



# *Anniversary*

## *Sixty Years of Impact*



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The Council would like to thank Lotterywest for its support in making this History Project possible.



# Foreword

In presenting this brief historical study, it is firstly important to acknowledge that the State of Western Australia is only young if considered in terms since its founding by colonisers. In fact it has a long and rich history of the many Indigenous communities that have lived here for tens of thousands of years, with complex systems of culture and law that underpinned their social well-being. It is hard to comprehend that scale of time in comparison to just two centuries. So much has changed since 1929, and at an incredible pace.

The twentieth century was an important turning point in the tradition and structure of social service. As charitable organisations were beginning to develop in WA and across the other new Australian colonies, they were already becoming well-established in parts of Europe and North America. Emerging from the early wave of feminism and faith-based women's initiatives in late nineteenth century Australia, they had an evident activist and social justice foundation.

Social activism and advocacy were central to the history of professional social workers and charitable organisations from their earliest days. It is important then to reflect on and recognise the important role of social activism and advocacy throughout the history of the Western Australian Council of Social Service, and its continued significance in our community today.

The provision of charitable services throughout the nineteenth century pre-dated the existence of any form of publicly funded and provided social security in Australia. It was principally supplied by large church-based and philanthropic organisations that had been founded to tackle child neglect, homelessness, disability and poverty. The emergence of the trade union movement drove an approach to welfare based on wage regulation, and was followed in 1908 by the introduction of the first aged-pension and subsequently the 'invalid' pension in 1910.

Pension payments in their early years were only available to people the Commonwealth Government deemed to be of "good character." This led to the exclusion of those who were not of European descent, alcoholics and past prisoners, and helps set the context in which social service activism and advocacy emerged in Western Australia.

The earliest forms of community service, post-colonial settlement in WA, were evident in the charitable relief provided by benevolent societies. This was to some extent supported financially by the authorities of the times, but largely drawn from the voluntary philanthropic efforts of the community. It is the voluntary and philanthropic nature of the service that has defined the community services sector throughout its history, and remains inherent to its mission today.

Unlike in the United Kingdom or the United States, however, funding by large philanthropic trusts of welfare programs was low and has never developed to the level that it has in those countries.

The development of the Lotteries Commission (now Lotterywest) by the State Government in 1932, has proven over time to have been an invaluable contribution to the Western Australian landscape. It was granted the authority by statute to directly provide funding to the non-government not-for-profit sector for benevolent and charitable purposes, making it one of the very few lotteries in the world to do so. This power has deeply linked

the history of Lotterywest with that of Western Australia's community and not-for-profit sector since that time.

The WA Council of Social Service emerged into that landscape, in the period after the Second World War, when social work theory shifted to an understanding that the causes of poverty were the outcome of social structures, not the personal deficits of the poor. It is fitting to pay tribute in this history to the many psychologists, social workers, occupational therapists, speech therapists and other medical professionals that helped to give a higher profile to the needs of the vulnerable and disadvantaged in our community.

In 1956, the Western Australian Council of Social Service began its formation as a membership-based peak body to advocate on behalf of those who were most vulnerable in society and for the community and welfare services that support them.

Sixty years on, it is a worthy moment to pause and reflect on the impact of the Council's contribution to the WA community over that time.

A voluntary reference group overseeing this project was supported by Steve Crotty, the Council's Corporate Services Director, and included: Steve Joske CSC, Director WA, Australian Red Cross; Mark Fitzpatrick, CEO, St Vincent de Paul Society; Justine Colyer, CEO, Rise Network; Debra Zanella, CEO, Ruah; Sabina Leitmann and Jeff Simper.

We are very grateful for the support from all those who have made this reflection possible. In particular we'd like to thank our Researcher for this project, Dr Sue Hart together with Christina Granger and Kevin Casey for their writing contributions. Generous interviews were provided by Archbishop Barry Hickey, Professor Maria Harries and Mr Chris Hall.

This brief history is rich with examples of individuals and groups who, as you can read throughout, "not only recognised a need amongst their fellows but who had the vision and the energy to do something about it."

2016 sees a Western Australia on the other side of a decade-long mining boom of unparalleled size, which exploded out its economy and population, and for a time made it the wealthiest state in the nation. But that wealth did not come without consequences. The cost of living rose higher and higher, and those who were not benefiting from the boom were left further and further behind. Now with the boom over, Western Australia finds itself with a litany of social issues, colossal debt levels and no clear plan for the future. A State election in March 2017 will likely bring these matters to a head, with a path set for Western Australia that may offer genuine societal recovery or risk harsh austerity measures to bring down government expenditure.

We hope this history may provide a reflection that will inspire and motivate the kind of vision and energy of the Council's earliest founders, and bring it to bear for decades to come.



**Steve Joske CSC**  
President



**Irina Cattalini**  
CEO

## 1950s: On the starting blocks

One mark of a civilised society is its concern for its less fortunate members. As Australians we pride ourselves in the way we rally to help those who need support. We hold a deep belief that it is part of the Australian psyche to be fair and to ensure that our society is just and equitable.

The many charities initiated by both church and secular organisations which have operated in Australia reflect this concern and while these have evolved over the years as social attitudes shift there has remained a common purpose – a desire to identify and help those who are in need.

The history of the West Australia is rich with examples of individuals and groups who not only recognised a need amongst their fellows but who had the vision and the energy to do something about it.

The zeal and energy of the many voluntary organisations across Australia received a significant boost when, in the late 1940s and 1950s, the fields of social sciences began to impact on community attitudes and government policy. Psychologists, social workers, occupational therapists and speech therapists helped to give a professional profile to the needs of the disabled.

During the 1950s charities were broadening their scope of who was deserving of welfare. And so, from this growing awareness of welfare, with its numerous and complex issues, came the need for its many agencies and organisations to collaborate and co-ordinate in some way. The seeds for a peak body for social services were sown.

As citizens of the 21st century, we are familiar with the concepts of advocacy, strategic policy, government lobbying, networking, media targeting and advertising.

But in the mid 20th century these notions were not the household words they are today, and we are indebted to the professional workers and the lay people who recognised the emerging possibilities of collaboration, systematic assistance and a co-ordinated approach.

Other states had already identified the need to co-ordinate the efforts of their welfare organisations.

New South Wales had created the New South Wales Council of Social Service (NCOSS) as early as 1938 while Victoria and South Australia both formed state councils, VACOSS and SACOSS, in 1946.

### Reflections from Ms Sabina Leitmann

*Ms Leitmann has been involved with the WACOSS organisation for a number of years and is part of its history reference group.*

*The concept of a welfare state and the advent of WACOSS are closely linked. The emerging profession of social workers in the United Kingdom served as a role model for the profession here even though in 1954 there were only thirteen trained social workers in WA.*

*There were four key factors through the 1950s that gave impetus to the formation of a coordinating organisation. The social workers of the state worked closely with the medical profession, who were keen to see more trained social workers in the community. They, and other leaders, saw an indisputable need for welfare and a need for co-operation between the various agencies that supplied it. Finally, it was crucial that the welfare be research based.*

*Ms Leitmann believes the second major turning point for WACOSS occurred in 1993.*

*After 37 years of operating as a traditional peak welfare body, receiving government grants, coordinating and advocating for its member agencies and initiating welfare programs where it saw a need, the organisation had to reinvent itself in line with changes implemented by Richard Court's conservative government.*

*The government questioned why it should be paying an organisation that was, in effect, critical of it. It cut the funding in half and decreed it would now pay WACOSS fees for services such as training or research connected to welfare issues.*

He left a widow and one son.  
Mrs. Bell Blay was the fourth white woman to arrive in the Kimberleys.

### Social Groups Must Unite Says Cleric

Until social welfare organisations coordinated their efforts they would get comparatively little help from either the Government or the public, the Rev. A. C. Eadie said at the second State Social Welfare Conference last night.

"Collaboration in social welfare enterprises is a crying need," he said. "We should look to the establishment of a centralised organisation representing all spheres of social welfare." By the formation of a community chest, social welfare groups in Geelong, Victoria, had quadrupled their total finances in two years and last year had raised £100,000, he said.

All members of the Royal Artillery Association of W.A. are invited to attend the Unveiling Ceremony of the State War Memorial

d.

The Rev. A.C. Eadie says there is "a crying need" for collaboration between social welfare groups, in a story in *The West Australian* of November 5, 1955.

*Through those years the environment WACOSS inhabited transformed from an acceptance of a welfare state to welfare delivered through a market economy and it operates in that same environment today as a self-sustaining organisation.*

*In interview with Dr Sue Hart*

The Australian Council of Social Service was formed in 1951 to co-ordinate these councils and help implement councils in other states.

But the impetus to form a Council of Social Service in WA may also have come from Great Britain when, in 1950, Mr George Haynes, of the British Council for Social Service, was invited to Perth to speak on the value of the British COSS. What inspired this visit? The invitation came from The Women's Service Guild of Perth and though

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no direct documentation exists, it is probable that it was promoted by Guild member, Mrs Gertrude (Gwin) Ruston. Mrs Ruston was an energetic and influential worker in social welfare networks of the time and someone who went on to become a key player in the founding of the West Australian Council of Social Service as we know it today.

## THE CONTRIBUTION OF GWIN RUSTON

In the history of movements, large and small, there often emerges one person who can galvanise ideas, convert them into action and be central to much of their execution. In the history of WACOSS Gwin was such a person.

