

OPINION

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EDITORIAL

D-Day looms for promised reform of WA's GST rip-off

The clock is ticking on the promised GST fix.

And so the pressure for more detail and assurances that the fix will come is mounting.

This week WA Labor MPs Matt Keogh and Patrick Gorman tabled a joint motion in Federal Parliament, calling on the Government to "reveal the inner workings" of its GST solution.

"We need to see the detail of this plan and we need to see a fair share for WA legislated," they said. "Labor wants to see this problem fixed and are prepared to work with the Government, States and Territories."

Also wanting detail is the State Government, which is seeking written confirmation from Prime Minister Scott Morrison — who promised WA's \$4.7 billion GST fix when he was treasurer — that the deal will be delivered.

They are correct to keep hammering away. Political experience shows that until the ink is dry, things can change.

On Tuesday Mr Morrison gave the State his word the plan would be in place before the next election.

Asked for a guarantee that the reforms would be delivered — even if Treasurer Josh Frydenberg fails to win over State and Territory counterparts when they meet next month — before voters head to the polls, Mr Morrison said: "Yes, I believe it."

"I made a promise to Western Australia years ago and I'm delivering on that promise," he told 6PR radio.

And as *The West Australian* revealed nearly two years ago, in the end the matter could be resolved regardless of the other States and Territories.

In November 2016, a key Federal GST bureaucrat declared it is the Federal Treasurer who ultimately divides up the GST.

Commonwealth Grants Commission chairman Greg Smith said: "The CGC's role is to make recommendations to the Commonwealth Treasurer on how to share out GST revenue among the States consistent with terms of reference."

And then, importantly, "the Treasurer is responsible for determining each State's share".

Under Mr Morrison's proposal, the Federal Government will set a 70¢ in the dollar floor for WA's annual GST allocation in 2019-20, rising in 2024-25 to a 75¢ floor, as it increases the GST pool and moves to change the way the GST is allocated.

Labor has also offered a 70¢ allocation and promised to enshrine in law a shift to a 75¢ floor for WA in 2024-25 — legislated within 100 days of being elected.

GST D-Day looms.

Mr Morrison has given his word. We expect he will keep it.



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Words have power in mental health battle

■ Gary Martin

So "R U OK?" day has come around again.

It's our national day of action which casts a spotlight on the importance of regular mental health "check-ins" with family, friends and work colleagues.

The significance of "R U OK?" day can not be underestimated with experts believing that one in five Australians will experience mental ill-health in the form of conditions such as anxiety disorder, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder each year.

Mental ill-health does not discriminate — it can affect anyone.

And signs of mental ill-health often remain masked and hidden, highlighting the need to extend "R U OK?" to those, who on the surface, appear to be coping well with everyday life.

Tragically, many who ask "R U OK?" will not receive an honest answer.

That's because despite the progress we have made in recent times, the mental health stigma is still well entrenched in our community, including in our workplaces.

For some, it is simply easier to brush away "R U OK?" with "Yes I'm fine" and in doing so, avoid the pain associated with a destructive, alienating and harmful mental health stigma.

That very stigma is underpinned by the words that we use to describe those with mental health challenges. And make no mistake, there are far too many words used in our everyday language that serve only to demoralize



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those with mental health challenges.

How often, for example, do we hear off the planet, out of it, bonkers, deficient, nutter or schizo as words used to describe someone with mental ill-health? And what about happy pills in lieu of antidepressants, and shrink instead of psychologist?

Perhaps surprisingly, stigmatising beliefs about individuals with mental ill-health are held by a broad range of individuals within Australian society — even by those who have encountered a family member, friend or work colleague with a mental health challenge whom we might reasonably expect to have a better understanding of the debilitating impact of stigma.

From a restaurant to the bar, school yard to university classroom, or even the workplace to the sporting club — it is highly likely that you'll hear people with mental ill-health being cast in a negative light.

Everyday words heard in everyday places have become a major obstacle to compassion, understanding, and ultimately the recovery of many with mental health challenges.

It's that stigma — fuelled by our language — that limits employment opportunities, make various forms of insurance harder to obtain, and causes those with mental health challenges to become socially isolated.

Above all, the stigma is a major barrier to those with mental ill-health disclosing their challenges and seeking appropriate support. For many, the stigma is simply one additional stress they do not wish to endure. Those impacted even argue the stigma rivals that of the actual distress associated with experiencing mental ill-health.

So let's be clear. The most important way in which we can reduce the stigma surrounding mental ill-health in our community is to change the way we talk about it. Not only do we need to change the way we speak as individuals but we need to step up and remind others that their language can play a huge role in eradicating the mental health stigma in our community.

It is this type of change that will build a culture of acceptance, trust and support within our homes, in the workplace and within the broader community. Let's de-stigmatise our conversations around mental ill-health and make it OK for those with mental health challenges to say "No, I'm not OK".

And, just by the way, when you do ask "R U OK?" and you get the answer "Yeah I'm OK" — yet you remain unconvinced — ask again some time soon. It might be the stigma obscuring a real mental health challenge.

■ Professor Gary Martin is chief executive of the Australian Institute of Management WA