TheMHS Awards 2017
Nomination for Exceptional Contribution Award
The Hon. Helen Morton MLC
Former Western Australian Minister for Mental Health

Contents

Additional Description  2
Evidence to support Selection Criteria 1 & 2  3
Conclusion  12
Referees  12
Appendix of supporting material  13
Helen Morton CV  21
Additional Description

Mrs Helen Morton entered politics in 2005 and was Western Australian Minister for Mental Health; Disability Services; Child Protection from 14 December 2010 - 31 March 2016. Helen initially entered politics with the desire to make a difference and reform mental health. During her two terms as Minister for Mental Health, Helen made a significant contribution to WA’s mental health landscape and was responsible for implementing many important reforms.

Her passion for mental health reform contributed to the establishment of Australia’s first Mental Health Commission, the State’s first independent Minister for Mental Health, the enactment of a modernised, contemporary Mental Health Act, completion of the WA Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drug Services Plan 2015 – 2025 and the State’s first suicide prevention strategy. Helen was an integral supporter of the establishment of a Mental Health Commission in WA in 2010 with a vision mental health would gain prominence and come out from the shadows of health. She was unafraid to challenge the status quo, including the medical establishment.

As a minister who had frequent contact with service users and staff, Helen was uniquely informed of the day-to-day reality of people living with mental health issues. This was evident in her championing of consumer and carer rights in WA’s Mental Health Act. The strong reporting requirements around patient assault are directly due to her influence. Helen was a firm advocate for consumers and their families being able to access personalised, modern and high quality mental health services close to their homes. This became evident within the release of WA’s 10 Year Plan, which set a bold agenda and encouraged all members of the community to work together for better mental health.

The 10 Year Plan was built around recovery principles and an evidence-based approach with consumer, family and carer inclusion at the forefront, bringing WA’s mental health service delivery in line with global best practice. As a member of the National Disability Reform Council, Helen introduced the National Disability Insurance Scheme to WA and commissioned its rollout State-wide. She strongly supported psycho-social disability being included in the NDIS and advocated for people with psycho-social disability to benefit from the scheme.

Helen was also responsible for ensuring funding to establish WA’s first consumer peak body - and made a difference unparalleled by any other health minister to WA’s consumer movement - when she committed funding to Consumers of Mental Health WA in 2011.

More poignantly, when a young woman took her own life following a discharge from a local hospital, Helen listened to the father and a small number of other families in similar situations and ensured that their views were considered in the resultant inquiry. Helen is a self-confessed “TheMHS enthusiast” and attends the national conference every year. The now traditional TheMHS ‘commissions session’ is a direct result of her influence. She was especially supportive when TheMHS came to Perth in 2014 during her term. Mrs Morton’s political career ends in May 2017.
Criteria 1 - Evidence that the person has made a significant contribution to the field of mental health on a local, state or national level.

Helen Morton’s contribution to the Western Australian mental health field has been unprecedented. Helen was instrumental in the establishment of the following major reforms (for which supporting evidence for each point is further detailed below):

1. WA’s first Mental Health Commission; merger of Alcohol and Drug Office with Mental Health Commission; and independent Minister for Mental Health
2. Reformed Mental Health Act 2014
3. Mental Health Ten Year Plan
4. First consumer-led peak body in WA
5. WA’s Suicide Prevention Strategy

1. Established the first Mental Health Commission in WA

Prior to Helen Morton entering politics, a Mental Health Commission had not been established in Australia. WA was the first jurisdiction in Australia to establish a Mental Health Commission, and its creation revolutionised the management and service of mental health.

A Mental Health Commission is significant because it widens the scope of services for consumers. Often, when mental health is managed under the public health system, it becomes too focused on the acute / hospitalisation end of the mental health spectrum. WA’s Mental Health Commission offers a holistic approach to mental health services, and incorporates factors such as employment, housing, mental health promotion and prevention, physical health, and community support into service responses. The Commission is vital to the whole picture of wellbeing rather than concentrating on crisis end of mental health care.

Similarly retaining an independent and dedicated Minister for Mental Health keeps the focus on prevention, community supports, and holistic very broad spectrum approaches to mental health outside of the public health system and health service funding.

