

Recommendation Response from Department of Health Biannual Report – February 2025

Child SK died, aged 13 years, at Royal Perth Hospital from complications of a head injury. Child SK had multiple attendances to emergency department and admissions in the six months prior to her death following self-harming incidents and expressing intentions to suicide. The coroner found that Child SK intentionally stepped into the path of an oncoming car on a busy highway, and she died two days later from her injuries.

Two recommendations were made relating to securing funding to establish additional Acute Care and Response Teams (ACRT) across the state and a facility with an intensive day program providing an easily accessible service and an alternative to hospitalisation for children and young people under the age of 16 years.

The CRC reviewed these findings with members noting the budget announcement for ACRTs to be established in the North Metropolitan Health Service (NMHS), South Metropolitan Health Service (SMHS) and the Great Southern region, in addition to extending the existing EMHS ACRT. Members also noted that some system gaps exposed in this case had been addressed by the Chief Psychiatrist's recommendations in his targeted review of the treatment provided to Child SK, all of which have now been implemented. Members also noted that the ICA Taskforce3 is addressing other gaps with funding for ACRTs.

The Mental Health Commission (MHC) has funded the CAHS to establish two new ACRTs in the north and south metropolitan areas, which are planned to commence in January 2025.

Additionally, the state's first ACRT, which commenced in the east metropolitan area in March 2023, has been funded for an additional 18 months.

These three teams will form a cohesive, metropolitan-wide network. Together, these teams will ensure all children in the metropolitan area can access mobile or virtual crisis care. Here, children will not have to travel to community clinics or attend an emergency department to receive crisis care. The teams will also work closely with existing Community Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) to provide supplementary care to children and families engaged with a service who would benefit from a more intensive approach.

In addition to the metropolitan teams, the MHC has funded the WA Country Health Service (WACHS) to establish the state's first regional ACRT, to commence in January 2025. This team will be located in the Great Southern region and will build upon the existing Great Southern community CAMHS team. All four ACRTs are funded until December 2027.

The MHC recurrently funds CAHS to deliver the Touchstone program. This structured day program provides supports for young people aged 12 to 17 years who are struggling with relationships, mood difficulties and self-harming behaviours, and their families. The MHC are working closely with the CAHS to further develop a hybrid step-up, step-down model for young people under 16 years, comprising features of the former Transitional Care Unit and the Touchstone program, however, funding has not yet been secured. The Commission is

working with the CAMHS to identify preliminary sites for the intended service, and this will inform a future budget submission.

The MHC, with the Department of Health, is developing a 10-bed Youth Step Up/Step Down (SUSD) service for the Perth metropolitan area. The SUSD service will provide support to young people aged 16 to 24 years who have signs and symptoms of moderate to severe mental health issues, with or without co-occurring alcohol and other drug issues.

Although operating in the Perth metropolitan area, it will not be restricted to metropolitan residents. Young people who are eligible will be offered a temporary, safe place to stay well in the community, out of hospital and connected to their family, friends and community. The length of stay at the service is anticipated to be a maximum of 28 days. The anticipated commencement date is late 2026.

On the understanding that funding has been committed to expanding the existing ACRT in the east metropolitan area and establishing new ACRT in other metropolitan and regional areas, CRC members agreed to close recommendation one. CRC members agreed to close recommendation two on the understanding that budget submission for funding will be made after suitable sites are identified. No further updates will be provided in the next biannual report.