

A fresh approach to preventive health

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WA Primary Health Alliance (WAPHA) was pleased to participate in the inaugural WA Preventive Health Summit last week, whose dual themes of alcohol and obesity have a significant impact on the health and wellbeing of many Western Australians.

WAPHA CEO Learne Durrington said alcohol and obesity are also priorities for WAPHA and our focus is on creating the right environment within the primary care setting to promote effective health interventions and better health outcomes.

“The summit was timely, bringing together a high-level group of leaders who can influence change and a strong consumer voice.

“The importance of primary care in prevention, early intervention and management was well recognised, and it was extremely valuable to hear more about the many challenges experienced by vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in respect to alcohol and obesity.

As with so many health conditions, general practitioners (GPs) are the front line when it comes to managing patients with alcohol and obesity issues. They have ongoing relationships with their patients and recognise the barriers and motivators for individuals to change their behaviour.

WAPHA, and other organisations providing support and education for GPs, therefore have a fundamental role in enabling GPs to use their skills as expert generalists to manage these public health issues.

“We need to fulfil this role as best we can to improve access to person centred primary care for Western Australians with alcohol and weight management issues,” Ms Durrington said.

“WAPHA is focused on building the capability and confidence of GPs to initiate the often sensitive and difficult conversations with their patients that are needed to tackle these issues collaboratively and effectively.

“We will be interested to see the range of state-level policy levers identified at the Summit to mitigate the health impacts of alcohol and obesity in WA.

“We thank the Minister for Health for initiating this important discussion on these two public health issues that have a profound impact on the lives of those affected, their families, society and the health system,” Ms Durrington said.

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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