WA’s first Mental Health Commission came to fruition in March 2010, and although Helen would not be appointed as Minister for Mental Health until later that same year, behind the scenes she was crucially advocating, planning for, and anticipating the first Commission in the lead up to its eventual establishment.

As Opposition spokesperson in 2008, Helen wrote the mental health policy originally outlining the creation of Australia’s first Mental Health Commission, which the Liberal Opposition took to the 2008 election. Five years after the Commission was established, Helen authorised the merger of the Alcohol and Drug Office and the Mental Health Commission, with the aim of improving the delivery of holistic care for people with co-occurring problems.

Helen was very proud that WA paved the way nationally, inspiring the movement for other Mental Health Commissions to be established in most other Australian jurisdictions since.
It quickly became evident Helen’s state reforms had lasting impacts at a national level. Queensland Mental Health Commissioner Dr Lesley van Schoubroeck said: “Though she was a consummate politician, Helen was respected nationally by many politicians of all parties for her drive to reform mental health.”

“There is no doubt that Helen Morton created the parameters for major change in the mental health system in Western Australia when, as Opposition spokesperson in 2008, she wrote the mental health policy which the Liberal Opposition took to the 2008 election.

“The policy promised the creation of a separate Mental Health portfolio and the creation of Australia’s first Mental Health Commission. Although when elected to government she was not the first Minister for Mental Health, her vision was quickly implemented and she ultimately to charge of the portfolio taking both the Mental Health Commission and the mental health portfolio very quickly into a national leadership role.

“She created a change process which has empowered consumers and family members in a way that has helped reshape the system.”

- Joe Calleja, Former CEO Richmond Wellbeing and current founding director of Calleja Consulting

“The urgent priority in WA is to improve the way in which individualised care is provided and co-ordinated for people with mental health problems.

“Too many Western Australians with a mental illness end up in our hospitals. Too many relapse and have to return to hospital because there is no alternative.

“This new approach will ensure that mental health consumers and carers can have more input into the planning and delivery of mental health services. We are recognising that many of the influences of good mental health, and of mental illness, are determined by factors outside the health system.

“The announcement today [of the first Mental Health Commission] will ensure there is more scope to work with the community sector. Their commitment and capacity to work with people means the non-government sector has the flexibility to be innovative and respond to emerging.”

- Former WA Premier Colin Barnett

Supporting links


2. Reformed Mental Health Act 2014

While Helen Morton was Minister for Mental Health, she delivered the new Mental Health Act 2014, which had been in development for more than a decade, and was designed to underpin a broad cultural shift in the management of mental health problems and the compulsory treatment of people with mental illness.

The Mental Health Act opened up a new and modern raft of rights for consumer and carers, and brought them in line with international best practice, reflecting a deeper understanding of recovery and personal choice, and upholding basic human rights.

Two of the most significant impacts of the new Act was the access all consumers have to an advocacy service by default upon compulsory hospital admission and how carers and family members would be kept informed about their loved ones’ care and consulted as part of the recovery journey and treatment plans.

Supporting link

“From a family perspective, Helen’s impact in mental health was more than the substantial changes she delivered during her time as Minister.

It was more than the creation of the Mental Health Commission and the new Mental Health Act that finally put recovery and families in of the systemic picture. It was more than the Start Court, the Western Australian Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drug Services Plan 2015-202, initiatives which involved the voices of families in their construction and acknowledged the complex challenges families affected by mental health issues face.

It was even more than the authorising direction she gave ensuring families and carers were involved in the co-production of systemic reform and service delivery directions within mental health services.

The single most important thing Helen gave to families from her time as Minister was reason for hope.

Hope that change was finally really going to happen, after years of inaction.

Hope that resources of the kind that families had been crying out for would finally be funded, after years of underfunding.

Hope that our voices would be heard, and acted upon.

Hope that the realities we were living, realities that were often distressing, isolating and stigmatising, would be validated, and addressed. We felt as though she ‘got it’, which is not something one usually says about a politician.

Helen’s legacy lives on in emerging innovations such as the Recovery College of WA, and will only continue to grow as changes begun under her watch hit the ground and gather pace.”

