



INJURY MATTERS
2021 WA STATE
ELECTION PRIORITIES

Injury Matters seeks the following commitments from the WA political parties:

1. Increased, long-term investment in injury prevention and recovery.
2. Introduce a minimum unit price for alcohol.
3. Development of a guiding strategy for preventing falls in WA.
4. Development of a mandated referral pathway enabling automatic referrals for post-crash support after a serious road traffic incident.
5. Amend firearms legislation to ensure WA complies with all commitments of the National Firearms Agreement 2017.



>3 Western Australians die each day from injuries¹

IN 2019, INJURY WAS THE LEADING UNDERLYING CAUSE OF DEATH for Western Australians aged 1 - 44 years.¹



EACH YEAR, APPROXIMATELY **1 OUT OF 5 WESTERN AUSTRALIANS REPORT AN INJURY** REQUIRING TREATMENT BY A HEALTH PROFESSIONAL.²



IN 2012, THE TOTAL COST OF INJURY EVENTS WAS **\$9.6 BILLION**

DUE TO HEALTH CARE NEEDS, LOSS OF PRODUCTIVITY AND QUALITY OF LIFE LOST.³



Injury Matters is a for purpose, not-for-profit organisation with a vision of safer people and places, that works towards an organisational purpose to prevent and reduce the impact of injury and support those affected. To achieve this, Injury Matters focuses on helping facilitate and lead change on a societal level, through its key platforms of influencing, empowering and collaborating.

As an organisation, Injury Matters is committed to making a positive difference, advocating for safer people and places within the communities we work alongside, while remaining pragmatic in our approach to safety utilising experience and available evidence.



Increased, long-term investment in injury prevention and recovery.

- 1.1 Attribution of a proportion of the overall health budget to injury prevention.
- 1.2 Introduction of schemes to cover support for no-fault catastrophic injuries.
- 1.3 Improved access to epidemiological data.

Injury Matters urges the prioritisation and long-term investment in injury prevention and recovery in WA to mitigate the increasing costs on the health system and as a means to improve the lives of Western Australians.

As the fourth highest cause of death in WA in 2019 (n=1,380)¹, injury is a public policy priority that needs coordinated action across all areas of government and the public sector. Western Australians suffered approximately 227,000 injuries leading to fatalities, hospitalisations, and emergency department visits in 2012, costing the WA health system almost \$1.2 billion.³ When quality of life costs, loss of paid productivity, and long-term care costs are included, the cost of injury in WA in 2012 expands to \$9.6 billion.³ Despite their frequent occurrence, injuries can be predicted and prevented through coordinated evidence-based programs, policies and services. Access to additional support activities will allow individuals involved in additional activities to provide access to the long term care needs that people may have following a serious injury or harm.

A range of injury prevention interventions are cost-saving, given that the costs to implement prevention strategies are less than the resource costs they will save.⁴ Injury prevention interventions can therefore represent significant value for money.⁴ Injury Matters commends the WA Department of Health and other Government Departments for their current investment in injury prevention and recovery, however there are opportunities for improvement to decrease the burden of injury on the WA community. To adequately achieve long-term reductions in the incidence of injury in WA, Injury Matters suggest that further investment in injury is made as part of the Sustainable Health Reviews Recommendation 1 to increase and sustain investment in public health, with prevention rising to at least five per cent of the total health expenditure.⁵

Whilst the funding of additional injury prevention initiatives is critical to reducing the incidence of injuries in WA, the reality is that some catastrophic injuries will still occur. As a result, individuals and families affected need support to continue to live fulfilling lives in the wake of the lasting impacts associated with significant injury. The Productivity Commission Report (2011) recommended the creation of a National Injury Insurance Scheme (NIIS) to support those affected by four main causes of catastrophic injury.⁶ In WA progress has been made through the introduction of the Motor Vehicle Catastrophic Injuries Support Scheme in 2016.⁷ Injury Matters calls on WA Government to progress the development and introduction of schemes to support no-fault cover of the long-term care and support needs of people experiencing catastrophic injuries for; medical treatments, workplace injuries and general injuries (occurring in the home or community).

