



# Issues Paper – Excerpt

## **Companion to the WACOSS Pre-Budget Submission**

Investing in Outcomes  
Making it Count for the People of WA

**Part One – Issues and Funding Pressures in the Community Services Sector  
The Community Sector’s Relationship with Government**



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*Investing in Outcomes: Making it Count for the People of WA*

*Part One – Issues and Funding Pressures in the Community Services Sector  
The Community Sector’s Relationship with Government*

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# THE COMMUNITY SECTOR'S RELATIONSHIP WITH GOVERNMENT

## Background

The State Government and WACOSS are working collaboratively in reshaping the relationship between the community and public sectors. The EAC report, *Putting the Public First: Partnering with Community and Business for Outcomes*, and the implementation of its recommendations provides opportunity for both sectors to reflect on developing innovative solutions to meet the many challenges our communities face today in delivering better community outcomes.

A conceptual framework for improving public service outcomes is shown in the diagram below – Changing the Way We Do Things. The framework recognizes that to achieve outcomes that reflect the needs and aspirations of citizens, a critical shift in thinking across the public sector is required and the existing relationships with the community (and private) sector need to be radically refocused.

The framework attempts to capture the changing relationship between Government and the community sector and the priority to find innovative paths and methods to develop new service delivery models. It also acknowledges that community service providers (along with other key stakeholders such as business, citizens and local government) should take a proactive role in contributing to policy and planning processes.

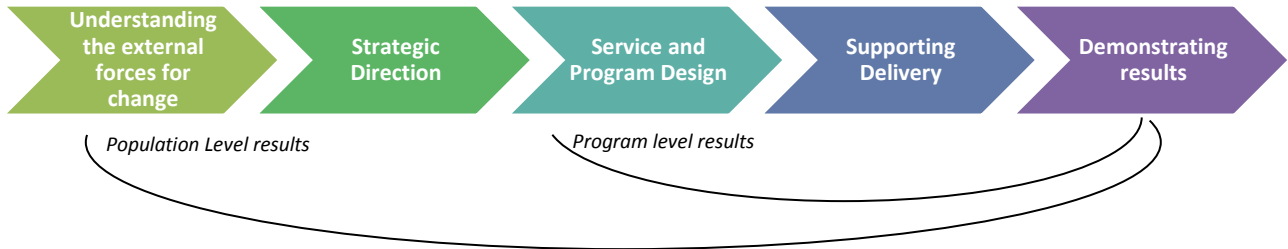
The WACOSS 2011-12 Pre-Budget Submission has been developed bearing in mind the “new” partnering arrangement between Government and the community sector – with an emphasis in the first instance on building the capacity of the sector to help deliver better outcomes for Western Australians. This is critical to ensuring real improvement in service delivery.

WACOSS is supportive of the State Government's desire to reform the delivery of human services in Western Australia through the implementation of Economic Audit Committee final report recommendations, the major driver being to improve outcomes for Western Australians, and in particular, those most disadvantaged in the community.

The EAC final report and a number of Premier's statements support greater involvement of the community sector in human service provision. This provides the foundation for a new strategic direction in social service delivery to meet the needs of the community. A key consideration is building the capacity of the sector to deliver these services effectively, efficiently and sustainably. The WACOSS 2010 Pre-Budget Submission provides the Government with opportunity to move this agenda forward in a number of service delivery areas and importantly start the process of strengthening sector capacity.

# Changing the Way We Do Things

## A conceptual framework for human services reform in WA



Comparisons with other jurisdictions indicate that WA is achieving below average outcomes in many areas. Economic and demographic changes, combined with increasing complexity in our communities, will place even greater pressure on existing services in the coming years. Key statistics include:

- 1 in 8 children in WA is considered developmentally vulnerable – the highest proportion of any State except QLD.
- 1 in 4 Western Australians will have a disability by 2026.
- By 2050, there will only be 2.7 people of working age for every person over 65 in Australia. The ratio is currently 5 to 1.

New ways of working and thinking will be needed to meet these challenges and deliver better outcomes for Western Australians.