- Kerry Hawkins, Carer / Family Member Advocate and WAAMH President
Hon Helen Morton MLC, Former Minister for Mental Health; Disability Services; Child Protection

Landmark new Mental Health Act for WA

Monday, 30 November 2015

- Significant changes to mental health law start today in Western Australia
- More recognition and rights for families, carers and people with mental illness

Announcing the start of Western Australia's long-awaited new Mental Health Act, Mental Health Minister Helen Morton said today was a day of celebration and an important milestone for people with mental illness and their family and carers.

Mrs Morton said the Mental Health Act 2014, which had been in development for more than a decade, would underpin a broad cultural shift in the management of mental health problems and the treatment of people with mental illness.

"It has been long acknowledged that the previous Act was out of date and not in line with contemporary mental health practice," she said. "I am glad to see so much enthusiasm and support for the commencement of the Act today.

"For the first time the family and carers who support people with mental illness will have a legal right to be more informed and involved in treatment and care decisions. This is a momentous day for the many people who have advocated on behalf of people experiencing mental illness. The Act will enhance the treatment and care of people living with mental illness and strengthen their rights and protections."

The legislation was drafted after extensive State-wide consultation and provides for:

- tele-psychiatric assessment in regional areas
- greater recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and, where applicable, access to culturally appropriate treatment
- extra safeguards for children experiencing mental illness
- a Charter of Mental Health Care Principles to guide and set expectations for mental health services
- new levels of rights protection through the Mental Health Tribunal, the Western Australian Chief Psychiatrist, the Health and Disability Services Complaints Office, and the new Mental Health Advocacy Service.

The Minister said the Mental Health Commission, Office of the Chief Psychiatrist and Department of Health had developed a range of training materials around implementation of the Act. More than 3,500 frontline mental health clinicians have undertaken the training. A range of other professions and groups have also undertaken targeted training including non-mental health clinicians, ED staff, GPs, Department of Education staff and WA Police.

"I would like to thank all those who have completed training in preparation for the new legislation. I would also like to thank the many thousands of people across Western Australia who contributed to the formulation and implementation of this important new legislation," Mrs Morton said.

The Minister said the new legislation was an integral component of the State Government's mental health agenda to provided increased services and supports in the community.

Fact File:

- 1,300 written submissions helped inform the drafting of the new law
- The Mental Health Act 2014 replaces the Mental Health Act 1996
3. Introduced The Western Australian Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drug Services Plan 2015 - 2025

Helen has always been a firm advocate for consumers and their families being able to access personalised, modern and high quality mental health services close to their homes. This vision materialised with the release of WA’s 10 Year Plan in December 2014, which set a refreshing blueprint encouraging all levels of government, the private and not-for-profit sectors, consumers, and families to work together to achieve better mental health outcomes.

The 10 Year Plan was built around recovery principles, person-centred and evidence-based approaches, a prevention-focus, with consumer, family and carer inclusion at the forefront, in an effort to bring WA’s mental health service delivery in-line with global best practice and standards.

At the time of the plan’s announcement, Helen said the State Government needed to “enhance prevention programs and strategies, intervene earlier and increase community-based services to reduce reliance on the out-dated system which consisted of expensive hospital beds and substantially improve the ability of consumers and their families to navigate the system.”

The 10 year plan was a significant contribution to the field of mental health in WA because it has set the tone and priority of services for the immediate future and offered a clear guideline about how WA can realistically achieve a better and more effective system for mental health care. It strongly supports personal choice and community mental health services for individual wellbeing and recovery.

If the plan is implemented correctly and supported with the appropriate levels of investment it requires, it will ideally lead to many long-term health benefits for individuals, their cares and family members.

Acting as a more efficient model for the health system too, the plan’s implementation and focus on prevention will hopefully result in significant costs savings, usually accrued most heavily at the hospital / acute end of end of public services.

Supporting links

Please see supporting appendices on pages 17 – 18.


4. Funded Consumers of Mental Health WA

In 2011, during Helen Morton’s time in government, she dedicated establishment funding for a mental health consumers’ association, in hopes of amplifying the voice of consumers and the weight of their invaluable views, within the mental health sector.

Consumers of Mental Health WA (CoMHWA), which was first established in 2005 by a group of committed and passionate people who shared a lived experience of mental health issues was the successful applicant through an expression of interest process.