Born in Essex, England, in 1897, to Percy and Elizabeth Rockliff, and christened Gertrude Winifred, Gwin, who preferred to use her second name with the 'G' attached, received a good education, though her university entrance score was not high enough for her to study medicine and fulfil her ambition of becoming a medical missionary. Nevertheless Gwin went on to work as a private secretary during World War I. She was also a nurse with a Voluntary Aid Detachment. In 1917 she married Harry Ruston and with her husband migrated to WA in 1920, taking up land near Albany. It was during this time that Gwin would have experienced hardship at first hand when, in two successive weeks, the family house was burnt down and the land flooded.

In 1937 the Ruston family moved to Perth and it was here that Gwin joined the Red Cross as a volunteer. Her stellar commitment to the welfare of others had begun. Through the 1940s she met Betty Rischbieth, an active worker for social justice at the time and together they became foundation members of Soroptomist International, Perth, a volunteer movement dedicated to improving social and economic outcomes for women.

As a tireless and proactive agent for improvement of the disadvantaged, Gwin became president of the Slow Learning Children's Group and helped



Gwin Ruston. Picture: WACOSS archives

to establish Meals on Wheels in Perth and the Civilian Widows' Association.

Due to her involvement in these many spheres and her obvious commitment to effective social service, it is not surprising that we recognise Gwin at the hub of the group of people who implemented WACOSS.

When a small ad hoc committee was formed following the visit of George Haynes, Gwin was the secretary. She went on to become the first secretary when the Council was officially established.

## THE SEEDS ARE SOWN

When George Haynes visited Perth in 1950 and spoke of the pivotal role COSS played in formulating and co-ordinating social welfare policy and practice he struck chords, not only with charity organisations but with members of the medical profession and professional social workers.

In October of 1954 a conference of the Social

Workers Association of WA was held where a simple but crucial recommendation was made: "That a committee be appointed to arrange future conferences with a view to the collaboration of social agencies". Flagged as the State Conference of Social Welfare, the conference had 74 enrolments, 36 of whom stayed for the duration of the proceedings.

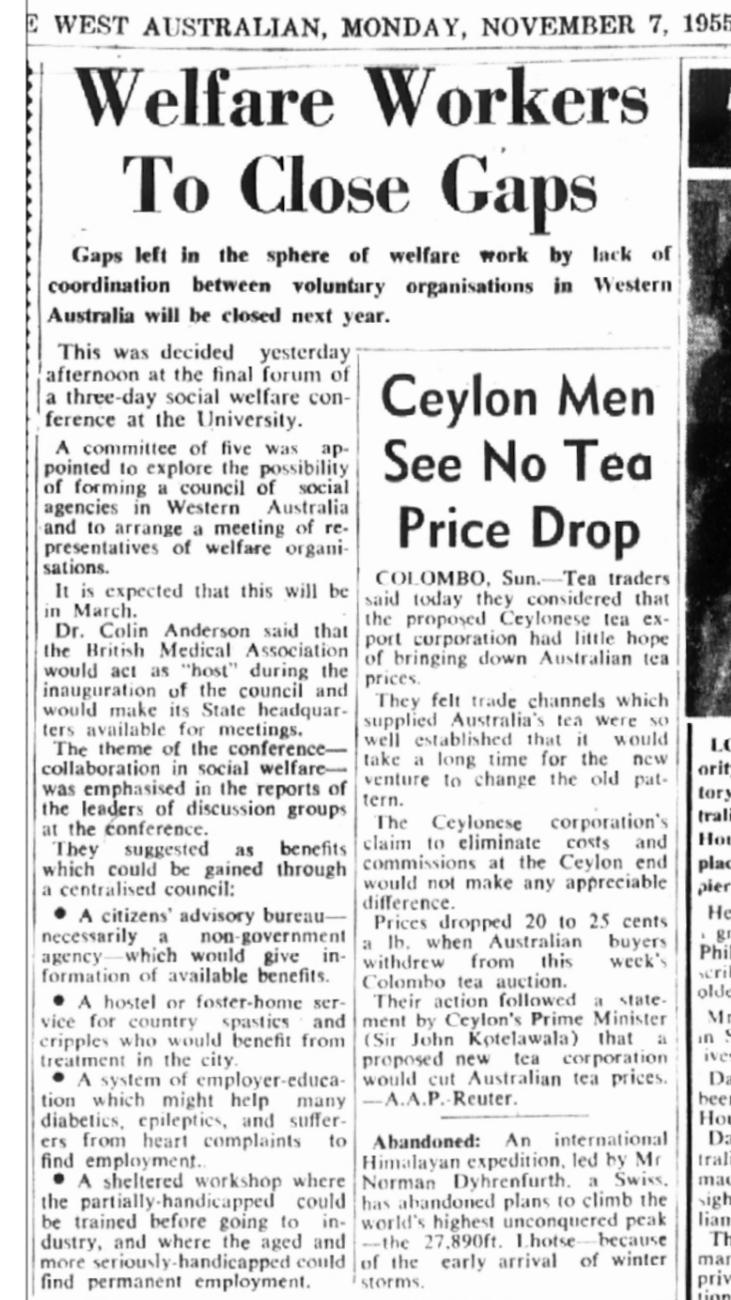
The initial aims of the committee were to establish a citizens' advisory bureau; establish a foster home or hostel for country people who had cerebral palsy or who were disabled in some way; and to provide employer education for diabetics, epileptics and sufferers of heart disease.

It was proposed to form a League of Social Welfare arising from the conference. Although this proposal failed to carry, the committee was in place to ensure future conferences would be held. There was yet another significant suggestion made at the October conference. It stated, that when elected, the executive committee of the Council should consist of equal numbers of both voluntary and professional social workers. The stage had been set.

Over the next months a small committee of five people - Mrs Gwin Ruston, Dr Colin Anderson, a well-known and respected WA doctor and three social workers, Mr Cliff Knight, Miss Mary Walters and Miss Eleanor Williams worked to establish a Council of Social Service in Perth.

A second State Conference of Social Welfare was held on November 4-5 in 1955. Its theme was "Collaboration in Social Welfare" and its chief aim was to form a Council of Social Service similar to those existing in other states.

On March 16, 1956, a public meeting in the Perth City Council Chambers, was opened by the Lord Mayor of Perth, Henry (Harry) Howard. With 11 people in attendance and more than 50 organisations represented, a motion that "a Western Australian Council of Social Welfare Agencies" be formed was moved by Miss Irene Glasson.



The West Australian of November 7, 1955, reports on the committee formed with the aim to form a COSS and "close gaps" in welfare in WA.

This conference, with that auspicious motion, has been hailed as the official start of WACOSS.

The number of attendees not only reflected the need for such a council, but augured well for its future effectiveness in the state.

Of equal significance was the composition of the provisional committee and the ad hoc committee appointed on that propitious day. The range of



Irene Langsford Glasson. Picture: National Library of Australia

dedicated professionals and lay workers with their great depth of experience ensured the continued momentum of this newly created body.

### PRIORITIES AND PROGRESS

Committees and hard work very often go hand in hand and the executive committee of the newly formed WACOSS was no exception. The organisation required adequate funding, which was initially hard to obtain. The British Medical Association of WA was especially helpful at this point, making premises available for meetings and allowing the new Council the use of its telephone number at no cost. But it is interesting to note that the Council survived for its first few years on member subscriptions and occasional donations. At the end of 1957 there was £34 in the bank.

But the Council and its committees powered ahead. Initially there had been a push to establish a family welfare bureau, but members agreed that family advice belonged more within the realm of professional social workers and concentrated their efforts on establishing an effective Citizens' Advice Bureau and its close relative, a comprehensive directory of the social agencies available to the people of WA.

There was also a range of pressing social issues to be tackled. The welfare of children, both Aboriginal and white, was a concern. The plight of children with mental illnesses and intellectual disabilities also had to be addressed. Minutes and documentation of the time suggest that the situation of widows, who needed to go out to work and whose children, as a result, may become "delinquent" occupied the Council, too.

Problems faced by unemployed people and those with disabilities of some kind were also a priority.

With child welfare seen as a priority, organisation member, the Child Welfare Department, raised the need for a child care course. It was noted that Victoria had conducted such a course with more than 100 attendees from 21 different institutions. Using WACOSS as a platform, the Director of Child Welfare, Mr McCall began to explore the

possibility of setting up a similar course in WA.

Driven by the need to address the many social issues around them and their desire to propel the newly fledged Council forward, the Ad Hoc and Executive Committees made good use of the remaining months of 1956.

A constitution was set in place, membership was canvassed and 30 applications were accepted, and plans were made for the first official meeting of the West Australian Council of Social Services.