The EAC’s Final Report and statements by the Premier provide the foundation for a new strategic direction for human services delivery in Western Australia. Key components of this strategic direction include:

- A genuine partnership between the community sector and public sector in policy development and planning;
- Empowering individuals in the design and delivery of services;
- Supporting social innovation;
- Focusing on the needs of individuals, families and communities, particularly those in most need; and
- Supporting collaboration at a local level to meet community needs.

Meeting the increasingly complex and diverse needs of our communities will require an ongoing assessment of service and program design informed by:

- New and emerging models of care, focused on early intervention and support;
- Consumer/service user engagement, with increasing consumer choice and control over services they access;
- Opportunities for integrated service delivery;
- Input and upfront advice from service providers on the ground;
- Sharing of best practice and innovation in service delivery; and
- Program level performance information and data.

Ensuring sustainable and effective services will be critical to meeting the growing and diverse needs of the WA community. Key initiatives include:

- Streamlining administrative and reporting arrangements through key procurement and contractual reforms;
- Moving focus away from measuring inputs to collaboratively achieving outcomes;
- Supporting flexibility and innovation at the local level;
- Improving the sustainability of community funding arrangements; and
- Supporting capacity building through the Community Development Investment Fund.

“Is anyone better off?”

The ultimate objective of human services reform is to improve outcomes on the ground for all Western Australians, including the most disadvantaged.

Outcomes can be demonstrated through key indicators. These indicators should distinguish between the impact that programs have on clients (program level results) and the overall results experienced by the community (population level results).

Key indicators should be used to inform policy development, planning and service design and delivery.

Voluntary and community activity is fundamental to the development of a democratic and socially inclusive society. Voluntary and community groups, as independent not for-profit organisations, bring distinctive value to society and fulfil a role that is distinct from both the state and the market. They enable individuals to contribute to public life and the development of their communities by providing the opportunity for voluntary action. In doing so, they engage the skills, interests, beliefs and values of individuals and groups.

While Australia has a large community sector its development is hamstrung by its sometimes fractured relations with State and Federal governments, and by the absence of a coherent policy framework. In Australia, Government policy is piecemeal, with no National or State policies focused on the community sector as a whole.

By contrast, in the United Kingdom, the Blair Government engaged in a set of initiatives designed not only to foster 'traditional' activities such as philanthropy, but also to broaden forms of community sector activity, deepen infrastructure support for the sector, and foster new types of community sector organisations. Partly as a result, the UK community sector is playing an ever-larger role in the national economy.

The WA State Government has indicated its support and faith in the community sector to help contribute to better delivery of public service outcomes that are citizen centric. This has been formally demonstrated through the implementation of EAC report recommendations and the active engagement of the community services sector in that process. WACOSS believes this could go further through the establishment of a permanent *Office of Community Collaboration*.

The roles of an *Office of Community Collaboration* would be to:

- Support the engagement of the community service sector in the ongoing commitment of the government to work in partnership with the community to deliver better outcomes for the community;
- Coordinate the implementation and monitoring of the new Collaboration for Community Policy;
- Provide an ongoing structure to support the relationship between the community and government sectors; and
- Supporting the initiatives of the Partnership Forum.

WACOSS has been actively involved in shaping the governance structure of the EAC implementation process ensuring the community sector is well represented at all levels. The Government has indicated that it is critical for WACOSS to play a lead role in this process as the key sector representative and has provided funding to cover the cost of involvement.

The implementation process is guided by the establishment of an EAC Implementation Working Group, steered through the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC) and the Department of Treasury and Finance (DTF).

The Government has established an EAC governance structure with the Partnership Forum serving as a key group leading the implementation process. As one of the key EAC recommendations, the new

Partnership Forum is helping to reshape the relationship between Government and the community sector. The EAC governance structure is shown in Appendix 3.

To continue this work in the long term, WACOSS supports the establishment of an *Office of Community Collaboration* to provide leadership from within the social economy to bring it together at State and National level.

#### *EAC Steering and Working Groups*

The Partnership Forum is supported by a number of Steering Groups and Working Groups to progress a range of agendas of significance to our sector. Key groups include the Policy Capacity and Collaboration Steering Group, Community Building Steering Group, Budget Process Steering Group, Community Sector Funding Working Group and the Procurement in Partnership Working Group.