The decision to fund CoMHWA was important because the association provided a strong voice to advocate on behalf of each consumer and to support and empower them. Some of CoMHWA’s other objectives include informing, educating and raising awareness and acceptance for consumer rights and wellbeing; promotion and support of the peer workforce; recovery with and for consumers; and leading change.

Media Statements

Hon Helen Morton MLC, Former Minister for Mental Health; Disability Services; Child Protection

A voice for consumers of mental health services to be established

Friday, 8 April 2011

Acting on a major election commitment, Mental Health Minister Helen Morton today called for expressions of interest to form a consumer peak body to represent people with an experience of mental illness in Western Australia.

In a raft of changes to reform the State’s mental health service delivery, the Mental Health Commission is seeking interested parties to develop the WA Association of Mental Health Consumers. The commission has allocated up to $250,000 per year to fund the body, the first of its kind in WA.

Mrs Morton said the WA Association of Mental Health Consumers would provide an informed and assertive collective voice, designed to protect the rights and promote the wellbeing of people with a mental illness.

“Consumers have described this as a watershed in mental health reform. The voice of mental health consumers will not be denied and now is the time for that voice to be heard through the form of a peak body,” she said. “This new association will give them a strong voice to advocate on behalf of each consumer and to support and empower them.”

The Minister said the association would focus on mental health law reform and the recognition of, and respect for, the rights of people living with a mental illness.

It will also advocate for an expanded role for consumer consultants, peer support workers and consumer representatives, as well as working to deliver better information and referral services for people living with mental illness.

5. WA’s Suicide Prevention Strategy

Prior to Helen Morton’s role as Minister for Mental Health, investment in and focus on suicide prevention had been largely side-lined by the WA State Government.

In May 2015, Helen announced $26 million funding over four years for the new Suicide Prevention 2020 strategy, aiming to halve suicides and attempts in WA over the following decade – this level of funding doubled upon previous investment allocated in the state budget.

Prioritising and lifting investment in suicide prevention was a vital and urgent move, as it’s estimated nearly 400 people a year in WA take their life by suicide.

After a strong focus on raising awareness and reducing stigma around suicide initially, the strategy unveiled under Helen concentrated on a plan to target high-risk groups. It also emphasised evidence-based training for community facilitators as the first point of contact for mental health problems and suicide; and delivered initiatives to foster resilience and strengthen families to improve mental health and reduce the suicide rate.

Supporting links


6. Justice reforms: police co-response; mental health court; patient transport

Crucial justice reforms implemented by Helen Morton made a significant step towards rectifying the distressing situations often experienced by people with serious mental health issues when they first encounter police or other first respondents when being admitted to hospital involuntarily or transferred between hospitals.

A two-year police and mental health co-response trial was launched in 2010 with the aim of diverting people with mental illness away from the criminal justice system to the health and support networks they need. This move was in response to the tripling number of police attending mental health-related call outs.

This collaboration marked an important step in recognising the role police play in approaching people experiencing mental distress and psychotic episodes. The initiative aimed to reduce recidivism for people with mental health issues through early intervention and enhanced assessment, treatment and support.

Helen also established the first mental health court in WA, which provides a diversion option in Perth’s magistrate courts by offering enhanced assessment, court liaison and support for people with mental illness.
Patient transport methods were revolutionised under Helen’s administration, with a trial in 2014 aiming to offer a safe, respectful and timely form of transport for people placed on a transport order under the former Mental Health Act 1996.

This trial marked a substantial contribution because not only did it help de-stigmatise mental illness by using appropriate patient transfers with suitably trained staff as opposed to police officers, it also meant unwell people requiring specialist care spent less time in emergency departments waiting for transportation. The WA State Government went on to commit funds to develop the transport service initiative, to be delivered under the new Mental Health Act.

**Supporting links**


**Criteria 2 – Evidence that the person is doing something innovative or is maintaining a high standard of service.**

Helen Morton was an innovative politician driven to improve out-dated and traditional modes of operation, and strived for more efficient ways of tackling mental health system issues. Helen did not sit idly by and wait for things to happen, she was not afraid to challenge the status quo and stand up for basic human rights and quality of care.

