

Primary care a priority in Federal budget

10 May 2018

WA Primary Health Alliance welcomes the increased investment in support for people at risk of poor health outcomes, as outlined in this week's Federal budget.

WA Primary Health Alliance CEO, Learne Durrington said the announcement of new mental health funding, which is targeting suicide prevention, research and older Australians, and a focus on the primary care workforce is aligned with the organisation's work to improve access to primary care.

The significant investment in suicide prevention and support services will enable follow-up care and practical support to be provided to people discharged from hospital after a suicide attempt, which also includes the delivery of a modernised, and more responsive telephone crisis support service.

Additional investment into residential aged care for psychological services will provide much needed support to older people with a diagnosed mental disorder and who are currently ineligible for other programs such as National Disability Insurance Scheme.

Ms Durrington said investment in more treatment and support services and building the skills of our health practitioners is critical to increasing the health and wellbeing of people across WA.

"Our job is to stop people falling through the gaps in healthcare services and we know that some people miss out on getting a service because what is on offer doesn't meet their needs, or the service doesn't exist where they live.

"We therefore welcome the Government's commitment to ensuring people with mental health issues and older people are not further disadvantaged," Ms Durrington said.

The Government's announcement of the Stronger Rural Health Strategy will see a much-needed focus on GP and other primary care services throughout regional and rural Western Australia.

"We know that across WA there are people living in communities who have poor health and can't get access to a GP," Ms Durrington said.

"At the moment, we don't have the balance right. We have more GPs in our metropolitan areas despite our regional areas having a greater need.

"It is also important to note that outer metropolitan areas are also underserved by GPs, which is just as critical as addressing rural and regional needs.

"Building a skilled, local workforce is critical to ensure people don't have to travel too far to get help.

"As a result, we are looking to develop a stronger multidisciplinary team-based workforce to complement the work of GPs and better meet the demands of communities with the greatest needs," Ms Durrington said.

“We are particularly pleased with dedicated funding to provide professional development for primary care to support and treat people who have problems with alcohol and drug use.

WA Primary Health Alliance notes that the Budget outlines reductions over the forward estimates and that it is still unclear as to whether alcohol and other drug programs will be impacted.

“We are committed to a continued focus on reducing harm from alcohol and drugs use and will continue to closely monitor any further announcements,” Ms Durrington said.

WA Primary Health Alliance will continue to work closely with its partners to complement existing initiatives and progress implications from the budget announcements.

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About WAPHA: WAPHA oversees the strategic commissioning functions of the Perth North, Perth South and Country WA Primary Health Networks (PHNs). The WA PHNs are three of 31 PHNs established by the Australian Government nationally to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of medical services for the community. We work across the WA healthcare system with doctors, allied health professionals, Area Health Services and service providers to improve the coordination of care for people who are at risk of poor health outcomes. For more information, visit www.wapha.org.au