WACOSS has played a proactive role in shaping the Steering and Working Group structures, supporting community sector membership and developing draft terms of reference for respective groups. WACOSS is also proposing to mirror (for key groups) the EAC Governance structure for the community sector as a mechanism to engage the sector and provide better considered and consensus positions to Government.

WACOSS has also undertaken a comprehensive range of engagement strategies with the sector to ensure that the views we put forward are truly representative of all parts of the community sector.

This includes discussions with the sector representatives (comprising of community sector members that sit on various EAC steering and working groups), briefing the WA Peaks Forum, the engagement of sector people on working parties and the identification of issues and strategies for working with key stakeholders such as National Disability Services (NDS) WA and Community Employers WA (CEWA).

WACOSS has also provided briefings to regional organisations on the implementation of the EAC recommendations. The sessions will provide an opportunity to discuss new initiatives to improve outcomes for people who rely on community services as well as reform the relationship between the community sector and government. Consultations were held in regional centres include Albany, Kununurra, Broome, Mandurah and Geraldton.

WACOSS has convened the EAC Strategic Reference Group and the EAC community sector representatives to provide leadership and direction on key EAC implementation issues from a community sector perspective.

The EAC implementation process must ensure that resolving the funding issue continues to be the priority item on the EAC agenda. WACOSS will continue to provide opportunity for the community sector to be engaged and consulted with during the implementation process. This includes conducting forums and workshops on important reform areas for the sector.

Coupled with the work being conducted through the EAC process has been the recent creation by the State Opposition of a Shadow Ministry for Community Relations, and its conference resolution to

work with the sector and state government to develop a better regulatory framework for the sector, there seems to be growing bipartisan support for moving in this direction.

To continue the EAC work in the long term, WACOSS supports the establishment of an *Office of Community Collaboration* to provide leadership from within the social economy to bring it together at state and national level.

This would signal to the sector and the broader community that the Government acknowledges a three sector model of the economy and the important growing economic, social and political role of social economy organisations.

#### *Strengthening the evidence base to plan for social advantage*

WACOSS put forward a budget proposal in the 2010-11 Pre-Budget Submission to create an accessible, integrated data set of social wellbeing indicators in WA. This is congruent with the findings of the EAC Report recommendation 8.<sup>1</sup>

The EAC report is focussed around Government being supported by frank, fearless and well-informed strategic advice based on sound evidence and analysis of community needs and impacts.

One of the key recommendations of the EAC report is to strengthen the evidence base for decision-making through:

- the creation of an evaluation network across government, supported by a centrally coordinated unit and/or steering committee, similar to Gateway evaluation processes;
- ensuring access to common data sets;
- requiring that major agencies undertake a value for money audit at least once every five years;
- requiring an appropriate scale of evaluation of all new programs created by Government within three years of approval; and
- creating incentives for agencies to routinely undertake evaluations.

This would enable community, government and business analysts to determine and measure baselines and targets for the social advantage of individuals and the community.

Access to integrated, shared data would greatly complement the new *Community Development Investment Fund* and *Social Innovation Grants* by assisting the planning and design of innovative service models and tracking outcomes in the community.

WA has a great potential to develop a relatively untapped resource base through the better coordination and application of its data on the social wellbeing of WA. Decision makers and policy developers, within Government, the public and private sectors and the community would benefit greatly from improved data management and analysis to inform their planning and decision making. Access to reliable and credible data, across a collective group of social wellbeing performance indicators, is a critical starting point for improving WA's long term social advantage.

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<sup>1</sup> Economic Audit Committee. *Putting the Public First. Partnering with the Community and Business to Deliver Outcomes. Final Report October 2009*, p.44.

Integrated data from community service providers could serve as useful performance indicators of pressure points and priorities for early intervention and service delivery. This would apply to affordability issues for critical services, including food, fuel, transport, energy and water, and accessibility issues including housing, financial counselling, emergency relief, child care, mental health and drug and alcohol services. Coupled with an integrated data set, WA would benefit from a mechanism for consumer engagement that provides the capacity to test performance indicators arising from coordinated data analysis, with the lived experience of people in the WA community – in particular as consumers of social services.