### MOVERS AND SHAKERS

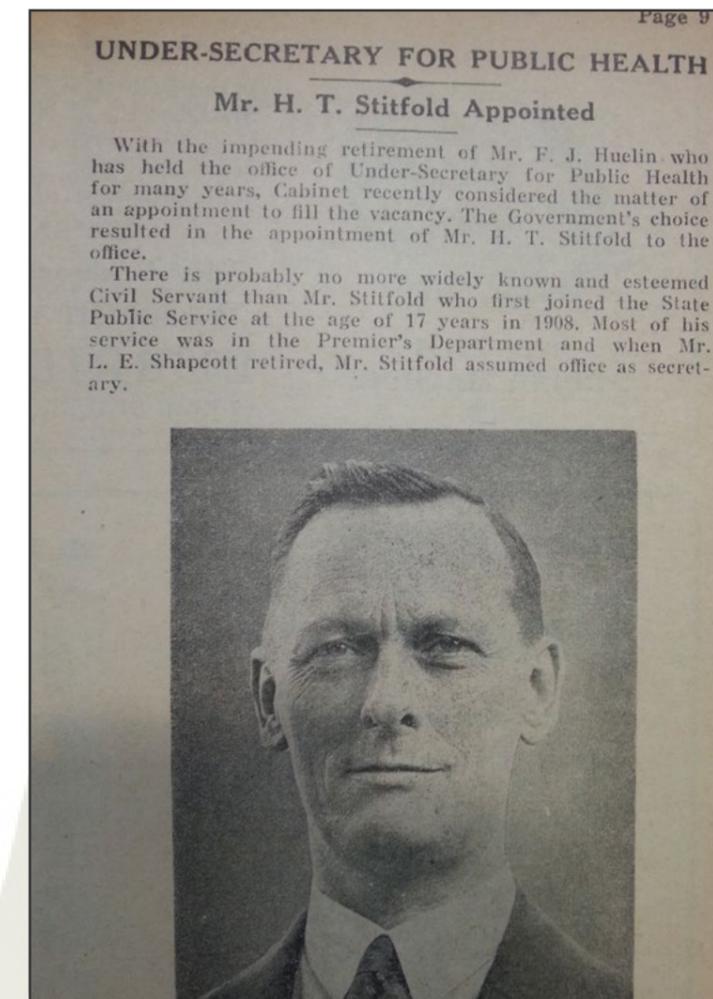
Who were the driving forces on the early committees of WACOSS, who gave both cohesion and focus to its mission? Minutes of committee meetings held during 1956 and 1957 often show Dr Colin Anderson in the chair. He became a signatory to the Council's bank account and was appointed as Vice President in February 1957. Dr Anderson was a medical practitioner with a keen interest in the welfare of the elderly. He saw the benefits of meaningful activity for people in their post-employment years and highlighted these concerns in early WACOSS meetings. Around that time he became very much involved in the creation of Beehive Industries, an activity workshop for elderly or socially isolated people and went on to become the WACOSS representative on the national Beehive Industries body.

Another key player with a keen overview of social services available in WA was Miss I Glasson. It was she who had moved the motion that created WACOSS at that February meeting in 1956, when she was elected to the Executive Committee. She commenced work on a directory listing available welfare and support agencies and made important progress on this project. Unfortunately, Miss Glasson died late in 1957 but tributes to her reveal a tireless social worker who devoted much of her time to many different welfare organisations the state.

In the early WACOSS months there was some difficulty in finding someone to fulfill the all-important role of president. Enter Mr H T Stitfold. Described as the quintessential bureaucrat, H T Stitfold had a wealth of experience in public office, having been secretary to the premier's department in the state government. He was also actively associated with organisations such as the North Beach Surf Lifesaving Club and the Masonic Lodge. His energy and experience made him an ideal leader in those early times. He frequently chaired committee meetings and travelled interstate to see the workings of other councils of social services.



The West Australian of March 17, 1956, reports on the first WACOSS meeting.



Mr H.T. Stitfold was described as a quintessential bureaucrat.

## THE CONTRIBUTION OF PROFESSOR ERIC SAINT

When Mr Stitfold relinquished the post of President in 1958, the position was filled by the prominent Perth doctor and scientist, Professor E G Saint. Educated at the University of Durham in Newcastle, England, where he graduated with science and medical degrees, Dr Eric Saint had relocated to Australia after serving with the Royal Air Force during World War II. He had a profound commitment to social justice and a deep understanding of the problems posed in society by poverty.

Dr Saint worked in the Pilbara during the early 1950s and was instrumental sounding a warning on asbestos and raising awareness of its disastrous health effects. He was also committed to Aboriginal health in the Pilbara and Kimberley, with a particular involvement in stopping the spread of leprosy.

When Dr Saint came to work in Perth he spearheaded the establishment of the medical school in the University of Western Australia and became one of the school's foundation professors. At a WACOSS general meeting on May 27, 1958, he spoke of the increasing social, medical and mental problems of elderly people within the community. His inspirational address convinced them that Professor Saint would make an ideal leader for their young organisation and at the August meeting later that year he was appointed the President of WACOSS, a position he held for the next ten years.

## INSPIRATION FROM SISTER STATES

It is to the credit of the WACOSS founding members that they were ready to observe and learn from other states. They saw that the Victorian Council of Social Services (VCOSS) had been successful in effecting affordable housing through a Housing Commission and had created a Good Neighbour Council to assist with the settlement of migrants. It had successfully developed a Directory of Social Services gaining the Australian Taxation Office's acceptance of its constitution, while also allowing donations of over £1 to be tax deductible.

Meanwhile the New South Wales Council of Social Services (NCOSS) promoted research into issues, both in partnership with a university, and alone. It had worked towards establishing support for employment for people with disabilities, due possibly to the growing movement of disabled people from institutions into more normalised settings.

The South Australian Council provided a wonderful role model of how to effectively use the media. Newspapers, magazines, radio and television were all targeted to gain support and disseminate important information.

Undoubtedly WACOSS benefited greatly from the ideas gained from its sister organisations and its interaction and cooperation with them.

## CHANGING NEEDS OF A CHANGING SOCIETY

*The first decade of WACOSS saw many worthy projects struggle for traction. Some would eventually succeed, while others would adapt to the changing needs of a changing society.*

Our 21st century perspective finds some of these projects and the terminology used to describe them rather old-fashioned, but there are others that show an enlightened and progressive stance.

For instance there was a pervading preoccupation with the welfare of the children of widows and the concern that they would become delinquents. At a December 1957 meeting, Mr McCall, director of the Child Welfare Department said there was no indication that this was so. He identified the main problem for civilian widows as a lack of money, which meant that many of their children had to leave school at 14 years of age. The committee then broadened its approach to look into the welfare of civilian widows and their children and wrote to the

University of Western Australia and the Australian National University to see if studies had been done and if data was available. If not, WACOSS would seek funding from Lotteries WA to conduct its own study.

The concern for, and attitude towards, prisoners is a noteworthy example of an enlightened approach. WACOSS meetings show an understanding of the alcohol factor in crime and incarceration and maintained many prisoners would be better served in rehabilitation instead of prison.

The minutes of meetings also reveal that Professor Eric Saint, Dr Colin Anderson and Mrs Gwin Ruston were very much the backbone and cohesive force of WACOSS during its first few years.

When Gwin sought to retire as the Honorary Secretary in August 1960, Professor Saint pointed out that much of the Council's success was due to her efforts. It is good to see that she did take on the role again and fulfilled it for a number of years.

## FRUSTRATIONS AND FAILURES

As with any organisation there were frustrations. Members of the early committees who tried so hard to effect practical solutions to welfare issues often felt they were getting nowhere. When this was aired at an Annual General Meeting in 1958 Dr Anderson reminded the meeting that all Council members were committed to full-time jobs and work done for WACOSS was done in their free time. It was clear then that there was a need for full-time paid staff.

Then there was the tyranny of distance from the other states, where fresh ideas could be gleaned from the conferences and communities of sister organisations. Interstate travel came at a cost and funding was non-existent.

WACOSS operated on a shoe-string budget with no funds readily available for important projects, such as the printing and distribution of a Social Services Directory. And when invitations and notifications of interstate and overseas conferences came, funding was once again a real issue.

Through 1958 we can trace a saga of an international conference centred around Child Welfare in Tokyo. Successive meetings sought

funding assistance, first from the Premier and then from the Prime Minister but to no avail. It is apparent that no WACOSS member succeeded in travelling to Tokyo as early in 1959 a Miss Davidson from the Australian Council of Social Services visited Perth and reported on the Tokyo Conference. Federal funding at that level was clearly available.

## THE TWO-FOLD STRATEGY

By 1959 a routine of meeting schedules had emerged which apparently served the Council well. Quarterly general meetings with a short business session were followed by lectures, forums or symposiums on social issues. The executive committee and committees dedicated to a specific task met more frequently but the quarterly lectures and symposiums could be attended by any interested persons, not just members, and were to be advertised and reported on as widely as possible. WACOSS was making its mark on the state's social welfare landscape.

There was another way of effecting action on social welfare issues. As well as using its muscle to work as an advocate for member organisations, WACOSS took direct action as an entity in its own right to identify welfare needs and address them.

Evidence of this course of action is seen at the start of 1959 when WACOSS sought to run its own child care and development course and throw it open to the whole community, even though the Child Welfare Department had its own course in place.

Child welfare remained a pressing concern throughout 1959. It was the theme of the first State Conference held by WACOSS on June 5-7, with the title "Family Needs in Modern Communities". Sixty-six people enrolled to take advantage of topics such as "Changing Patterns in Family Life", "The Emotional Needs of Children", "Economic Requirements of Modern Families" and "Broken Homes and Problem Families".

By November 1959 a panel discussion on "Provision and Plans in WA for Children's Welfare" noted the changing nature of the issue, with more children now being placed in foster homes than in institutions.

## Sixty Years of Impact

### 1960s: Making its mark

By the beginning of the 1960s WACOSS was making a distinct mark on the social services landscape of Perth and of West Australia. A small but significant demonstration of this is when it successfully gained insurance cover from the State Government Insurance Office for when infants were taken out of institutions for recreation.

