



## **WANADA Submission to the Department of Health Adult Mental Health Centre Proposed Service Model Consultation**

WANADA welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed service model for the Adult Mental Health Centres.

Problematic alcohol and other drug use typically co-occurs with a range of health and social issues, including primary health; other acute and chronic health; domestic and family violence; relationship/social disconnection; child protection; corrections; housing and homelessness issues. Regarding mental health co-occurrence, 50 - 76% of people presenting to Australian alcohol and other drug treatment services have a cooccurring (typically a high prevalence) mental health condition.<sup>i</sup>

For Western Australian specialist alcohol and other drug services, addressing co-occurring needs is considered the norm, rather than the exception.

The rates of co-occurrence between alcohol and other drug use and related health and social conditions highlights the importance of:

- services being aware of their capability limitations to address multiple concerns beyond their specialty focus;
- services having the capability to appropriately screen, and provide brief intervention and referral to specialist services, to address capability gaps;
- a commitment to sustain a connected system of services; and
- the establishment of throughcare and care coordination, supported navigation and negotiated easy service access, to enable a person's needs to be holistically addressed.

The Western Australian Mental Health, Alcohol and other Drug Services Plan 2015-2025<sup>ii</sup> identifies optimal service levels for both sectors. As the Plan is funder neutral, it is essential that the design and introduction of new initiatives are coordinated across funding bodies, to ensure an optimised system of services.

There are a range of activities underway in Western Australia that have implications for the design of the proposed service model. The model must be designed to complement, rather than complicate, current initiatives, which for the alcohol and other drug sector include:

- Multiple State Government processes to identify, consult and implement crisis service options for alcohol and other drug users, including capacity to address co-occurring needs. These include the establishment of the Midland Crisis Centre, consultation and service design regarding one-stop-shop options, and crisis service solutions.
- The recent expansion of telephone options for alcohol and other drug (via the AOD Support Service) and mental health support.

In addition, there are a significant range of recent State Government mental health funding announcements, including a 20 bed adult community care unit.

**WANADA recommends that the proposed service model is subject to further consultation with the Western Australian Government and alcohol and other drug services, to ensure it is complementary to existing initiatives.**

## Proposed Service Capability

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The service is stated as providing 'integrated care' for people whose concerns regarding alcohol and other drug use co-exist with mental ill-health. It is unclear if the proposed service model intends to establish a mental health service with capability to identify and respond to co-occurring alcohol and other drug issues, or a service that equally addresses harms associated with alcohol and other drug use alongside mental health issues.

If the service intends to address co-occurring issues and provide a 'low stigma soft entry point' for consumers, it is recommended the service model includes appropriate language that does not contribute to alcohol and other drug related stigma and discrimination (e.g. 'misuse').

While the model includes reference to addiction specialists and alcohol and other drug workers, the model inadequately describes alcohol and other drug treatment needs. The National Framework for Alcohol, Tobacco and other Drug Treatment 2019-2029 provides guidance on terminology and components of treatment.

## Proposed Service Elements

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WANADA recommends additional local consultation on each of the proposed service elements, to ensure these do not duplicate existing services and initiatives in Western Australia.

It will be essential that the Mental Health Centre has a clear understanding of its capability to address alcohol and other drug needs (to mitigate risks of harm). An awareness of co-occurring capability will be essential to support the effective use of alcohol and other drug specific screening and assessment tools, treatment matching and coordinating referrals with specialist services.

Referral must also include harm reduction service options, so that people who intend to continue to use are supported to use in a less harmful way.

**Workforce and governance** – Workforce considerations should include:

- staff understanding about alcohol and other drug issues and prevalence;
- co-occurring competencies for all staff;
- awareness of external partner services that can provide alcohol and other drug expertise; and
- management leading a commitment to addressing co-occurring issues, and ensuring appropriate supervision of staff.

WANADA notes that the proposed service would require to be compliant with relevant safety and quality standards, including the National Standards for Mental Health Services 2010. If the service intends to deliver alcohol and other drug services, there will be implications regarding compliance with the National Quality Framework for Drug and Alcohol Treatment Services.

**Evaluation** – Given the intent to provide co-occurring treatment and support, it is essential that the pilot evaluation captures performance regarding the determination of service

capability, and the application of screening, assessment and referral practices to specialist alcohol and other drug services.

## About WANADA

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The Western Australian Network of Alcohol and other Drug Agencies (WANADA) is the peak body for the specialist 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 organisations, which include community alcohol and other drug counselling; therapeutic communities; residential rehabilitation; intoxication management; harm reduction; peer based; prevention; and community development services.

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<sup>i</sup> Australian Government Department of Health (2016). Centre of Research Excellence in Mental Health and Substance Use at NDARC (National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre) at UNSW Australia (The University of New South Wales). *Guidelines on the management of co-occurring alcohol and other drug and mental health conditions in alcohol and other drug treatment settings* (second edition)

<sup>ii</sup> Western Australian Government (2019). Western Australian Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drug Services Plan Update 2018.