



**Hon Amber-Jade Sanderson MLA
Minister for Health; Mental Health**

Our Ref: 76-25165

Adjunct Professor Terry Slevin
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Dear Professor Slevin

Thank you for your letter of 26 June 2023 to the Premier regarding investment in prevention, signed by you and your colleagues in public health. As this matter falls within the health portfolio your correspondence has been forwarded to the office of the Minister for Health. The Minister has asked me to respond to you on her behalf.

The Western Australian Government remains committed to the preventive health goals set by the Sustainable Health Review (SHR). As I think you are aware, the Department of Health (DOH) is tracking expenditure on public health and prevention using definitions established by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

There is a time lag associated with this data. The most recent expenditure figures available are for 2021/22, which show that the spend on prevention by WA Health, the Mental Health Commission and Healthway as a proportion of their total combined budget of \$11.8 billion was \$817.7 million, or 6.9 percent of the total health budget. This reporting captures expenditure related to the public health response to COVID-19, as activities aimed at population-wide control of infectious diseases are within scope for public health as defined by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

The Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic has therefore been responsible for much of the recent increase in expenditure on public health, and this can be expected to recalibrate as the health system moves to living with COVID-19. However, the Government has not lost sight of other important areas in prevention. For example, recent announcements have been made to expand Western Australia's (WA's) newborn heel prick test to include severe combined immunodeficiency disorder, universal free influenza vaccinations have been offered as part of the 'Stay Well this Winter' campaign, and more than half a million dollars has been invested in the State's first Youth Suicide Sanctuary adding to an earlier commitment of \$2.9 million. This follows on from funding commitments in 2022-23 of more than \$16 million for prevention of Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, prevention of alcohol-related violence, and the WA Syphilis Outbreak Response.

I am advised that the DOH is working to implement transparent annual public reporting on expenditure on prevention as part of a suite of reporting on SHR indicators. An initial Public Health Indicator Set has been developed by the DOH's Epidemiology Directorate and is currently under review. Public reporting on these indicators is therefore expected to begin in 2024.

As a separate project, a set of high level indicators for the SHR as a whole is under development and will likely also be released in 2024. Expenditure on public health is a key indicator for Enduring Strategy 1 of the SHR and is being considered for inclusion in both sets of reporting.

In the interim, the DOH has published the *Moving Towards Measuring What Matters: Sustainable Health Review fast track outcome measures* report available at: www.health.wa.gov.au/~media/Corp/Documents/Reports-and-publications/Outcome-measures-project/SHR-moving-towards-measuring-what-matters and a broad indicator set for chronic disease and injury prevention in WA is included in the *WA Health Promotion Strategic Framework 2022-2026* (www.health.wa.gov.au/Reports-and-publications/WA-Health-Promotion-Strategic-Framework).

The SHR website provides periodic updates on work that is being undertaken across the full SHR program which you may also find of interest (www.health.wa.gov.au/Improving-WA-Health/Sustainable-health-review/Enduring-Strategy-1-Commit-and-collaborate-to-address-major-public-health-issues).

Thank you for the ongoing support shown by you and your colleagues for the Government's implementation of the SHR.

Kind regards



Stacey Hearn
CHIEF OF STAFF

28 JUL 2023