There were now 46 representative members and 12 associate members. A scan of the list of subcommittees from the 1960-61 Annual Report shows an organisation with a firm sense of direction and will to succeed, but still dedicated to its core mission. Subcommittees existed for: the Citizens' Advice Bureau, the Annual General Conference, the Employment of the Handicapped, Finance and the Constitution and Publications and Public Relations. There was a steering committee on alcoholism and the topic of "Coming Changes in the Law of Divorce" to be presented by Miss Sheila McLennan OBE was set for the 1960 Annual General Meeting in August.

At a General Council Meeting in November of that year, Mr C Gannaway, Welfare Officer of the Prison Department and Mr C Glew, chairman of the Parole Board addressed the topic: "Prison, After-Care and Rehabilitation".

At the March 1961 General Council Meeting Sister K Burns from The Silver Chain spoke on "Employment of the Handicapped", while the May General Council Meeting took the form of a conference on alcoholism with a recommendation that a standing committee on the issue be established within WACOSS.

When Dr Colin Anderson stepped down as Chairman of the Executive Committee in September 1962 there were 10 subcommittees in operation and dealing with issues such as alcoholism; prison aftercare; the welfare of the disabled; child, youth and family welfare; and civilian widows.

However despite its growing profile, WACOSS still had no home base. Royal Perth Hospital helped by making a medical lecture theatre and a faculty common room available, but funding continued to be a problem. Minutes of the May 1961 Executive Committee Meeting indicate requests for



1963 - First fixed premises: Citizens Advice Bureau Office in Murray Street. Showing Mrs. Muriel Haning – Secretary, in doorway of office, Mrs. T. M. Chadwick, interviewing client, at desk – Director Mrs. G.W. Rushton.

funding being made to local, state and federal government as well as to the Lotteries Commission of WA.

#### MILESTONES ALONG THE WAY

A landmark achievement was reached when, on March 26, 1963, the Executive Committee Meeting was able to announce that the Registrar of Companies had accepted the constitution and WACOSS was now an incorporated entity. The President was Professor Eric Saint, Dr Colin Anderson was the Vice President, Mrs Gwin Ruston was the Executive Officer of the Citizens' Advice Bureau and Nancy Russell was Chair of the Executive Committee.

New premises were also found in Perth's CBD at 76 Murray Street.

Since its inception, WACOSS had worked hard to establish a Citizens' Advice Bureau (CAB) and publish a Directory of Social Service Agencies. During the early 1960s these goals were achieved. In 1960 the Lotteries Commission of WA (now Lotterieswest) gave £500 towards the directory and 1000 copies were authorised for sale.

Then in May 1961, the Lotteries Commission and the State Government gave £500 and £1200 to-

wards the establishment of a CAB.

In 1962 the CAB was incorporated with the proviso that the director must also be an executive director of WACOSS. Gwin Ruston very ably filled this role and Perth business man, Frank Boan generously made part of his store available for premises when the Perth City Council was unable to provide a home base.

The CAB was immediately very much in demand. The 1962-63 Annual Report revealed how extremely busy the CAB had been and many volunteers were needed to keep up with the inquiries. Its reputation and success prompted the Councils of both Fremantle and South Perth to seek to establish bureaus in their localities.

The many volunteers working at the CAB dealt with a range of organisations, including government departments, churches, voluntary agencies, businesses and professional people, and felt the need for some specific training. Once again WACOSS sought to maintain the standard of its work and arranged for a series of lectures through the Council of Adult Education to equip the volunteers. These proved to be very successful. Many volunteers worked for more than two years, a clear demonstration that they felt that they were serving a worthwhile cause and were doing it effectively.

Yet another milestone of the early 1960s was reached when, at the end of the 1963-64 financial year, WACOSS had 60 member agencies and 25 associate members. That same year saw an increase in committees co-ordinated by the Council that were formed to address specific issues. For instance the Ex Service Association involved 14 affiliated organisations and Family Welfare involved 11 affiliates.

There was now a community perception that WACOSS was an organisation that could unify and co-ordinate groups with common interests. Rather than jealously guarding territory these groups worked through WACOSS where a spirit of co-operation was engendered and outcomes were much more effective.

A visible milestone was also created when the CAB moved its base to rooms at 76 Murray Street. As home to both WACOSS and the CAB, the premises was a veritable hub of activity. Publications also proliferated. Along with the Directory of Social Service Agencies, a Guide to Perth for the Handicapped, a CAB information brochure, and a WACOSS magazine - Social Service News were also published.

It is also noteworthy that though its position in the community was consolidating, WACOSS still remained faithful to its original mission - to help the disadvantaged. A Welfare of the Indigent Subcommittee was formed co-ordinating representatives from churches and other non-government organisations who were committed to the alleviation of poverty.

Another neglected group the Council sought to

help were widows whose ex-servicemen husbands had died after returning from war.

The child welfare vigilance was further demonstrated when an after-school care centre was opened at Subiaco Primary School. A benefactor, Thomas Wardle, promised to fund this and other similar centres with £5000 a year. By 1965 there were five Wardle Centres in operation in Perth, but unfortunately they had to close when the Education Department decreed they must be staffed by trained teachers who in turn required equivalent teachers' salaries, a demand Mr Wardle refused to meet.

Midway through the '60s the 64-65 Annual Report enables at least two significant conclusions to be drawn. Firstly, the key office bearers are: Professor Saint, President; Dr Colin Anderson, Vice President; Mr J Picton-Warlow, Honorary Legal Adviser; and Mrs Gwin Ruston, Executive Officer. All had been active WACOSS members for more than five years, providing experience and stability for the Council's deliberations and activities.

Secondly, the fact that office space and finance continued to be a concern pointed to the fact that the Council's reach was expanding. There was a constant need for a large number of volunteers to help with the work of CAB, while the Standing Committee on Alcoholism and the Board of Management of the Wardle Centres required office space. The Report expresses the Council's thanks to the Royal Perth Hospital, The West Australian Employers Federation, the Air Force Association and the Anglican Church all of which had helped with office space.

Fortunately, in 1965 WACOSS moved into the old Government Printing Office, on the corner of Pier and Murray Streets, where there was more space for its own administration and the support of its many committees. The CAB already occupied part of the building and there was a mini-board room for both organisations to share. This allowed the vital co-ordinating role played by the Council to take place far more seamlessly.

## EVOLVING WITH THE DECADE

It could be that the more distinct profile of WACOSS now made it easier to attract more funding. In 1966 the Premier provided \$1000 for Trained Emergency Aid (TEA), a newly initiated service to help families where the mother was in hospital or incapacitated in some way. This much-needed, and indeed much-utilised service, grew to become the Perth Emergency Housekeeper Service (PEHS), with Gwin Ruston as its prime mover.

Of course an organisation that has made its mark of its own volition through the impetus of strong-willed people is bound to have conflicts and tensions from time to time. WACOSS was no exception. In 1969 Gwin Ruston was hit by a car and sustained life-threatening injuries. It was noted at the 1969 AGM that this was the first AGM she had missed since the Council's foundation - a remarkable record. But while she was recovering, Dr Anderson asked WACOSS to assume the management of the PEHS operation and finances, a decision Gwin resented. We can understand that she felt excluded from the organisation to which she had devoted so much time, energy and unpaid service. Fortunately the rift was healed with the passage of time.

The '60s witnessed a shift, and in some ways a revolution, in social attitudes. Naturally these changes impacted on WACOSS and the way it now saw its role. There was now a focus on rehabilitation rather than commitment to institutions in the treatment of the mentally ill. The Aged Persons' Homes Act led to a dramatic increase in aged care facilities, and services for the disabled decreed that they be integrated into the community rather than institutionalised.

Changes in leadership of WACOSS were also afoot. Three of the most influential members of WACOSS chose to resign from their office at the end of the 1967-68 financial year. All three - Professor Eric Saint, Dr Colin Anderson and Mrs Gwin Ruston had given the Council dedicated service over the years and much of its success was due to their efforts.

The new office bearers were, Professor C B Kidd, President; and Brigadier Hunter of the Salvation Army and Mr R Vincent as Vice Presidents. At this changing of the guard the Council paused in a moment of self-congratulation, describing the satisfaction it felt with the level of co-operation it had achieved between the many statutory and voluntary organisations through which it operated. It also highlighted the fact that the general public was often unaware of the work done by WACOSS since much of it involved private consultation with government and other statutory bodies. Nevertheless it felt that it was functioning to a high degree of efficiency and hoped that its next 10 years would be as "interesting and productive as the last". Of note also is the fact that prominent Perth businessman, Alan Bond, became a Vice Patron of WACOSS at that time.

## FEDERAL FACTORS

In the late '60s there was an increasing need to influence social welfare policy at a federal level and WACOSS began to actively campaign for change. Working through ACOSS, the national body responsible for lobbying the federal government on the formulation of legislation, WACOSS was successful in recommending an increase in child endowment, a uniform rate for guardians and mothers in all pension categories, and a uniform allowance for all children.

In 1969 the Council successfully influenced the legislation on Intensive Care for Nursing Home Patients and in 1970 saw seven of its suggested measures incorporated into the Senate Standing Committee's recommendations for the physically and mentally disabled.

It was inevitable that involvement at federal level and with ACOSS in particular would lead to tensions. Red Cross was unhappy with the way funds were used and WACOSS felt that ACOSS favoured the eastern states, appointing representatives from Victoria and New South Wales to its committees and not distributing all budgeted funds to the state councils.