Helen entered politics with a clear agenda to fuel her passion, and reform how the State Government managed mental health. Her vision, ideas and commitment to bring WA’s mental health services and standards up to global best practice positioned her both as an inspiration to her parliamentary colleagues and as a source of hope for consumers and carers in the community, often forced to deal with the fall out, and flow on effects of mental health crisis on a daily basis.
While it seems common within community mental health to use terms such as ‘recovery’ and ‘person and family-centred’, Helen introduced dialogue like this into the mainstream political landscape, capturing recovery-oriented language in her reforms and speeches. She helped shape the language used in public mental health services, as a means to restore dignity to people when may be in their most voiceless and vulnerable state.

One of Helen’s greatest qualities was her ability to service her community simply by listening to her community. Helen took the time to hear first-hand the concerns of drained carers, disappointed family members and demoralised consumers and used her powerful, decision–making position to address the problems raised about the mental health system, through her reform and funding choices. Helen attended community events, no matter how small or grass roots they appeared, and funded community mental health services she knew would help make a difference to the quality of people’s lives. Helen’s unwavering commitment to service the community remained her primary motive from the moment she entered politics in 2005 until she exited more than a decade later in 2017.

When Helen first began working in the health sector, she was “appalled at the obstacles and waste of resources created by bureaucratic inflexibility between local, state and federal responsibilities in health.” Helen’s clear vision for improving mental health became clear very early on in her political career, and she was driven to activate her creative ideas and innovations during her legacy.

“Common sense must prevail in finding new approaches to local, federal and state responsibilities in health,” Helen Morton stated in her Inaugural Speech in 2005. “My interest in health reform is well known. I have been involved in state and Commonwealth health agreement negotiations. Despite increased strong spending mental health still represents a major public challenge in WA, and that is an area to which I remain strongly committed.

“I pledge my commitment to use my imagination and creativity to contribute to the health, happiness, security and optimism of all Western Australians.”

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**Supporting links**


Conclusion

It is with great pleasure that I nominate Helen Morton for the very well deserved Exceptional Contribution Award as part of TheMHS Awards.

Helen Morton made sweeping changes to WA’s mental health landscape to bring it in line with global best practice and placed community mental health and consumer, carer and family involvement in the spotlight.

Helen’s professional, political and personal commitment to all facets of the mental health sector not only stood to improve many vulnerable individual’s lives, it also set the right example nationally and internationally for a modern approach to mental health service delivery.

Helen’s most notable political achievements which will forever set the bar in high mental health standards included WA’s updated and improved Mental Health Act; the comprehensive WA Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drug Services Plan 2015 – 2025; the establishment of WA’s first Mental Health Commission; the Suicide Prevention Strategy; her reforms to patient transfer, police co-response and establishing WA’s specialist mental health courts and funding WA’s mental health consumers’ association.

Helen always proved to be a strong supporter of the community-managed mental health sector and her flawless attendance to the causes, events and campaigns that mattered became evident to numerous members of not-for-profit mental health services.

Finally, Helen will always be treasured for her warm manner, great sense of humour, compassion, empathy, political aptitude and her approachable attitude - a rare combination seen in only a handful of Australian Ministers.

Referees

Removed for privacy
Appendix of Support Material – Photos, media coverage and statements

Helen Morton at the Arafmi walk for mental health awareness

Helen Morton at CEO’s Breakfast on World Mental Health Day 2014 with Chamber of Commerce and Industry CEO Deidre Willmott, former WAAMH president and current MP Alison Xamon, Elder Charlie Kickett, Mental Health Commissioner Tim Marney, WAAMH CEO Rod Astbury.

Helen Morton opens the Mental Health Week concert in 2014.
Helen Morton at the Mental Health Week Closing Ceremony 2015 joined by mental health sector colleagues, including Chief Psychiatrist of WA Nathan Gibson.

Helen Morton accompanied by WAAMH CEO Rod Astbury and former Mental Health Commissioner Eddie Bartnik, 2013.

Helen Morton speaking during Mental Health Week 2012 and 2015.

Helen Morton speaks and observes at the inaugural WA Mental Health Conference in 2016
Minister keen for more spending on prevention

A plan to establish a “recovery college” for mental health patients in WA that operates small and “the Haven of Hope” is building confidence among people with mental health issues.

