

Submission to Service Priority Reveiw:

Interim Report to the
Western Australian Government

About WANADA

The Western Australian Network of Alcohol and other Drug Agencies (WANADA) is the peak body for the alcohol and other drug education, prevention, treatment and support sector in Western Australia. WANADA is an independent, membership-driven not-for-profit association.

WANADA is driven by the passion and hard work of its member agencies, which include community alcohol and other drug counselling; therapeutic communities; residential rehabilitation; intoxication management and harm reduction services; peer based; prevention; and community development services.

Alcohol and other drugs are a health and social issue that impacts the whole community. The alcohol and other drug sector provides specialist services to meet the diverse needs of people in Western Australia. WANADA aspires to drive across sector solutions that focus on a whole of community approach to addressing health and wellbeing issues associated with the use of alcohol and other drugs. WANADA is uniquely placed to coordinate sector and non-government service user engagement.

The specialist alcohol and other drug service sector is uniquely placed to address alcohol and drug related harms. The service sector understands better than most the cross-sector complexities needing to be addressed. As a result it is well placed to provide coordination and capacity building support to other sectors, including health and human services, providing services to people with alcohol and other drug related problems.

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Recommendation

WANADA recommends the Service Priority Review acknowledges the State Government's responses to alcohol and other drug associated harms within the implementation of its reform agenda.

Foreword to WANADA's Response

WANADA supports the direction proposed by the Service Priority Review Interim Report (Interim Report).

Organisations outside of the State Public Service have expressed an appetite for change. The non-government specialist alcohol and other drug service sector in particular seeks improved State Public Sector coordination, partnerships and practices to deliver improved community outcomes.

There is pressure for non-government service providers to increase their rigour in demonstrating value for money and delivering outcomes. There must be a commensurate expectation of government agencies to role model a commitment to continuously improving efforts to realise and demonstrate outcomes.

The Service Priority Review is being undertaken alongside multiple government reviews and Machinery of Government changes. In addition, State Government Departments are planning and delivering the new State Government's election commitments. While this environment of change provides opportunity to progress substantial reform, the breadth of concurrent activities also risks reducing strategic clarity, or complicating responses to entrenched issues.

To realise the benefits and actively manage the risks of the current reform environment, the Service Priority Review should identify those government initiatives that are optimally placed to champion the proposed reform agenda. WANADA considers the State Government's response to alcohol and other drug associated harms to be one such example.

Recommendation:

The Service Priority Review acknowledges the State Government's responses to alcohol and other drug associated harms within the implementation of its reform agenda.

Identifying Opportunities – Alcohol and Other Drugs

The election of a new State Government in March 2017 has had significant implications for how State Government agencies approach and address critical cross-portfolio issues. Policy direction from the new State Government outlines the need for strategic, coordinated responses that deliver better outcomes for the community. Recent departmental amalgamations as part of Machinery of Government changes are a further example of the intention to realise more networked solutions.

The Service Priority Review Interim Report reinforces the need to improve outcomes – particularly for the State’s most critical issues – through structural, cultural and policy change. There is potential for the Final Report to build on this direction, by identifying key options to progress reform as part of its roadmap for implementation.

WANADA considers existing government responses to alcohol and other drug associated harms are well placed to benefit from the reform direction outlined in the Interim Report:

- Key government initiatives are in the early stages of the project development cycle, and are well placed to integrate reform
- There is a need for additional strategic clarity and networked solutions to address the critical issue of alcohol and other drug associated harms at a systems level
- The complex, systems impacts of alcohol and other drug associated harms requires robust co-design and co-production of government initiatives to ensure consumer, community and service needs are addressed, and cross-portfolio impacts managed
- The State Government has committed to developing key performance indicators and outcomes to measure progress in addressing alcohol and other drug associated harms across multiple government portfolios. WANADA also believes that there is a high likelihood that a cross-government key performance indicator will focus on reducing the harms associated with methamphetamine use.