## 1970s: Changing the guard

In 1971, Brigadier Hunter became President of WACOSS. With the change of leadership and personalities within WACOSS, which had grown from infancy as a tightly knit group of people who knew and understood each other's ways of operating, it is not surprising that misunderstandings arose from time to time.

On one occasion, Mrs Stephenson was nominated and elected to be the ACOSS representative. Another member disputed this, stating the nomination had been incorrectly handled and that the Council's constitution was ambiguous. It is worth noting the reply of the long-standing legal advisor, Mr Picton-Warlow, who upheld the constitution, not only claiming it to be clear but able to be "operated effectively by people of good will." The good will factor certainly shines through the history of WACOSS.

As a long-term agent for the support and welfare of families and children, WACOSS maintained its vigilance in this area as the '70s evolved. One concern was to address the causes of road accidents and ways to prevent them, and it looked to Norway's laws on drink-driving. Non-alcoholic or low-alcoholic drinks over the Christmas period were also suggested.

Other priorities of the time were the establishment of facilities for disabled people, rest centres for women who had travelled into Perth, support for female prisoners on their release and setting an appropriate school starting age.

Success was achieved with many of these issues. The government began to put integrated living facilities into place for disabled people, while Perth City Council moved on establishing rest centres for women. Government action ensured that Aboriginal women, particularly those with venereal disease, would receive medical warrants guaranteeing further treatment on their release from prison.

Again, government legislation changed the school starting age. Children who turned five years of age before June 30 could now start school where previously they had to be six years



Malcom Fraser. Picture: Wikipedia

of age. Free pre-school education was made available for all four year-olds.

After-school care was still a concern. There was now a growing trend for both parents to be in paid employment and a survey concluded that 14 per cent of primary school children returned from school each afternoon to an empty home. WACOSS responded by developing a Care Workers Course to train carers to address this need. Sixty people completed the course.

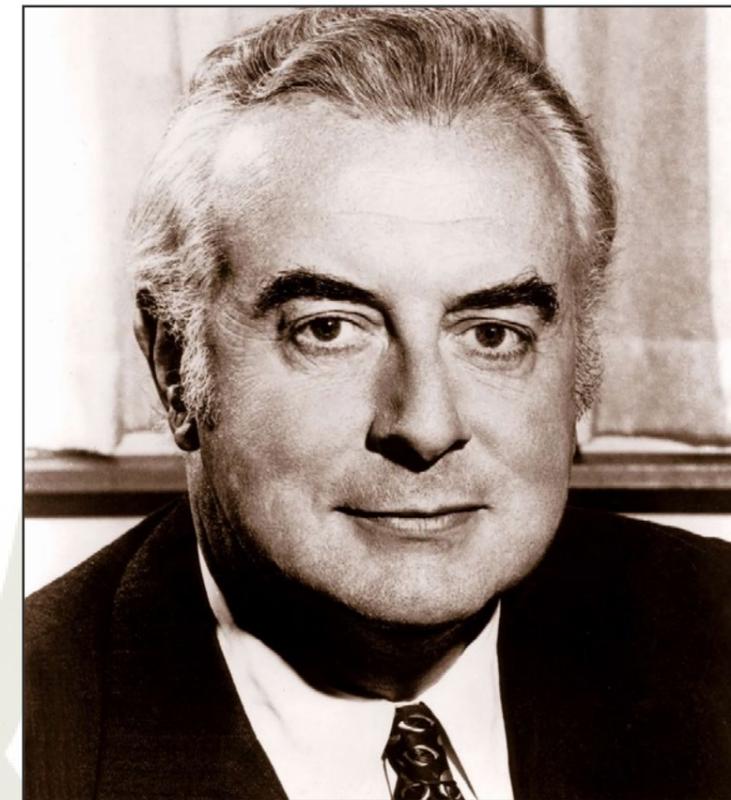
Like the preceding decade, the '70s decade was also an era of great social change. The election of the Whitlam Government gave social welfare a new profile. It flagged the Australian Assistance Plan and WACOSS embraced this idea, proposing the establishment of a Community Welfare Advisory Council to make submissions to the Minister for Social Security.

In 1974, Mr Bill Hayden, the then Minister for

Social Security, came to Perth to address a WACOSS quarterly meeting. He tentatively described the Assistance Plan as a prototype which the federal government planned to test through pilot projects.

However in the face of an anti-welfare feeling at the time he hinted that his government would proceed with caution. Then came the dismissal of the Whitlam government in 1975 and with the election of the Fraser Government the Assistance Plan gave way to a Community Liaison Committee.

Despite the political upheaval WACOSS continued to exert muscle in areas of concern. The Council made significant input into the act that established the Family Law Court of Western Australia in 1976. It urged that there be an independent Director of Counselling and Welfare and was disappointed when this failed to occur.



Gough Whitlam. Picture: Exploring Democracy

## THE CONTRIBUTION OF MRS MARGARET STEPHENSON

The WACOSS story is rich with accounts of generous and dedicated contributions made to the organisation by some remarkable people. The contribution made by Mrs Margaret Stephenson is no exception.

We pick up her story in England at the start of World War II when she had been accepted into Cambridge but chose instead, in 1939, to volunteer for the Auxiliary Territorial Service. She became the youngest commander of all three women's services, an accomplishment that already showed her competence and ability to lead from a young age.

After the war she became a teacher of deaf women until she migrated to Canada in 1954, where she ran a day care centre for migrant children

In the mid-1960s Margaret migrated to WA where she became involved in the welfare area. In 1968 she was appointed Supervisor of the Perth Emergency Housekeeping Service and was elected to the Executive Committee of WACOSS. Under the initial title of Secretary and then as Executive Officer she served tirelessly in that role for the next 10 years, contributing a tremendous amount to the work of the Council over and above the call of administrative duties.

She prepared papers on rural health issues for conferences and symposiums, made submissions to the Magistrates Court and the Commission on Australian Government Administration. Many of her findings were used by state and federal governments. She also served on the advisory committees of Australian Legal Aid and the School of Social Work at the WA Institute of Technology (now Curtin University). The Domiciliary Care and Homemaker Service was put in place partly due to her influence.

The establishment of the Voluntary Court Welfare Service in 1974 was due to Margaret's work and

concern for others. Then, at the end of that year she played a leading role in WA's response to the Cyclone Tracy disaster in Darwin, acting as Chairwoman of the Darwin Evacuees Welfare Committee for six months and as a member of the Disaster Coordination Committee for two years.

Margaret and her husband raised their own children and also fostered Aboriginal children. On her retirement she was hailed by her contemporaries as an extremely giving and supportive person. There can be no doubt that WACOSS benefited from her drive, energy and expertise, and she was awarded the MBE for her services to welfare.

## SEVENTIES SUCCESSES AND STRESSES

At the end of a tumultuous decade and from amid the ebb and flow of political fortunes at state and federal level, WACOSS could still point to some genuine successes. A Community Liaison Committee was formed to renew the mission of co-ordination and co-operation among its member groups and distill the main welfare issues to be targeted for action. Four main issues emerged from this: drug and alcohol use; homelessness; health; and youth involvement in welfare.

The Voluntary Court Welfare Service established in 1974 continued to grow and records in the final years of the '70s showed that more than 4000 clients had been given advice on court procedures and legal aid across East Perth, Beaufort Street, Fremantle and Midland courts.

The Committee on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse succeeded in giving a collective voice to the many agencies dealing with the problem and set up a training course for volunteers, which was hailed as an excellent course by experts.

Still faithful to its mission to influence government policy, WACOSS established a Migration Issues

Committee. It had considerable input into a green paper, Immigration Policy and Australian Population, which stressed the need for a non-discriminatory immigration policy and a more considerate attitude towards family reunions and the intake of refugees. A final government report on Services to Migrants also reflected WACOSS influence.

But it is ironic that when inflation is high and the need for welfare in the community is more pressing than ever, the need to reduce taxation leads governments to want to reduce spending on welfare. This vicious circle was gaining momentum in the final years of the 70s, affecting governments' desire to meet community needs.

## Reflections from the Most Reverend Barry Hickey.

*The Most Reverend Barry Hickey, then Father Hickey, served as Vice-President and Acting President of WACOSS from 1973 -1978. With a Masters Degree in Social Work and considerable experience in the welfare field, including serving as Head of the Catholic Family Welfare Bureau, he was considered suited for the role.*

*Initially Catholic charities had not seen the need to belong to WACOSS because they had been under the control of religious orders that had close ties with relevant government bodies. However Father Hickey recognised the value of WACOSS, particularly its ability to get disparate organisations to work together and achieve more productive and time-efficient outcomes. His involvement with WACOSS encouraged more church organisations to become members of the Council. His influence also led to a significant increase of social workers within Catholic charities.*

*During his time in office with WACOSS, Father Hickey was particularly involved with the Standing Committee on Child and Family Welfare and the Darwin Evacuees Welfare Committee.*

*In interview with Kevin Casey*



Barry Hickey. Picture: Wikipedia

## TAKING STOCK

With the 20-year milestone passed the Council saw the time was ripe to reflect on its performance and future role.

In 1979 new premises were taken over at Freedman Rd, Mt Lawley. While moving from the city could have disadvantages the extra accommodation, ease of parking and the fact that the move enabled it to share resources with the Council on Ageing augured well.

At this point a consultant was called in who recommended more administrative structures be set in place to address inefficiencies at Board level.

