

When you're in, we can win!

PREVENT.
SUPPORT.
HEAL.



About Prevent Support Heal

Prevent Support Heal is a campaign run by the Western Australian Association for Mental Health, the peak body for community mental health.

Our Western Australian mental health system and spending is currently oriented around crises with public mental health services and Emergency Departments the major focus.

We currently only spend 1% of the mental health budget on prevention for mental health and AOD services and just 5% on community support. Meanwhile we spend half of the budget on the acute and crisis end of mental health care.

These services deliver medical models of care which alone do not achieve positive mental health outcomes for our community.

We need a dramatic shift to prevent mental health issues from developing or worsening and to provide equitable access to holistic community-based support that keeps people living well in their homes, in jobs and connected to loved ones in the community.

WA's mental health system is badly in need of rebalancing, away from costly crisis-led acute services to a focus on preventing mental health issues in the first place and making it easy to find help where and when it is needed.

The government, mental health sector, people with lived experience and the wider community must all work together if we are to shift to a better, more balanced system.

The campaign website: preventsupportheal.org.au

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