The college – which treat patients on an individualised health intervention program – have had tremendous success in the US and the UK. The WA Association for Mental Health has urged the Barnett Government to introduce the college across WA.

“If the UK, recovery colleges have proven in the past that people can stay out of hospital if they are motivated,” he said. “The support for a recovery college in WA is overwhelming. It provides an opportunity for individuals experiencing mental health issues to overcome their challenges and explore an alternative route to recovery.”

“We are looking at this college developing as an entity in its own right,” he said.

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Celebrate

Mental health problems are very common, affecting one in five Australians each year. The reality is that someone we know, someone whose life has been severely interrupted by mental illness.

Mental Health Week is a time to raise awareness about mental health issues, to increase good mental health and well-being and highlight the need to reduce stigma associated with mental illness. It is also a time to acknowledge the importance of those who suffer and the mental health workforce in supporting and assisting people who are mentally unwell.

During Mental Health Week 2012 a key message at the forefront of the week’s activities is the need to promote the health of the general population and help people to live a full and productive life. Along with you and I, people with mental health problems need to lead a free and productive life. Those who are unwell need to be supported to make a positive change.

A highlight of Mental Health Week is the Mental Health Good Outcomes Awards, which celebrate individuals, groups, programs, services and partnerships across the government, private and community sectors that have made an outstanding contribution to the mental health of our fellow Australians.

Mental Health Day, on October 10, provides us with an opportunity to raise awareness of mental health and its impact on us all. People with mental health problems need to live in a safe and healthy environment, have access to quality mental health care, and to have the opportunity to lead effective and independent lives.

Celebrate Mental Health Week by taking part in the activities being held in your local area and addressing mental health during Mental Health Week 2012.

Kim Helen Morton MLA

Minister for Mental Health

The West Australian, October 2012

The Sunday Times, 26 April 2016

Health + Medicine, The West Australian, 4 October 2014

Mental Health solution

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Health + Medicine, The West Australian, 4 October 2014
Championing mental health in Western Australia – The Hon Helen Morton MLC

CITE MAGAZINE

Over the course of her career, the Hon Helen Morton MLC has been an advocate for improving Western Australia’s mental health services.

After graduating in 1969 with an Associate Diploma in Occupational Therapy from the Western Australian Institute of Technology (now Curtin University), Helen worked as an occupational therapist, applying her skills in mental health rehabilitation. She witnessed the obstacles facing WA’s mental health services: from limited funding and community treatment and support services, to the isolation of mental health services from other state health systems. This experience not only prompted her to develop private occupational therapy services in mental health, but also in nursing homes, hotels and day-care centres. It was also the start of a lifelong commitment to bettering mental health services in WA.

“Mental health still represents a major public challenge in Western Australia, and that is an area to which I remain strongly committed,” Helen says. “I want to make sure that people with a mental illness are given a fair go.”

To achieve her aims, Helen moved into health management, and over 13 years held senior executive positions in health organisations across WA, including roles at Central Wheatbelt Health Service, Midwest and Gascoyne Health Service, South Metropolitan Health Authority, Department of Health WA, Armadale Health Service, and Kalamunda Community Care.

“Mental health has been my passion and has seen me play an instrumental role in designing, building and managing the full spectrum of public mental health services across the country and metropolitan areas before embarking on a political career,” Helen says.

Currently the Minister for Mental Health, Disability Services and Child Protection, Helen has dedicated her time to reforming mental health services in WA and establishing the Mental Health Commission. This role has also seen her announce the merger of the Drug and Alcohol Office with the Mental Health Commission to ensure better integration of prevention and treatment services in these areas, as well as introduce the Mental Health Act into parliament in 2013.

“I truly believe that the same personal qualities that motivated me to become an occupational therapist are precisely the same qualities that have driven my political career; I honestly want to see individuals and communities have better outcomes and opportunities,” Helen says.

Media Statement

Hon Helen Morton MLC, Former Minister for Mental Health; Disability Services; Child Protection

10-year plan builds on WA mental health reforms

Wednesday, 3 December 2014

- Draft plan released today for consultation
- Prevention and community services prioritised to help people stay well at home
- Staged closure of Graylands Hospital as local and regional services are delivered

A bold and ambitious agenda for building up community based treatment and support services as a priority forms the basis of The Western Australian Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drug Services Plan 2015-2025.