The Child Welfare Standing Committee and Family Services Committee, both serving long-term missions of WACOSS combined to become the Family Forum. At its first meeting in November 1979 more than 100 people attended and discussed issues such as children and the court system; unemployment and the family; children in women's refuges; and out-of-school-care. Another Family Forum was held in April 1980 and as a demonstration of its regard for the work done in this area, the WA Department of Community Welfare provided \$10,000 for research projects on child and family welfare.

*Sixty  
Years of  
Impact*

## 1980s: Activism above the political fray

By 1981 the role of Executive Director of the Board was established. At the same time written guidelines formalising the role and responsibilities of the President, and other office bearers and committee members, were set in place.

WACOSS set forth into the new decade with a more activist attitude. Community attitudes towards unemployed people tended to be reactionary and this needed to change. To this end, wage and salary demands were encouraged as the percentage of people living below the poverty line had grown exponentially since the line had been set in the early '70s.

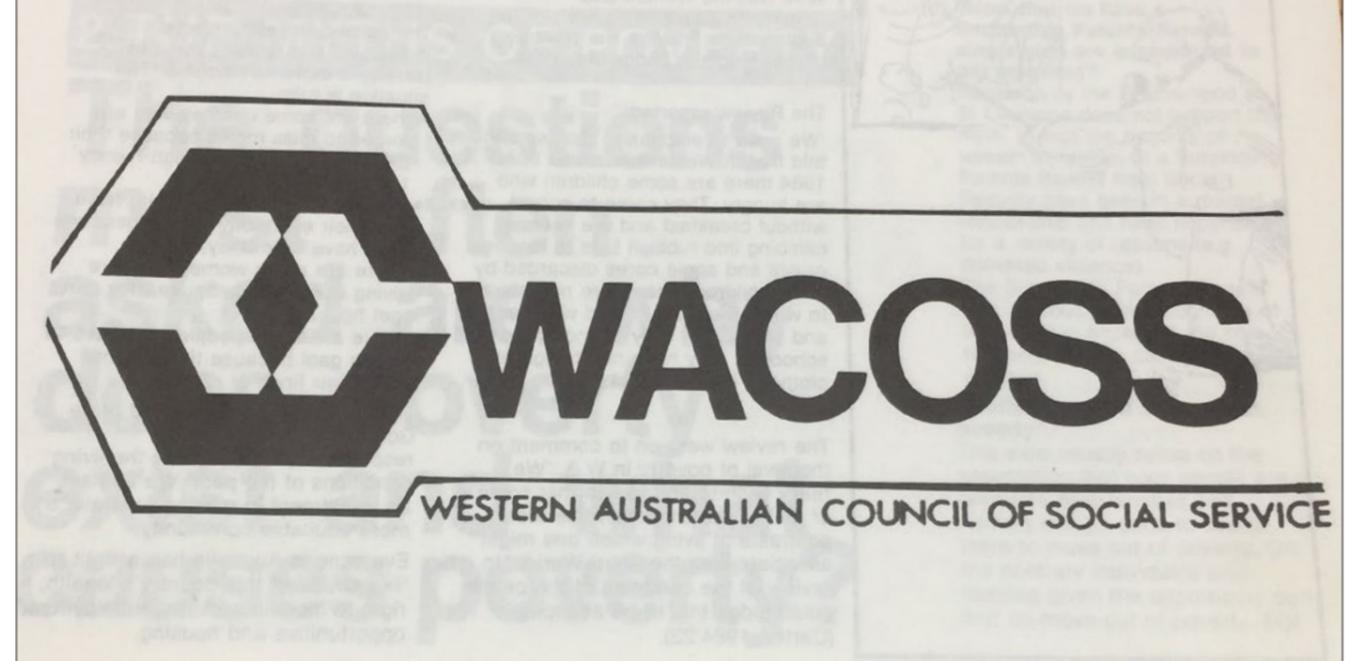
Pensioners and unemployed people on fixed incomes were recognised as vulnerable. While looking to the State Government for further financial assistance, WACOSS also canvassed support for its programs from the service clubs, Rotary, Apex and Lions, inviting them to their AGM.

Although Australia was not officially in recession in the early 80s the Fraser Government had deemed wage and credit restraint as the way to

keep the economy in hand. It also exerted tighter regulations on government spending. Naturally these constraints were felt at a state level and became the realities that confronted WACOSS.

Once again WACOSS assessed the situation it was in and responded accordingly. It is here that we see the foreshadowing of a "fee for service" organisation and its established reputation helped it to thrive.

The Council was asked to convene a taskforce and conduct a feasibility study into setting up a Human Services Information System for WA. The Director was asked to give consultative advice to two formal government committees. It conducted an evaluation seminar to assist its many member agencies and concluded that the State Government was certainly getting good value in return for its funding.



*WACOSS logotype from c. 1985 - c. 1995.*

There were definitely signs that governments were becoming more aware of the vast range of welfare work done by non-government agencies, and they were keen to utilise their experience and knowledge. For instance, the Human Services Board, which had been established in 1979, had the WACOSS President and Director appointed as part of its board. The 1981-82 AGM report cites financial support from both state and federal government with government representatives sitting on some WACOSS committees and senior government officials at Executive Committee Meetings.

WACOSS wisely responded to the increased interaction with government by establishing a Policy Taskforce. Underpinned by WACOSS philosophy, its statements on social and welfare matters were then ready to form the foundations of policy to meet the demands of a variety of issues.

What were the main preoccupations and social issues of the early 1980s? Successive president and director reports identify poverty as the welfare issue of the decade.

In her first report as Director of WACOSS in 1980, Anne Bartlett (later to become Anne Sinclair),

identified the big issues facing the Council as poverty, youth unemployment and job retraining. Maintaining strong links with Councils of Social Services in other states and with the national body, ACOSS, was crucial to keep pressure on politicians and department heads about the problems faced by many Australians.

Responding to poverty and unemployment became the theme of the decade. Successive reports urged the Council and its members to maintain pressure on government welfare policy to cope with the growing demands of the "unemployed, cold, hungry and homeless".

In 1982 a Standing Committee on Emergency Relief was formed and WACOSS sought to intervene with the State Government about changes to the administration of Distressed Person's Relief.

It also had to intervene in the opportunity shops dispute with the Public Health Department, which had decreed all clothing offered for sale must be dry-cleaned, a measure that would have put many of the shops out of business.

WACOSS membership now numbered 150 welfare agencies, many of which were under

extreme financial and workload pressure due to the economic climate. This number gives a clear indication that the Council remained steadfastly committed to its mission of helping society's disadvantaged. Its increasing interaction with government also reflected its capacity to adapt to a changing political landscape.

In 1983, the aims of Director Anne Bartlett's report are couched in more political terms when it states that welfare should be about developing an economic strategy and measures for redistributing the nation's resources in a fair and just way.

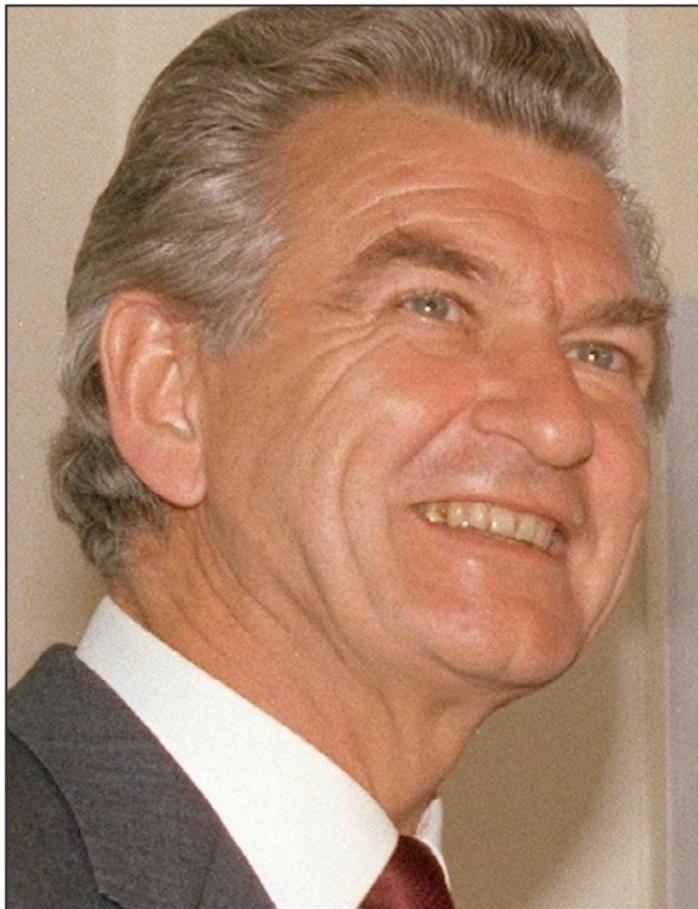
Meanwhile retiring President, Father Barry Hickey reflected that it had been a fruitful experience to work with an organisation which, though political in its aims, remained apart from party politics.

At this same Annual General Meeting the Executive reported that the pace of WACOSS growth had outstripped the decision-making structure.

The economic downturn had led to increase in welfare demands and workers in agencies had found it increasingly difficult to meet their commitments. It suggested that while the immediate issues of poverty were very visible the focus of a welfare organisation like WACOSS must shift to a structured analysis of equity and redistribution.

