

Submission to Consultation on Youth Initiatives

The Western Australian Network of Alcohol and other Drug Agencies (WANADA) welcomes the opportunity to provide input into the consultation process for the Youth Step-Up Step-Down Service, Youth Long-Term Housing and Support Program and Youth Psychosocial Packages. We would be happy to discuss or expand on the below submission.

WANADA recognises that this submission is being lodged parallel to broader stakeholder consultations by the Nous Group.

Determining Alcohol and Other Drug Capability

WANADA notes that the majority of initiatives are intended to address the needs of young people experiencing mental health issues “with or without co-occurring alcohol and other drug issues”. This wording suggests that these particular initiatives will utilise existing mental health service models that have been adapted to include some capability to address co-occurring alcohol and other drug issues.

The services’ capability to specifically address co-occurring alcohol and other drug use (and the severity of harm) is not currently defined. This will have a subsequent impact on other elements of the service models and the requirements of the service provider.

- The step-up step-down and long-term housing and support programs are both described as providing a mix of clinical and support services for people with or without co-occurring alcohol and other drug issues. It is unclear whether the service interventions to specifically address alcohol and other drug use in this context will be clinical or support focussed, and the severity of alcohol and other drug related harm that the service will have the capability to respond to. These factors will have different implications for staffing roles and expertise, and organisation capability.
- The interventions (e.g. clinical treatment, support, harm reduction, crisis response, prevention and education), pathways to other specific services (including alcohol and other drug treatment), and capacity to coordinate care for those people experiencing alcohol and other drug related harms will need to be specifically defined for each service.
- The service models will need to fully describe the required partnerships with the alcohol and other drug treatment sector. This is particularly important given that the target group for these initiatives (16-24 years of age) will mean that the young person may be eligible for both young person-specific (12-24 years of age) and adult alcohol and other drug services (18+ years of age).
- In instances where a person’s needs exceed the capability of the service, the model needs to describe transitioning requirements to alcohol and other drug clinical services (which in the context of the alcohol and other drug sector includes community treatment services).

WANADA notes that the intended age range is 16-24, as opposed to the 12-24 years of age cohort outlined in the *Young People’s Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drug Use: Priorities for Action 2020-2025*.

Clarity regarding housing and psychosocial support

WANADA notes that two programs will include a housing element (long-term housing and support program; and psychosocial support packages). WANADA supports the inclusion of initiatives that seek to address housing and homelessness and support independent living.

- It is currently unclear in the service description whether housing access will be via private rental, or through service owned/operated stock (e.g. transitional housing).
- Alcohol and other drug related issues will require distinct consideration in this context, given these can be barriers to accessing or maintaining housing.

WANADA notes that what constitutes a psychosocial support package is currently unclear. There is a need to build a shared understanding amongst stakeholders regarding what these packages will deliver and how they will be administered. It is also unclear the extent to which this initiative is a mental health specific initiative, or whether co-occurring alcohol and other drug issues are in scope.