Releasing the draft plan for consultation, Premier Colin Barnett and Mental Health Minister Helen Morton said the 10-year blueprint outlined sector-wide transformation across three distinct phases.

“We are building on reforms this State Government has already implemented to modernise support and services. It will help people with a mental illness, their families and carers at an earlier stage and in their community while also supporting those working in the sector,” Mr Barnett said. “People struggling with mental illness, alcohol and drug use, as well as their families, need access to personalised, modern and high quality services close to their homes. Prevention and early intervention programs and greater access to community-based services are essential to bring balance to the system and reduce our reliance on expensive hospital beds.

“This Government recognises this and has made mental health, alcohol and other drug services a high priority since 2008. Substantial change has already taken place to modernise supports and services, and this plan will build on this. Change cannot happen overnight and must be staged to produce a system that is more responsive, easier to navigate and more equitable for all West Australians.”

Mrs Morton said the plan was an honest reflection of the mental health picture in WA.

“It shows where we are, where we need to get to and which direction to take,” she said. “It articulates the need for change over the next decade to tackle mental health, alcohol and other drug challenges to create a more connected, efficient and high quality system.

“We want to achieve this by moving hospital and community services to outer metropolitan and regional locations where possible, and increasing the number of people treated closer to home. As part of these changes, the Government has committed to the staged closure of Graylands Hospital as contemporary services are delivered across the State.”

The staged closure of Graylands would take place over a number of years, with no immediate impact on existing staff or residents. Any change would only take place following consultation with residents, their families or carers and would be on a person-by-person basis.

“However, this does not mean that there will not be anything on the Graylands site, as it is intended some new, contemporary mental health facilities will be located there,” Mrs Morton said. “I would like to reassure every person receiving services at Graylands, as well as their families and carers, that they will continue to receive quality services and support. Nobody who is now receiving services will be disadvantaged or have their services reduced.”

The Government noted input from stakeholders to draft the plan, receiving more than 1,400 submissions during the initial consultation.

“The challenge now is for all levels of government, the private and not-for-profit sectors, consumers, families and significant others to work together to achieve this transformation across mental health, alcohol and other drug services,” she said.
Fact File:

- The plan was developed to tackle mental health, alcohol and other drug challenges and to create a more connected, high quality, and person-centred system.
- It is a blueprint for the optimal mix of services, investment and change needed to meet the demand for mental health, alcohol and other drug services over the next 10 years and over three defined periods: short term to the end of 2017, medium term to the end of 2020, and long term to the end of 2025.
- The short-term focus is to build on the changes and developments under way in an achievable and affordable manner.
- The plan articulates the services and programs required in the system but not who should fund or provide such services.
- It was drafted by the Mental Health Commission, the Drug and Alcohol Office and the Department of Health, with the involvement of consumers, carers and families.
- The forensic component was developed in consultation with the Department of Corrective Services.

Helen Morton unveils WA’s 10 Year Mental Health Plan as Minister for Mental Health in 2015
Mental health minister Helen Morton to shake up services, ‘relocate’ city beds to regional WA

KARA VICKERY, Health Reporter, PerthNow
September 14, 2014 12:00am

WA does not need more acute hospital beds for mental health patients.

Instead, the system needs to use existing services better.

Mental Health Minister Helen Morton told The Sunday Times a 10-year blueprint for the future would have some metropolitan beds moved to regional areas.

“The decisions that have been made over decades and multiple governments have seen these beds in the wrong places to suit people,” she said.

“We need to ask: is it acceptable to still bring people down from Geraldton or from the Pilbara to a facility in Perth when we know we can provide those services properly in their own community?”

Ms Morton said additional acute hospital beds were not part of the 10-year plan being drawn up by the Mental Health Commission.

Investment would instead focus on the provision of community care facilities.

But her comments have angered the state’s top doctors’ group which say patients are waiting up to four days for a hospital bed.

Ms Morton would not say how many additional community care beds were needed or whether she felt Graylands Hospital should be closed, commenting only that stand-alone psychiatrist facilities were “outdated and archaic”.