Draft Western Australian Alcohol and Drug Interagency Strategy 2017-2021

The draft Interagency Strategy was recently released for consultation by the Mental Health Commission. The intent of the document is to outline a cross-agency approach to addressing alcohol and other drug associated harms in the community. Its governance process that includes the measuring of key performance indicators and outcomes.

In its recent submission to Mental Health Commission, WANADA identified the Interagency Strategy as an ideal vehicle to leverage the current reform agenda, and to demonstrate the State Government’s evolving response to critical issues. WANADA recommended the Interagency Strategy is delayed and revisited to best reflect the Service Priority Review reform, in particular the need to establish a stronger strategic, whole-of-government response to a complex/critical issue.

Methamphetamine Action Plan 2017

The intent of the Methamphetamine Action Plan 2017 is to provide an improved cross-portfolio response to methamphetamine-related harms:

“A McGowan Labor Government will break down the silos across government and ensure that there is a coordinated plan to tackle the methamphetamine crisis facing our community.”¹

The coordination of the Methamphetamine Action Plan 2017 includes new governance arrangements, and the development of key performance indicators and outcomes. WANADA understands these arrangements are currently being established. This presents an opportunity to integrate the reform direction outlined by the Service Priority Review.

Co-design

WANADA strongly supports the need to improve State Government agencies' recognition of community needs when designing and delivering services.

Rigorous co-design must underpin the development and implementation of all government initiatives, particularly those intended to address critical and entrenched issues such as alcohol and other drug associated harms. These co-design processes need to ensure consumers, communities, and specialist service providers are effectively engaged in equal partnerships with State Government to support the development and implementation of strategies, action plans, programs and services.

WANADA notes the Interim Report's recognition that undeveloped relationships with businesses and the community services sector contributes to sub-optimal performance in the Western Australian Public Sector.

Peak bodies in the community services sector are optimally placed to coordinate independent co-design in support of government initiatives. These specialist skills and connections could be more effectively recognised and utilised by State Government agencies.

Business sectors have a role in contributing to community outcomes. Coordination across community services, business sectors and government is essential to address the complexities of the State's most critical issues. For example, areas of relevance between industry sectors, the specialist alcohol and other drug service sector and government include:

- Construction – volatile substance handling
- Commerce – employee assistance programs
- Mining and resources – Fly-In-Fly-Out and Drive-In-Drive-Out workforce
- Alcohol and hospitality – alcohol accords

¹ WA Labor, Methamphetamine Action Plan. WA Labor, 2017, Pg.3

Demonstrating Reform

Whole of Government Targets

WANADA supports the implementation of cross government targets. To be effective, WANADA considers that these targets must:

- be linked to both existing government policies, programs and governance systems to ensure alignment and to avoid duplication
- balance the need for realistic targets that provide aspirational goals and demonstrate State Government leadership on key issues
- support the demonstration of systems-level progress.

Data

WANADA supports the Interim Report's recommendation for a clearer legislative framework for data sharing and information privacy. Addressing this legislative gap will support the delivery of human services and address privacy concerns, particularly where data and reporting has the potential to contribute to stigma and discrimination.

WANADA considers data to be central to improving service delivery. WANADA is of the position that any data system and supporting legislation must be subject to thorough co-design process, to ensure that it meets the needs of service users, government procurement and non-government services for informed improvements and planning. Of particular importance is clarity of data ownership and custodian rights and responsibilities.

WANADA also considers an effective data and outcomes system (and legislation) as necessary to drive the attraction and retention of alternative funding arrangements. A robust data system would enable services to quantify the impact and outcomes of its services, and present a defined value proposition to potential funding bodies.

Any measurements need to address the following:

- Confidentiality and privacy concerns
- Existing data and outcomes measurement and infrastructure limitations
- Resource and administrative burden on reporting entities
- Data integrity
- Co-design
- Clear policies and procedures governing data ownership, informed consent, and the appropriate use of data

