Message from the Commissioner

The year ahead promises many exciting opportunities to improve mental health in WA. The Mental Health Commission has begun work to implement the Early Psychosis Youth Centre (EPYC) announced by the State Government in December 2012 with the launch of a registration of interest process in April 2013. This is an important new initiative that will provide a vital contribution in the development of a comprehensive youth service. The State Government is also exploring the potential for the Commonwealth Government to fund a second EPYC. In the lead up to the election, the Government also announced a commitment to two further sub acute services in Bunbury (10 beds) and Karratha (6 beds). Work will commence shortly on planning for these services and when completed, the total number of sub acute beds will be 72, delivered over approximately five years which represents a major and innovative addition to community based services.

During the year we will also embark on the development of a 10 year Mental Health Services Plan which will be informed by the National Mental Health Services Planning Framework and will guide future development of mental health services and supports throughout the State. Both the adult and children’s mental health court diversion initiatives are now operational and are already delivering valuable supports to people with mental health problems who are involved in the justice system. These and many other initiatives will be actively pursued this year.

With the State election behind us, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate and welcome back the Minister for Mental Health, the Hon Helen Morton MLC, whose leadership and support in progressing the important mental health reform initiatives we have undertaken has been invaluable. I am sure you will join me in wishing her all the best as she adds Child Protection and Family Support to her portfolio.

I would also like to introduce Andrea Mitchell MLA, Member for Kingsley who was recently appointed as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Mental Health. Ms Mitchell will be focusing on perinatal mental health, mental health court diversion, forensic mental health in relation to children and young people and across the three portfolios in the Pilbara region.

I am also pleased to announce the appointment of Ms Nicole O’Keefe to the position of inaugural Executive Director of the new Office of Mental Health and Professor Bryant Stokes to the position of Acting Director General of Health. I look forward to strengthening our work in mental health through our partnership with the WA Health.

Merger of Mental Health Commission and Drug and Alcohol Office

As you may be aware, the Premier has announced plans to merge the Commission and the Drug and Alcohol Office (DAO) under the control of a single chief executive. Professor Stokes’s review of public mental health services has highlighted many of the issues facing the mental health system including the need to ensure that the system is properly coordinated and does not operate in “silos”. Consistent with this, the report noted the need for improved liaison and coordination between mental health and drug and alcohol services and worker willingness to cooperatively provide care and intervention for patients with dual conditions.

The decision to combine the Commission and DAO has been made to enable better integration of the State’s network of services relating to prevention, treatment, community support, professional education and training and research activities in the drug and alcohol and mental health sectors. This proposal provides the opportunity to strengthen both the Commission and DAO and Neil Guard from DAO and I will be working closely with the Public Sector Commission to plan and implement this new direction.

Review of admission and discharge planning

The Review of the Admission or Referral to and the Discharge and Transfer Practices of Public Mental Health Facilities/Services in Western Australia, by Professor Bryant Stokes AM was commissioned jointly by the Commission and the Department of Health in 2011/12.

Whilst there were many other important recommendations that will be actioned in the months ahead, the primary recommendation was for the MHC and the Department of Health to develop a Clinical Services Plan embracing the
key elements of clinical care, rehabilitation, living accommodation, geographical location and infrastructure build and support.

The draft *Mental Health Clinical Services Plan 2013-15* was completed on schedule in December 2012 and is currently being considered by the Government. The development of the Plan is an important first step in the reform journey for mental health services and service providers in WA.

In addition, a governance framework has been put in place to oversee implementation of the recommendations of the Stokes Report. A key feature of the framework is the establishment of the Implementation Partnership Group, chaired by Barry MacKinnon AM.

The committee provides the governance, oversight and monitoring of the implementation of all recommendations. They will meet on a quarterly basis and be responsible for monitoring and providing advice, facilitating cross-sector coordination in the implementation and supporting communication and information exchange to improve outcomes in the mental health system.

The Implementation Partnership Group will receive quarterly progress updates from the Project Management Groups responsible for coordinating the implementation of specific recommendations, and will submit an annual report to the Minister for Mental Health in March 2014.

**New START for people with mental illness**

Western Australia’s first mental health court diversion and support project has commenced with individuals accessing the mental health court and clinical assessments in the Perth Magistrates Court in mid March and the specialist clinical team commencing assessments of young people in the Perth Children’s Court in early April. The project is a pilot over 20 months in the Perth metropolitan region and has been allocated $6.7 million.

The aim of the pilot program is to facilitate the connection to services, thereby providing a long term support network that can help people manage their mental health, make positive changes in their life and reduce re-offending.

For adults attending the Perth Magistrates Court, the START (Specialist Treatment and Referral Team) Court has dedicated, trained staff from multiple agencies including Legal Aid, WA Police, and the Departments of Corrective Services, Attorney General and WA Health.

Potential participants can be referred to the START Court where they can volunteer to be assessed by the team. Suitable applicants will be able to access individualised mental health support which addresses their mental health issues and offending behaviour.

Unlike the adult program, in the Perth Children’s Court a separate court has not been established, but rather a specialist clinical team, led by a forensic psychologist, will be available to all courts and will work with the multi-agency services already available to children.

The team will offer assessments, some clinical intervention, and referrals and assistance in accessing community based services. Both the adult and children’s support teams will have access to some brokerage funds to meet urgent psycho-social needs, particularly those not able to be provided by existing resources.

**2013 Good Outcomes Awards – Nominations Open**

We are calling on individuals, groups and organisations across the government, private and community sectors that have made an outstanding contribution to mental health in Western Australia to nominate anyone they think deserves public recognition for a Mental Health Good Outcomes Award.

The award winners will be announced at the Good Outcomes Awards presentation event, held at the University Club of Western Australia on Tuesday, 8 October as part of the State’s National Mental Health Week celebrations.

Nominations close on 19 July 2013. For further information including the criteria, nomination and judging process visit the Good Outcomes Awards page on the Commission’s website at [www.mentalhealth.wa.gov.au](http://www.mentalhealth.wa.gov.au).
Individualised Community Living Initiative

The State and Commonwealth Governments have made significant investments in individualised supports and community-based housing to assist people with a severe and persistent mental illness to make a successful transition from hospital to living in the community. Over four years 122 people will have a home purchased for them through the Department of Housing and a package of support to ensure that they will be able to live a good life in their community of choice. In addition, a further 26 people will receive an individualised package of support, tailored to assist them to live in their existing home and participate fully in community life.

To date 100 homes have been purchased by the Department of Housing with 76 people having moved into their new home. In addition, a number of people are in the process of transition from hospitals to their new home.

People participating in this strategy can choose from one of thirteen organisations to create individual support packages with people receiving support on issues ranging from clinical care, assistance with daily living, participation in community based activities, education and employment and building social networks and friendships.

The strategy has also re-engaged families into their natural roles as parents, brothers and sisters rather than solely as carers. This is a very positive outcome for these families and the wider community.

Eddie Bartnik
Mental Health Commissioner