

Health unions unite to protect vulnerable children and their families

WA's three peak health sector unions gathered at the AMA (WA) offices in June in response to an audit of the Infant Child and Adolescent Taskforce by the WA Auditor General, critiquing failures by the Mental Health Commission to implement reforms that would protect vulnerable children and their families.

The AMA (WA), Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation WA (ANMF WA) and Health Services Union of WA (HSUWA) said the Commission had only fully implemented one of the 32 recommendations delivered by the taskforce in 2021.

Union leaders said the findings confirmed what clinicians, families and frontline workers have been experiencing for years – a fragmented system, difficult to access and overly reliant on crisis care.

AMA (WA) President Dr Kyle Hoath drew on his own professional practice to reflect on the implications of the report.

"As a psychiatrist, we know early intervention can change the course of a young person's life," Dr Hoath said. "It is deeply concerning that these reforms have lost momentum and still cannot demonstrate meaningful outcomes for children and families."

The Auditor General's report found the reform had significant gaps and did not demonstrate clear accountability or measurable outcomes.

The health unions said they were now calling for urgent action, including the release of a comprehensive public implementation plan for all recommendations, with clear timelines, funding commitments, and accountable agencies.

The unions sent a joint letter to Child and Adolescent Health Service Chief Executive Valerie Buić, expressing significant concerns regarding patient care and safety, and staff morale within CAMHS Community Clinics.

Dr Hoath said too many families were navigating a confusing system. "A modern mental health system cannot be built around crisis care alone. These services should be the safety net, not the front door," he said. ■



ANMF WA State Secretary Romina Raschilla, AMA (WA) President Dr Kyle Hoath, HSUWA Secretary Naomi McCrae, and HSUWA President Craig Russell.