



WANADA Submission to Productivity Commission Inquiry on the Social and Economic Benefits of Improving Mental Health

WANADA welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Productivity Commission Inquiry on the Social and Economic Benefits of Improving Mental Health. WANADA would welcome further opportunities to discuss or expand on this submission. Please contact Ethan James at 08 6557 9400 or at ethan.james@wanada.org.au.

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; harm reduction; peer based; prevention; and community development services.

Introduction

WANADA notes that the Productivity Commission is considering whether substance use disorder will be considered within the scope of this inquiry. WANADA is supportive of the inclusion of substance use disorder, and has developed its submission on this basis.

A significant number of people experience mental health and alcohol and other drug co-occurring issues. In responding to this need, both mental health, and alcohol and other drug services:

- have distinct roles and treatment methodologies to address the needs of service consumers;
- must be supported to assess and optimise their respective capability to address co-occurring issues, including cross-sector partnerships and collaborations;
- require tailored policy, planning and service commissioning environments that reflect the uniqueness of each sector, while also supporting each sector to appropriately address co-occurring concerns.

It is WANADA's view that to fully capture the social and economic benefits of addressing substance use disorder, the Inquiry should recognise and account for the distinct sector roles and the social and economic benefit of both the mental health and specialist alcohol and other drug service sectors.

How sectors beyond health can contribute to improving mental health and economic participation and productivity

The specialist alcohol and other drug service sector in Western Australia contributes to improving mental health, economic participation and productivity through the provision of treatment and support for people experiencing harms association with alcohol and other drug use, including those with co-occurring mental health concerns.

The Western Australian non-government specialist alcohol and other drug service sector's capacity to address co-occurring mental health concerns is a result of substantial Commonwealth investment in sector

capacity building. The Improved Services Initiative / Substance Misuse Service Delivery Grant Funds (from 2008 to 2017) provided funding to equip non-government alcohol and other drug organisations to better address the co-occurring mental health needs of alcohol and other drug service consumers. Support was provided through a range of strategies including:

- professional development;
- capability assessment to inform organisation improvements;
- resource development and information/research dissemination; and
- enhanced partnerships and linkages.

WANADA was also directly funded to coordinate sector wide capacity building, as well as to enhance cross-sectoral support and strategic partnerships between mental health, other related sectors and alcohol and other drug organisations. WANADA undertook an evaluation of the first three years of the initiative, demonstrating significant improved capability to address co-occurring issues across all strategy areas.

This funding stream is no longer available, despite the ongoing potential benefit in continuous improvement of the capacity of alcohol and other drug services to address co-occurring issues such as mental health. It was unfortunate that comparable funding was not offered to support the capacity of mental health services to better address co-occurring alcohol and other drug concerns.

This capacity building initiative provides an effective model for all sectors within and beyond health. While there are not enough mental health or alcohol and other drug services to meet demand, capacity building ensures the efficiency and effectiveness of available resources.

The effectiveness of current programs and initiatives across all jurisdictions to improve mental health, suicide prevention and participation, including by governments, employers and professional groups

Effectively addressing the harms associated with alcohol and other drug use, including substance use disorder and co-occurring issues, require a range of services, each of which applies specialist expertise and targeted approaches.

It is recognised that the separate treatment and support service sectors (such as mental health, alcohol and other drug, emergency departments, homelessness, domestic and family violence etc.) do not interface optimally. This has driven a range of isolated responses, such as:

- relationship building between cross-sector services;
- place-based planning and collective commissioning processes;
- capacity building funding; and
- machinery of government changes to support more "joined up" sector policy and planning.

From WANADA's perspective, while there remains substantial opportunity to improve cross-sector linkages and responses to co-occurring issues within programs, this does not necessitate purchasing one-stop-shop or generalist service delivery. Rather, the policy, planning and service commissioning environment must support service integration that delivers outcomes through multiple specialist service collaborations and care coordination. This form of service integration both recognises, and supports the sustainment of, the strengths of each respective specialist sector.

A framework to measure and report the outcomes of mental health policies and investment on participation, productivity and economic growth over the long term

If substance use disorder is to be considered within scope of this Inquiry, further consideration will be required to develop an appropriate framework to measure and report the outcomes of policies and investment in initiatives that address substance use disorder.

WANADA notes that the *Parliamentary Joint Committee on Law Enforcement Inquiry into Crystal Methamphetamine (Ice) Final Report* (March 2018) recommended an inquiry into the cost and benefits of the National Drug Strategy. WANADA supports this recommendation, and believes that it would provide a parallel analysis, complementary to the current Inquiry, and would more holistically capture the outcomes including addressing substance use disorder.