

Media Release
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Health expert proposes solutions for WA's troubled health system

The Western Australia Policy Forum (WAPF) has released an important, and hard-hitting, policy paper on health services for the Western Australian community.

Written by Professor Gavin Mooney, the co-convenor of the WA Social Justice Network, the paper provides a timely and critical analysis of power and resources in the WA health community. He argues that “As the WA health service is currently construed, I have argued that too much power on resource allocation decision making and on priority setting rests with the medical profession and the AMA”.

The alternative he puts forward is greater community involvement, which he believes can deliver better and more consistent allocation of resources within the health service. He presents the evidence of studies showing that citizens “want greater equity with special emphasis on meeting the needs of Aboriginal people but also higher priority for prevention and public health”. Professor Mooney argues specifically that “In WA we could for example place additional taxes on fast food companies or, yet more targeted, on their advertising and marketing budgets”.

Professor Mooney said “The question of who exercises power over the deployment of resources in any health care system is too seldom debated and WA is no exception. I am hoping that this paper might stimulate such a debate in WA. We need it.” He argued: “The new State Government needs to place the health service back into the hands of the WA people where it belongs and stop listening to the AMA to the extent that the last government did. The responsibility for ensuring more democratic control over this important social institution rests firmly with the government.”

WAPF Director Julian Roche said “WA has the financial resources to deliver world class health for all West Australians but successive governments have consistently failed to take up the challenge. At a time when the State Government is not only committed to the new Fiona Stanley hospital but needs to put substantial additional resources into a range of health services, Professor Mooney’s excellent paper shows the way forward for vigorous Government action to prevent ill-health and ensure health resources are rationally distributed.”

The paper may be downloaded free from wapolicyforum.org.au/publications.

Professor Mooney's valedictory address on leaving Curtin University will be this Friday 28th November at 4pm, in the BankWest Theatre at Curtin University. All welcome.

For further information, contact:

Professor Gavin Mooney
08 9339 0803
g.mooney@westnet.com.au

Susie Byers
Western Australia Policy Forum
0438 846 443
susie@wapolicyforum.org.au