Supporting the workforce to build capacity in mental health, alcohol and other drugs

Wednesday, 28 October 2020

$1.2 million funding to deliver targeted workforce development programs
Focus on the peer workforce; Aboriginal culturally secure services; trauma-informed care; and employment pathways

The McGowan Government has allocated an immediate additional $1.2 million to deliver workforce development in the mental health, alcohol and other drug community sector.

This initial suite of programs will support workforce development in key areas identified by peak bodies, service providers, stakeholders and consumers and carers.

They cover key focus areas of need including building the peer workforce; Aboriginal culturally secure services; building capacity in trauma-informed care; and providing employment pathways.

The programs follow today’s release of the Government's Western Australian Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drug Workforce Strategic Framework 2020-2025, which outlines priority areas and principles to guide the growth and development of the mental health, alcohol and other drug workforce in Western Australia.

The workforce development program will include future phases and will support peer workers, the Aboriginal workforce, clinicians, counsellors, social workers and more who assist and care for people with mental health, alcohol and other drug issues.

Earlier this month, the Government announced a record $1 billion for mental health, alcohol and other drug services in the 2020 State Budget.

Programs underway to boost the sector include:
Expanded suicide prevention services totalling $49.6 million over four years; Alternatives to emergency departments being established including Mental Health Observation Areas and Safe Haven Cafés; Initiatives being delivered in response to the Methamphetamine Action Plan Taskforce Report, including those addressing alcohol and other drug crisis intervention; Western Australia’s State-wide Recovery College for mental health, alcohol and other drugs, launched last month; 84 alcohol and other drug community beds delivered since 2016 and 10 more to be established, including an alcohol and other drug intervention service; and 110 inpatient mental health beds and 68 community mental health beds being established over the next four years.

In a crisis call Lifeline on 13 11 14, for alcohol and drug support call the Alcohol and Drug Support Line, and to find local mental health, alcohol or drug services, visit http://www.myservices.org.au

Comments attributed to Mental Health Minister Roger Cook:

"There are thousands of amazing workers who care for and support those of us who are struggling with their mental health, alcohol or other drugs every day.

"More than 450,000 people are supported by government-funded mental health, alcohol and other drug services across WA each year.

"By supporting those who care for others, we will be building the capacity we need in our community to enable all Western Australians to live fulfilling lives.

"We have many projects in the works across the State to deliver better and improved support and care to Western Australians - and we need to ensure we have appropriately skilled staff ready to deliver them."

Comments attributed to Mental Health Network Clinical Co-Lead Dr Helen McGowan:

"The quality of mental health care for vulnerable people depends on the skills and values of the people who care for them and so it is critical that our system ensures that our staff are trained, resourced and supported to provide high-quality, responsive and collaborative care.

"Workforce development requires a plan that ensures there are opportunities for training and professional development for peer workers, novices, generalists, experts and specialists across the various disciplines, professions and parts of the mental health sector."
"It is hoped that this framework supports the development of specific workforce plans that can address key gaps in our system."

**Comments attributed to WA Network of Alcohol and Other Drug Agencies CEO Jill Rundle:**

"Congratulations to the WA Government for recognising the importance of a Workforce Strategic Framework for the mental health and alcohol and other drug sectors. It is pleasing to see so many relevant strategies and actions incorporated.

"This strategic framework establishes a solid partnership approach that supports the foundation of sector quality and sustainability."

**Comments attributed to WA Association for Mental Health CEO Taryn Harvey:**

"The WA Association for Mental Health was pleased to work with the Mental Health Commission in the development of this framework.

"The framework is a clear acknowledgement that well supported workers who have access to targeted and responsive professional development opportunities are a crucial component in delivering high-quality, contemporary community mental health supports.

"This paves the way for continuing to build a robust workforce of skilled people that can deliver our vital community mental health services."

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