In the first months of the Hawke Labor Government in Canberra a National Economic Summit was held where ACOSS, prompted by the state Councils, echoed and pursued the theme of equity and redistribution of the nation's resources.

Again, through ACOSS at federal government level, WACOSS was able to address issues on taxation and wealth distribution at the



Bob Hawke. Picture: Wikipedia

Economic Planning and Advisory Council. The West Australian press hailed it as an alternate and worthwhile way to look at the problem of poverty in the community. Dr Jim Iffe, who became President of WACOSS in 1983, said that while many Australians were experiencing economic recovery, this was not the experience of society's most disadvantaged. There were an estimated two million Australians who faced poverty, homelessness or unemployment. Two of the major WACOSS projects at the time tell it all: Co-operative Housing and Furniture Project and the Emergency Relief Data Collection Project.

#### NEW EXECUTIVE - NEW APPROACH

Midway through the 80s the key positions on the WACOSS executive were filled with new personalities. This could be seen by some as a disadvantage, but since the new office bearers wanted to clarify their roles, 1985 saw some

important administrative measures taken. There was a constitutional review and a review of all procedures and structures within the organisation. New procedural manuals were developed to enable policy development and the vital interface with government to occur effectively.

Major activities of that year included advice on management training for individual agencies, a Welfare and Community Services Review where the major theme was a need for consultation between government and non-government agencies and how to achieve it. Training workshops were run for the welfare sector in conjunction with a lawyer from the Welfare Rights Centre, Canberra, where topics such as Life Chances, Advocacy and Justice and Emergency Relief were explored.

Two programs, the Home and Community Care Program (HACC) and the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP), were initiated. When taking stock for the 1986 AGM, the new executive felt that much growth and consolidation had been achieved. Attention to improved consultation with members and with government bodies had borne fruit and the policy development role strengthened. A report had been forwarded to the Community Services Board titled, "A Change From Charity".

With the benefit of hindsight we can see how significant these shifts of focus were. The winds of change that were to bring fee-for service models and corporatisation for organisations such as WACOSS were already in the air. The Council Board wisely looked to the future and encouraged professionalism and business-like procedures at all levels. But it was never distracted from its core business, expressing the need to maintain a balance between their independence and their ability to work closely with the government in developing policy and

programs. Above all, it expressed the need to keep its lobbying role to broad areas of concern in order to benefit the welfare sector as a whole.

Poverty was still the main issue of Director Robyn Barrow's report in 1986. Of the large number of people living below the poverty line she identified the most affected groups as women, women with children, Aboriginals, the unemployed, rural poor and large families. Another critical suggestion she made was for non-government organisations to develop expertise in state and federal government budget analysis.

With the move to new premises in East Perth in 1987, WACOSS had taken charge of Emergency Relief Data Collection and was in a position to advise the State Advisory Commission on the distribution of funds. It was also working on a handbook of programs and information of human services in rural areas.

In the 1987 federal election campaign, Prime Minister Bob Hawke made his famous statement: "By 1990 no Australian child will be living in poverty". Yet despite his goodwill there was an undercurrent of opposition by the public to government spending on welfare. The government responded with calls for greater accountability of funds. Meanwhile while WACOSS worked hard to achieve assistance where it was needed and to put the unfair "dole bludger" criticism to rest.

At the same time the Council's consultancy base was expanding as it tendered for a number of consultancies to conduct training programs with government departments. One standout example was the Training for Aboriginals Program. It produced a new Community Services Directory and continued to operate the Emergency Relief Data Collection.

By 1988 WACOSS had been appointed to develop the HACC Management and Service delivery

training package, a clear acknowledgement by the government of the Council's understanding of, and relevance to, community groups.

As the 80s drew to a close the welfare sector of the state continued to redefine itself. A significant topic at the 1987 conference alongside "Child Poverty" was "The Future of Social Welfare Expenditure". Significant, too, in 1988 was the pre-budget submission to government, where a business-like rationale rather than welfare needs was articulated. Staff expectations and the culture was also changing with staff wages and insurance posing problems.

Then there was the volunteer factor that member organisations had to address. Feeling the volunteer effort was under-resourced and uncoordinated, WACOSS developed a referral service to match individual volunteer skills with specific agency needs. It developed training programs for volunteers and established a reference library.

The WA Lotteries Commission at this time made Lotteries House available for small welfare agencies, enabling a large section of the welfare community to come together under the banner of Lotteries House Management Pty Ltd.

But administration matters, important as they were, could never eclipse the energy demonstrated for welfare needs of the day. A Psychiatric Issues Working Party was formed to look into the needs of patients released from institutions into the community with little support.

Also during the late 1980s, a training and development unit for HACC was established; a report was made to the federal government calling for a simpler, more accessible form for the Child Support Scheme; and a consultancy for the Law Reform Commission was undertaken to identify procedures and processes involved in obtaining consent for medical treatment for the terminally ill, defective neonates and minors.

And in 1988, in response to a submission to the Department of Community Services, Helen Moorhead was appointed as a Public Affairs Officer to promote social and economic benefits of social welfare in the community.

#### **'THE RECESSION WE HAD TO HAVE'**

When President Doug Robertson addressed the 1990 AGM he heralded tight fiscal times with the federal government cutting funds and the states having to make up the shortfall. Director Robyn Barrow reiterated the need for accountability for the government funding given to non-government organisations. Ms Barrow also stressed that they, in turn, must be accountable to their constituents - the people they help - and the philosophies and goals of these agencies should be acknowledged by government.

At this turning point the time was ripe for WACOSS to reflect on the significant shift in attitude towards welfare that had transpired. Traditionally, and for much of the Council's existence, community services had been based on the charitable model of giving to the needy. Much of the work had been organised by churches and similar groups, and staffed by volunteers. A shift had grown out of the Whitlam years, with the government funding and initiating services and programs. The community's expectations had increased and the range of community and welfare services had grown enormously.

Furthermore, across the whole field of welfare, a new workforce had been created. There were now more people working for wages in the non-government sector. There were also more people working in government departments.

While acknowledging the success of projects such as the creation of the Public Affairs role which handled the dissemination of information, the sophisticated Training and Development Unit

for HACC, the Emergency Data Relief Collection and the Poverty Programs Data Collection the President saw the dire need of yet another top priority project: an efficient, well-organised records management system to collate, store and retrieve the vast array of information that WACOSS now managed for its member organisations and used to operate effectively for the people they served.

## 1990s: Reforms and relief

In 1991 Robyn Barrow who had served as Executive Director since 1985 took up a role with the State Government Ministry of Housing. There had been some big changes and initiatives taken during her time in office, namely the move to Lotteries House, the establishment of the HACC Forum, the Child Advocacy Program and the creation of Stirling Management Pty Ltd. The new Director was Bindi Other-Gee.

Like many of her predecessors, Ms Other-Gee was a talented operator with the ability to get things done. At the 1991 AGM after only three months in the job she was able to make a perceptive assessment of the state of play for WACOSS. The West Australia Poverty Task Force, a long-term strategy put in place during the 1980s was being ignored by the government. She saw the Public Service Review of government funding to non-government organisations as vitally important and she spelled out two clear goals; addressing inequity and disadvantage for Aboriginal people and creating stronger links with areas beyond the metropolitan region

With Australia now officially in recession, poverty and housing remained dominating issues for WACOSS and its member organisations. How did

WACOSS respond to this crisis? A landmark event occurred on March 22, 1991 when WACOSS and the Trades and Labour Council combined forces to issue a Joint Communique on Social Justice, calling on the government to adopt a social justice strategy to work towards a fairer society.

Again, when the Hawke-Keating Government introduced the Newstart and Jobstart Allowances in July 1991 WACOSS urged caution. The Council warned that although the ideas were basically good, they must be administered with sensitivity and people must know their rights. President Doug Robertson warned that despite measures to alleviate poverty, the recession continued, unemployment was still high and there was a potential for a substantial Australian underclass to form. The Social Advantage Restructure

Implementation Committee was an important initiative at the time.

In February 1992 Paul Keating moved to address unemployment and stimulate the economy with an infrastructure development program, the One Nation Statement, but in West Australia unemployment was still high with an average of 10 per cent of the state's workforce unemployed along with a youth unemployment rate of 30 per cent.

Clearly there was still much to do and WACOSS continued to respond to the growing inequities and hardship it saw all around it. The Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Services Review was formed, the Child Care Fee Relief program was implemented along with the Children's Advisory Council, measures which all mirrored the concerns of the founding members in 1956. Seminars provided for member organisations also reflect the response with topics such as "Understanding the State Budget", "Bankruptcy", "Fee for Service" and "Taxation". The VASTE scheme (Volunteers Assisting Students Towards Employment) was initiated and a TransPerth Video produced for non-English speaking migrants.

Throughout all this urgent activity the Council continued to update its technology systems. The Lotteries Commission funded the networking of the computer system.

### **NEW CONTINGENCIES, NEW CONSTRAINTS, NEW MODELS**

In 1993 the election of the Richard Court State Government brought in big changes for WACOSS. In her AGM report Director Bindi Other-Gee cited the most difficult task as managing the organisation within its inadequate resource base and continually seeking ways to generate income. Staff hours had been cut because it had not received all its expected income yet she was

adamant that, through all this change, WACOSS must retain a social policy framework.