The likelihood of injury is influenced by a range of social, environmental and behavioral factors and therefore external activities, such as COVID-19, affect the incidence of injury in WA. It is vital that timely epidemiological data is available to monitor and assess WA's emerging injury priority areas. As one of WA's leading injury prevention organisations, Injury Matters would benefit from systems that would enable easily accessible, up-to-date epidemiological data to support the evaluation of injury prevention activities and the identification of emerging injury issues and changes in injury trends in WA. This would involve the streamlined collation of current and age-standardised injury data across hospitals, and a regularly updated data surveillance system that is accessible to the health workforce.

To reduce the cost of injury to the Western Australian health system and the toll on the WA community, continued investment in preventative healthcare and early intervention services must become a priority.



Introduce a minimum unit price for alcohol.

Injury Matters supports the introduction of a minimum unit price for alcohol in WA as an effective strategy in reducing the volume of alcohol consumed and as such, reducing the impact of alcohol-related harm in WA.

Alcohol misuse poses a threat to the health of Western Australian's, with overconsumption linked to a variety of health-related issues, including increased risk of acute injury, cancer and other chronic diseases.⁸ Alcohol consumption is attributed to a heightened risk of specific injuries, including; road crashes, intentional self-harm, violence, poisonings and is associated with 21% of all injuries.⁹

Existing Australian alcohol taxation to increase the price of alcohol has been effective in reducing alcohol consumption, however this falls short of reducing the overall amount of alcohol that can be sold for a single price.¹⁰ Mandating a minimum unit price for all alcohol products is an effective strategy in the prevention of alcohol-related harm, as it reduces the affordability of large quantities of alcohol and therefore reduces alcohol consumption.^{11,12} Australian jurisdictions where a minimum unit price for alcohol is in place have found a significant reduction in the number of alcohol-related intensive care unit (ICU) admissions, ambulance attendees, assaults and road crash injuries.^{11,13}

A minimum unit price for alcohol complements the current strategies WA has in place to prevent alcohol-related harm¹⁴ and would support the achievement of the priorities within the Sustainable Health Review Final Report,⁵ the WA Health Promotion Strategic Framework 2017-2021¹⁵ and the National Alcohol Strategy 2019-2028.¹⁶



Development of a guiding strategy for preventing falls in WA.

A reduction in falls-related incidents in WA requires multidisciplinary action. Injury Matters supports the development of an overarching WA falls prevention strategy to increase knowledge of falls prevention roles and available referral pathways.

In WA someone dies every 26 hours, is hospitalised every 19 minutes and presents to the emergency department every 12 minutes due to a falls-related incident.¹⁷ The frequency of falls in WA and the healthcare required following many falls-related incidents results in significant strain on the WA health system, with falls-related incidents costing the WA health system approximately \$273 million in 2012.³

Falls are multifactorial with biological, behavioural, environmental and socioeconomic factors influencing the likelihood of a person experiencing a fall.¹⁸ Due to the multifactorial nature of falls, a diverse population and a vast state, multiple falls prevention activities and professionals are required to prevent falls and support the recovery of those affected. Fortunately, through targeted interventions and collective action, the incidence of falls in WA can be reduced.

In WA the Health Promotion Strategic Framework¹⁵ outlines falls in older adults as an injury prevention priority. Previously the 2014 Falls Prevention Model of Care¹⁹ outlined recommendations, strategies and opportunities to prevent falls in the community, hospital and residential care settings in WA, however this guiding framework has now been made obsolete with no communicated plans for updating an overarching state plan.

The development and implementation of a strategic framework for reducing falls in older adults in WA would support the identification of gaps in falls prevention practice and the coordination of cross-sectorial activities.

