

Medical Respite Centre for Homeless - a first for Western Australia

Tuesday, 3 August 2021

20-bed facility to help care for homeless people after a hospital presentation or admission

Focusing on homeless patients across the Perth metropolitan area

A key deliverable of the Sustainable Health Review

The McGowan Government has today announced the State's first Medical Respite Centre - setting a new benchmark for providing medical care and support services for the homeless.

The \$4.4 million allocated for two years of operation will allow the concept of a 24/7 Medical Respite Centre to address the current gap in caring for people who are homeless.

The primary focus of the centre will be to support the individual to receive post-acute care during their recovery from illness or injury in a safe environment.

Additionally, it will provide a 'window of opportunity' to link the person with community and social supports and relevant organisations to help them out of homelessness.

Admission to the centre will only be possible via a referral from an emergency department or during a public hospital admission.

The centre will be operated by a consortium led by Homeless Healthcare with Ruah Community Services and Uniting WA, following a competitive tender process to select the most suitable provider.

The consortium members have a track record of strong collaboration and partnerships with person-centred approaches to achieve outcomes and delivery of programs to assist individuals who are homeless to engage with support services.

The centre - which has been secured by the consortium - is a former backpacker hostel and is located in Palmerston Street in Northbridge, and will be converted to provide the required services.

The Medical Respite Centre is a key deliverable of the Sustainable Health Review. The review highlighted the complexity of issues facing one of the most vulnerable groups in our society - people experiencing homelessness.

Homeless people face a high rate of chronic health issues, frequently have complex co-morbidities and can often have conditions left undiagnosed and untreated for long periods of time. This results in an over-reliance on acute health services.

Comments attributed to Health Minister Roger Cook:

"This Medical Respite Centre is the first of its kind in WA and a lot of time and research has gone into the development of this concept.

"A key component of this concept is targeting homeless people who are recuperating from hospital treatment and using that time to get them better physically and mentally, and in a position to utilise a range of services and resources to help get them into transitional or permanent accommodation.

"The consortium gives us the best possible chance of success with this innovative concept as they bring a wealth of experience and knowledge in the sector.

"Partnerships and collaboration with medical and social support service providers are essential to make a real impact on the health and wellbeing of the vulnerable population - and that is what the Medical Respite Centre offers."

Comments attributed to Community Services Minister Simone McGurk:

"People who suffer from chronic homelessness often have complex needs relating to health, mental health, disabilities, abuse and addiction.

"This 24/7 Medical Respite Centre will serve the dual purpose of addressing the health concerns of vulnerable patients experiencing homelessness, while providing an important opportunity for them to link in with a range of funded support services while they are being cared for in a stable environment.

"In line with other measures being delivered under the McGowan Government's long-term strategy to address homelessness, All Paths Lead to a Home, this centre draws on evidence to help break the cycle of homelessness by addressing some of its underlying causes.

"Addressing health and related strains can play a significant part in helping people experiencing homelessness to get their lives back on track, so I welcome the appointment of this consortium of experienced community service providers to deliver this facility."

Health Minister's office - 6552 6500

Community Services Minister's office - 6552 6600