

Pre-Budget Submission 2017/18

May 2017 Supplement

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.

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 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.

WANADA is the independent voice on alcohol and other drug sector issues throughout WA.

Western Australian Network of Alcohol and other Drug Agencies

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Foreword

WANADA has made the decision to release a supplement to its 2017/18 Pre-Budget Submission.

The first half of 2017 has seen a number of significant events: the Western Australian State Election 2017 resulted in a change of government and a strengthened Legislative Council; the Economic and Fiscal Outlook 2017 painted a picture of a challenging, sobering and uncertain operating environment; and the Public Sector Renewal substantially reduced the number of state government agencies. In light of these developments, and with the next State Budget to be handed down in September 2017, WANADA considered it prudent to revisit its budget priorities.

WANADA recognises the need for Government to contain recurrent expenditure, identify further savings, and avoid new spending proposals beyond its election commitments. With economic and revenue growth being insufficient to address the State's budgetary challenges, it is imperative that we support those initiatives that deliver substantial cost savings across forward estimates.

The race to reduce expenditure, however, should be considered and prudent. While there is potential for efficiencies and cost savings to be realised, cutting services will result in increased costs being borne by other systems, such as corrections and health.

Currently, Western Australian alcohol and other drug services sector cannot meet the community's demand for services. In addition to this being a critical and saddening statistic, it means that society is subjected to the exorbitant and avoidable social costs of alcohol and other drug use. Australia-wide, this cost is estimated to be at least \$55.2 billion.¹

The Western Australian State Labor Government has inherited a range of alcohol and other drug commitments, principal among them the *Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drug Services Plan 2015-2025* and the *Western Australian Methamphetamine Strategy 2016*. In addition, WA Labor made a number of commendable election promises on alcohol and other drugs outlined primarily in its *Methamphetamine Action Plan*.

To realise both increased community wellbeing and substantial cost savings, it is imperative that existing arrangements are maintained and these commitments delivered.

In our revised Pre-Budget Submission for the 2017/18 financial year, WANADA submits for your consideration a list of alcohol and other drug service sector priorities that will deliver substantial benefits to people, families, communities and the Western Australian economy.



Jill Rundle
Chief Executive Officer

8 May 2017

¹ Collins, David and Lapsley, Helen, *The costs of tobacco, alcohol and illicit drug abuse to Australian society in 2004/05*. Commonwealth of Australia, 2008.

Priority Budget Investment Recommendations

On behalf of the Western Australian alcohol and other drug services sector, WANADA submits the below recommendations for priority investment.

Priority Initiatives
Prioritise the delivery of an Aboriginal alcohol and other drug residential service in the State's south.
Continue to be guided by the WA Mental Health, Alcohol and other Drug Services Plan 2015 – 2025 “Better Choices Better Lives”
Maintain existing funding arrangements established under the Western Australian Methamphetamine Strategy 2016
Fast track dedicated alcohol and other drug rehabilitation prisons

Aboriginal Alcohol and other Drug Residential Service

Recommendation

Prioritise the delivery of an Aboriginal alcohol and other drug residential service in the State's south.

Overview

The development of an Aboriginal alcohol and other drug residential service in the south of the State is long overdue.

For over 15 years, WANADA has supported calls from the Aboriginal communities in the State's south for a specific Aboriginal residential service. The Noongar community represents over 30,000 people², approximately 30% of the Aboriginal population of Western Australia. There is no dedicated Aboriginal alcohol and other drug residential service in Noongar country.

Currently, Aboriginal people in the South and South West who require residential treatment must travel and seek specific Aboriginal support from services in other catchment areas, or mainstream residential services. The addition of an Aboriginal specific residential service will add a culturally secure choice and service option that would support better retention and outcomes. Uniquely an Aboriginal specific residential service would support post-treatment family and community connection, where these may have broken down as a result of alcohol and other drug related issues.

Aboriginal communities are significantly impacted by alcohol and other drug related issues, contributing to the over-representation of Aboriginal people in corrections and child protection services.

WANADA and the alcohol and other drug services sector believes an Aboriginal residential service in the State's south will result in stronger communities, increased wellbeing, and contribute to cost savings at high end services such as prisons. The planning and implementation of this service needs to be prioritised and fast-tracked.

Election Commitment

WANADA recognises the WA Labor Government made an election commitment in the 2017 election campaign to deliver a residential service in the South West. Noting existing community need and service gaps, WANADA considers the Aboriginal residential service initiative to be a high priority. All options to facilitate a fast-tracked implementation must be considered in consultation with the Noongar community.

Outcome

- Long identified community needs in the state's South addressed
- Stronger Noongar community
- Improved outcomes for Aboriginal alcohol and other drug consumers
- Reduced systems costs
- Delivery of the Plan's significant milestone

² South West Native Title Settlement Factsheet, 5 July 2016

Continue to be guided by *Better Choices Better Lives*

Recommendation

Continue to fund the implementation of the Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drug Services Plan 2015-2025 “*Better Choices Better Lives*” against current timeframes, and investigate alternative funding mechanisms to deliver initiatives.