The interaction of all elements of the health care system are crucial to the continuity of care and patients post-fall health outcomes, therefore the adoption of falls pathways within all Western Australian hospital emergency departments should be a core component of the proposed framework. A falls pathway provides a system to assess falls risk and manage access to specialist care for those presenting to the emergency department following a fall. The implementation of a falls pathway in the Fiona Stanley Hospital Emergency Department was associated with reduced inpatient bed days related to falls, equating to an estimated reduction in bed day costs of \$3.6m in the 2016-2017 financial year.²⁰

Falls continue to have a significant impact on the WA community, however the provision of this guiding strategy would reduce the fragmentation across health care and prevention settings, resulting in holistic environments that support positive ageing.



Development of a mandated referral pathway enabling automatic referrals for post-crash support after a serious road traffic incident.

Injury Matters urges the development of a mandated referral pathway that enables first responders and medical professionals to refer individuals who are involved in or witness a serious road traffic incident to post-crash support.

On average every year in WA, 168 people are killed, and 1,513 people are seriously injured in a road traffic incident, contributing to a road trauma cost of \$2.4 billion.²¹ However, due to the psychological impact of road traffic incidents and the impact of the incidents on the broader community, the true cost of road trauma extends beyond these figures. The psychological impact of road traffic incidents on survivors, their family and their friends can be profound, with a large proportion of crash survivors experiencing acute and long-term psychological conditions.^{22,23}

Injury Matters' Road Trauma Support WA service is a free state-wide service providing information, resources, support, and counselling to Western Australians affected by a road traffic incident. With road traffic incidents affecting individuals, directly and indirectly, involved in the incident and the inability to put a time limit on trauma, Road Trauma Support WA provides support to individuals regardless of when the incident occurred or what level of involvement the person had in the incident. The value of the Road Trauma Support WA service is reinforced by the provision of the counselling service to over 900 individuals since the establishment of the service in 2013 and 89% (n=40) of the 2020 annual survey respondents indicating that the counselling sessions helped them with their issues and/or concerns.²⁴

No referral is currently required to access Road Trauma Support WA and therefore Injury Matters conduct a range of awareness raising activities to generate knowledge of the service among Western Australians. Awareness-raising activities are an important approach to empowering individuals to access healthcare services,²⁵ however a mandated referral pathway would complement existing efforts to increase Western Australians knowledge of care pathways and services available after a serious road traffic incident.

Following a serious road traffic incident there can be a variety of emergency, medical and financial professionals providing care to the individual/s involved in the incident. Therefore, the development of mandated referral pathways across a variety of government departments and agencies, including WA Police, hospitals and insurance providers, and implementation of a system to enable the automatic referral of individuals to post-crash support services.

The introduction of automatic referrals in WA would ensure that all Western Australians involved in a serious road traffic incident, and their broader support network, are aware of and are enabled to access the support that they need to prevent long-term psychological impacts.





Amend firearms legislation to ensure WA complies with all commitments of the National Firearms Agreement 2017.

Injury Matters urges that WA complies with the commitments agreed upon within the National Firearms Agreement 2017,²⁶ to minimise unnecessary injury and death attributed to firearm misuse.

Australia's success in firearm regulation has been applauded by other countries around the world, due to its contribution to the prevention of firearm-related harm.²⁷⁻³⁰ However, firearm-related harm is still a public health concern in WA with 35 registered deaths related to firearms in 2019¹ and 74 armed robberies where firearms were involved,³¹ highlighting the need to prevent further injury and death.

The scope of injury from firearm use can be detrimental to the health of a community and the injured individual, as individuals who have been involved in firearm-related violence can experience long term physical and psychosocial injury.³²

Organisations that work to minimise firearm-related harm have raised concerns that WA has never fully complied with the National Firearms Agreement, since its introduction in 1996, and have urged that stronger firearm regulation is needed to prevent further injury and death.³³

Firearms are the responsibility of the State Government in Western Australia and are regulated by the WA Police Force.²⁶⁻³⁴ Efforts made by both the State Government and the WA Police reduce the impact that firearms have on the WA community, however regulation improvements are necessary in the further prevention of firearm-related harm.

At a minimum, the Western Australian Government should implement legislation to comply with the National Firearms Agreement 2017, as firearm-related harm does occur and can be prevented.

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