Media Statement

Hon Helen Morton MLC, Former Minister for Mental Health; Disability Services; Child Protection

Mental Health Advisory Council established in Western Australia

Thursday, 13 January 2011

West Australians have the opportunity to be at the forefront of mental health reform by nominating for membership of the State’s first Mental Health Advisory Council.

Mental Health Minister Helen Morton announced two major appointments to the council today.

“It is my pleasure to announce the appointments of Barry MacKinnon as inaugural chair of the council and Dr Judy Edwards as deputy chair,” Mrs Morton said.

The Minister said the council’s role was to provide high-level, independent advice to Mental Health Commissioner, Eddie Bartnik.

“The Mental Health Advisory Council is a vital step in reform because it will help the commissioner receive guidance from a wide range of community members as well as public servants about major issues affecting mental health care in Western Australia,” she said.

“It is important that the views and experience of consumers, their families and carers, as well as people from regional areas and diverse backgrounds are heard alongside those of clinicians.”

Mrs Morton said Mr MacKinnon had extensive experience in community services and the corporate sector. He has served as chair of the Disability Services Commission; the WA Football Commission; Fire and Emergency Services Authority; and the Speech and Hearing Centre for Deaf Children.

Dr Edwards is the executive manager of the McCusker Alzheimer’s Research Foundation and a former State Government Minister. Before entering Parliament in 1990, Dr Edwards worked a general practitioner, working closely with community groups. In her current role, she has a particular interest in the relationship between men’s mental health issues and ageing.

Expressions of interest are being sought for up to 11 community members to make up the council. Appointment is for two or three years with the option of a further two years.

Council members will be appointed by the Minister for Mental Health on the recommendation of the chair. The council will meet at least six times a year in addition to out of session work as required.

To nominate go to http://www.mentalhealth.wa.gov.au The closing date for nominations is February 11, 2011.

Helen Morton CV

Hon. Helen Margaret Morton MLC
Member for East Metropolitan Region, Liberal Party

Parliamentary Service

Ministerial Appointments
Minister for Mental Health; Disability Services: 14 December 2010 - 21 March 2013.
Minister for Mental Health; Disability Services; Child Protection: 21 Mar 2013 - 31 Mar 2016.

Parliamentary Appointments
Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer; Minister for Commerce; Science and Innovation; Housing and Works; Water; Mental Health: 11 August 2009 - 28 April 2010.
Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier; Treasurer; Minister for State Development; Water; Mental Health: 28 April 2010 - 14 December 2010.

Parliamentary Party/Shadow Ministerial Appointments
Shadow Minister for Women's Interests; Public Sector Management; Mental Health: 8 April 2006 - 23 September 2008.

Standing Committees
Member, Standing Committee on Public Administration and Finance: 26 May 2005 - 17 August 2005.
Member, Standing Committee on Public Administration: 17 Aug 2005 - 28 June 2007
Member, Standing Committee on Legislation: 6 November 2008 - 14 Dec 2010.
Member, Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges: 4 June 2009 - 14 Dec 2010.
Member, Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations: 10 May 2016 - present
Member, Joint Standing Committee on Audit: 18 August 2015: 10 May 2016 - 30 Jan 2017.
Select Committees
Chair, Select Committee into Public Obstetric Services: 24 May 2006 - 7 August 2008.
Co-lead on Remote Services Reform, focussing on improving outcomes for Aboriginal people living in remote communities of Western Australia.

Electorate – Short Description
East Metropolitan Region includes the Legislative Assembly electorates of Armadale, Bassendean, Belmont, Darling Range, Forrestfield, Kalamunda, Maylands, Midland, Mirrabooka, Morley, Mount Lawley, Swan Hills, Thornlie (formerly Gosnells), and West Swan.

Employment prior to politics
Helen commenced her working life as an Occupational Therapist and spent many years in senior executive positions within West Australian Health Services including:
- Regional Director of Central Wheatbelt, Midwest and Gascoyne Health Services;
- Director of South Metropolitan Health Authority;
- General Manager Finance and Resources, Health Department of Western Australia;
- General Manager Armadale Health Service;
- Chief Executive Officer of Kalamunda Community Care.

Education
Graduated in 1969 with an Associate Diploma in Occupational Therapy from the Western Australian Institute of Technology (now Curtin University).