Overview

Better Choices Better Lives was developed through substantial community and sector consultation. As such WANADA supports the implementation of *Better Choices Better Lives*’ alcohol and other drug specific actions. At WANADA’s State Election 2017 Forum, all parties present (WA Labor, Liberal and Greens) expressed support and a commitment to the *Better Choices Better Lives* going forward.

If *Better Choices Better Lives* were to be fully implemented it would save the community \$504 million over 12 years.³

WANADA recognises the impact of the current fiscal and economic environment, and is concerned that this will impact on the realisation of *Better Choices Better Lives*, including the cost savings. WANADA believes it is a priority that the State Government continue to progress initiatives under *Better Choices Better Lives*, and investigate alternative funding models to achieve its milestones.

WANADA and the alcohol and other drug services sector believe it is in the State Government’s interest to support the establishment of alternative funding sources. A range of funding models that enhance corporate, philanthropic and community confidence to contribute to the alcohol and other drug sector development, aligned with the Government’s endorsed *Better Choices Better Lives*, needs to be investigated and trialled.

Outcome

- Delivery of *Better Choices Better Lives*
- Increased alcohol and other drug services to meet community need
- Significant social cost savings

³ Western Australian Mental Health Commission, *Western Australian Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drug Services Plan 2015-2025 (Better Choices. Better Lives)*. State of Western Australia, 2015, p. 23.

Maintain Existing Funding Arrangements

Recommendation

Funding for the treatment and support measures under the Western Australian Meth Strategy 2016 is maintained.

Overview

In 2016 the Western Australian Government invested:

- \$6.2 million over two years for 60 beds at rehabilitation services – 52 rehabilitation beds and eight low-medical withdrawal beds; and
- \$3.7 million over two years to increase the existing state-wide network of Community Alcohol and Drug Services, through an additional 13 full time staff, which enabled more people to access prevention and treatment services.

These initiatives are under review and a decision will be required to extend funding in the 2017-18 State Budget.

It has been estimated that these low-medical withdrawal and residential rehabilitation initiatives will provide approximately 190 additional treatment episodes a year. This represents an estimated nine per cent increase in 2016 residential rehabilitation and low-medical withdrawal service provision.

It is imperative that funding for these services is maintained and extended through and beyond the 2017-18 funding period. These services provide substantial support and treatment to communities across the State.

Demand for alcohol and other drug treatment in Western Australian continues to far outpace supply. In this environment, it is both economically and socially responsible to continue to fund the delivery of these services. Further, any extension of funding must be of a suitable length such that it provides certainty for service providers, and does not adversely impact on future service provision and the retention of skilled staff.

Failure to continue funding these services will result in a widening of the gulf between community demand and supply. This will place undue pressure on individuals, families and communities in need of support. It will also place pressure on other community and acute health services, increasing the cost of service provision in these areas.

Outcome

- Delivery against the WA Mental Health, Alcohol and other Drug Services Plan 2015 – 2025
- Continuation of alcohol and other drug services to meet critical community need
- Ongoing, significant social cost savings

Fast Track Dedicated Alcohol and Other Drug Rehabilitation Prisons

Recommendation

Fast track the implementation of the WA Labor Government election commitment to deliver two dedicated alcohol and other drug rehabilitation prisons, and ensure these facilities employ the well-evidenced intensive therapeutic community treatment model.

Overview

During the 2017 State Election, WA Labor committed to creating two dedicated alcohol and other drug rehabilitation prisons, one for men and one for women. WANADA strongly supported this commitment, noting the importance of providing appropriate treatment services that address prisoner health issues and reduce the risk of recidivism.

It is acknowledged that a large proportion of the WA prison population has substance abuse problems.⁴ The introduction of increased rehabilitation services in prisons has the potential to deliver long term budget and social savings to Western Australia, by reducing the number of people reoffending and the need to build and service more prisons.

With substantial funding being directed to address alcohol and other drug issues in the prison population, it is imperative proven treatment models are adopted for best outcomes.

The intensive therapeutic community model has substantial evidentiary backing, and has been proven to deliver effective outcomes. While it has been adopted in jurisdictions across Australia and New Zealand, it is not used in Western Australia's prisons.

The National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre (NDARC) reviewed the available research to consider the effect of therapeutic community treatment on criminal recidivism following release from prison:

An evaluation of a TC for incarcerated women found that while 30 per cent of women in a non-treated control group were convicted of another offence following release, only 13 per cent of those who completed the treatment program were reconvicted. (Mosher & Phillips, 2006).⁵

Outcome

- Delivery of a key 2017 election commitment that contributes towards meeting the WA Mental Health, Alcohol and other Drug Services Plan 2015 – 2025
- Increased alcohol and other drug services to meet community need
- Significant social cost savings
- Reduced recidivism and future crime

⁴ Western Australian Government, Western Australian Meth Strategy 2016, p. 10.

⁵ Larney, S., Mathers, B. and Dolan, K. (2007), *Illicit drug treatment in prison: Detoxification, drug-free units, therapeutic communities and opioid substitution treatment*, Sydney: National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre. p.16