A Royal Commission into the Commercial Activities of Government had highlighted the need for accountability and integrity to be clearly visible in every avenue of funding. Confronted with these realities and contingencies, WACOSS set about transforming its activities to a contracting and tendering business model. Professor Maria Harries, whose Presidency of WACOSS oversaw this dramatic change said, "How well we manage the change to contracting and tendering will depend on how well we retain our integrity."

The Council now added new dimensions to its aims, endeavouring to ensure it remained a financially viable and well-managed organisation with a sound ethical and moral basis. The activities and projects of WACOSS are testimony to this vision.

Effective cost savings were implemented and extra income was earned from three projects, the Aboriginal Value Based Project, Australians for Reconciliation and Stirling Management Pty Ltd.

Child Protection and Emergency Relief remained priorities while both executive members and staff spoke at service clubs, sector conferences and educational institutions to maintain the momentum of the Council's aims and projects.

In her final report as president in 1995, Professor Maria Harries articulated an exceptionally relevant perspective of the role of welfare in our society and prevailing attitudes towards it. She saw that WACOSS had been battling for battlers now for 40 years. It had been established, she said, by visionaries who knew that the mark of a civilised society was its support for the disadvantaged and decried societies where individualism, rather than the social well-being, set the economic agenda. While some argued that welfare should exist only as charity to the deserving poor and not those undeserving of

it, she warned that it had been proved that this model inevitably led to social upheaval and high crime rates. In a state where unemployment was still at 8.9 per cent and contract work arrangements were increasing, there were still many people suffering. All society pays the price if economic growth is not balanced with social cohesion.

In the same year Shawn Boyle took on the role of Executive Director from Bindi Other-Gee. He identified two huge tasks for WACOSS. It must work hard for its own survival in the face of precarious funding arrangements and it must work equally as hard for all the WACOSS member services that were so much in need of support.

But Professor Harries had left the Council in a strong negotiating position with the government. This proved to be a huge advantage.

### Reflections from Chris Hall, WACOSS President 2007 - 2011

*Chris Hall was WACOSS Treasurer in 1993 when Richard Court's Liberal government came into office.*

*"This period was the beginning of significant reform in government funding and contracting with the WA community sector, including a move away from grant funding to contracting and the payment of fee for service arrangements.*

*The Government also sought to significantly change the nature and reduce the level of funding to WACOSS, introducing what it described as core funding and member fee for service arrangements.*

*This was probably one of the most fractious and tense periods in the relationship between a WA Government and the community sector, with then Minister for Community Development, Roger Nicholls, initiating key sector reforms.*

*In interview with Christina Granger.*

In 1995 the Premier's Office and Ministry for Family and Children's Services negotiated a three-year agreement, along with a memorandum of understanding, which provided secure funding.

Director Shawn Boyle hailed the agreement as a "huge relief". WACOSS could now get on with its goals, reset its mission and concentrate on securing new projects.

Membership at that time had increased from 158 to 188 organisations, with 64 individual members. It was clear the Council had the trust and support of the sector and it now set about putting networks and structures in place to return that support.

The new reality was that government departments and other organisations were now the clients and WACOSS must provide services for them to purchase. Significant projects of that time were Emergency Relief Data Collection, raising community awareness of the cost of utilities and Homeswest evictions and involvement with the Royal Commission into Removal of Aboriginal Children. It lobbied the state government on juvenile justice and housing and became involved with the Child Abuse Working Party, using its extensive experience and collected information on the causes and impacts of social problems.

The Council took up the cause of the new way of doing business and ran with it, conducting seminars to explain how competitive tendering and contracting worked. A very successful publication, "Coping With Contracting" was produced. With the help of social work student, Leah Bonson, it set up the Aboriginal Services Forum, which included all metropolitan Aboriginal community organisations and led to an Aboriginal Services Network more closely supported by WACOSS.

### Reflections from Professor Maria Harries, WACOSS President 1993-1995

*Since its inception in the 1950s WACOSS had remained a grassroots community-based organisation, representing its member agencies and individuals and totally dedicated to helping people who were in some way disadvantaged.*

*Through the 1980s there had been a significant growth in the community services and WACOSS had remained true to its original mission, working hard to create a fairer society. But at that time there was a government perception abroad that not-for-profit organisations were incompetent, self-focused and unaccountable for any government funding they received.*

*The not-for-profit organisations, on the other hand, felt deeply accountable to the people they served. WACOSS had been strategic in the way it operated. Its board members were leaders in the not-for-profit sector and maintained constant communication with government and shadow ministers. They held regular policy forums with government funding personnel and with members of academia.*

*Dramatic changes in funding policy brought in by the Richard Court State Government in 1993 meant that WACOSS had to become more financially independent.*

*Professor Harries became President just as the consequences of the Court Government Review were being understood and felt. She knew it was important for WACOSS to become more commercially focused to cope not only with the new government guidelines but deal with deregulation that had occurred in the Australian financial system. The Council must adapt to accommodate the changes but also ensure the community of agencies it served initiated action as well as merely responding to the altered landscape.*

*Funding for all human services now had to be contracted out and in many cases privatisation occurred. All not-for-profit organisations were required to move to a business base. Funding grants were dissolved and non-government organisations, used to receiving money for grants, now had to tender for them and compete with others to provide services and outcomes. This was a massive cultural shift for organisations that had been set up and staffed by volunteers and governed by voluntary committees of management even though, in some cases, they may have employed professional staff.*

*WACOSS reacted swiftly for itself, its members and the sector it represented. Unsurprisingly there were differences of opinion about how the crisis should be handled, some wanting to confront the government head-on while others decided to leave WACOSS and negotiate separately with the government. However Professor Harries wanted to mediate, be strategic and work with the government of the day. Amid much turmoil it was agreed that the member organisations should work together to better ensure the survival of the community services sector.*

*After a series of public rallies and considerable media coverage, an agreement was eventually reached with the Premier's Department and Cabinet. WACOSS obtained a government contract to provide services to itself and its member organisations as well as training for sector development. A new era had begun. A business plan was developed and accepted by the government and the Council set about contracting out its services. Shawn Boyle, who came Executive Director in 1995, worked very long hours to ensure the changes succeeded.*

*Throughout the turmoil the Council had continued through the dedication and sustained commitment of Board Members and senior staff, to engage in policy and service development - a heroic effort in the face of possible loss of livelihood.*

*When Professor Harries was first elected as President it was seen as significant that she was the first woman to gain the position. However there was some undercurrent of concern at her appointment as she was a professional and an academic in a sector that had long prided itself on its voluntary character. Ironically, when she resigned to take on chairmanship of another not-for-profit organisation, it was criticised her replacement was a man.*

*Professor Harries paid tribute to David Gilchrist who used his considerable financial skills to secure an annual grant to enable WACOSS to implement its new business plan, which has led the Council to where it is today - a powerful collaborating force that engages with government on behalf of the people of WA.*

*In interview with Dr Sue Hart*

By the end of 1996 WACOSS had a corporate plan, the executive and management committee were replaced with a more streamlined board and a new computing system had been installed for budget management and reporting. With a grant from the Lotteries Commission a complete upgrade of computer software and hardware took place. WACOSS was in business! And at the state conference held in November it celebrated its 40th anniversary.

### TOWARDS 2000

At the 1997 AGM President Ian Carter acknowledged the crisis of the mid 90s as one that had threatened the very existence of WACOSS. But now regular constructive meetings were being held with Government Ministers.

Executive Director Shawn Boyle called on members to maintain policy development and information flow through networks, seminars, forums and mail-outs. Having a key presence in the media was crucial as this brought the community face-to-face with social issues. It was also important to develop regional networks. While a new fee structure meant some loss of membership, other organisations had joined WACOSS, which by 1998 had a membership of 250.

An agreement was made with the State Government to explore ways to increase the Council's revenue-raising capacity, which was expected to provide 43 per cent of its annual budget in 1998. Projects such as the Emergency Relief National Data Collection Project and the Community Based Home Care services Project contributed greatly to the new business model.

In his 1998 Annual Report President Ian Carter invoked a universal perspective, challenging members to seek a balance in the economic, social and environmental dimensions of the



Cover of WACOSS' 40th Anniversary Conference Booklet

world, to give hope, and to uphold their moral responsibility to create a civil society. The 1998 Conference echoed this call with its theme: "Building Community in a Cutthroat World".

Support for member organisations continued a pace in ways such as training on a fee-for service basis, which covered topics such as how to work with the media, managing insurance issues, selecting and appointing staff and marketing their agency. Publication of the WACOSS News with policy and general industry support also helped general income. The Community-based Home Care Project held a back-to-back conference with the 1998 WACOSS Conference when the Council was able to give significant advice on streamlining office procedures and

hosting meetings.

The 1999 AGM hailed some important achievements. Reforms in childcare, disability, aged-care and employment services across state and federal arenas had all been influenced to a significant degree by WACOSS policies, philosophy and practice.

As the three-year funding deal came to an end the Council moved from the Stirling Street Lotteries House to the new City West Lotteries House and developed a new Corporate Plan. The total budget was now \$600,000 with less than one third coming from government grants. An upgrade to corporate-style communications was planned, access to the Council's library through the internet was provided and perhaps most important of all, WACOSS would have its own web page.

The organisation that had grown out of the goodwill and effort of a stalwart group of volunteers was ready to face the 21st century.

## 2000s: The global shift

The advent of the new millennium coincided with the introduction of the GST (Goods and Services Tax), a new taxation system that required explaining at many levels. WACOSS board members responded to the many calls from its member organisations and indeed members of the public by attending committee meetings and forums to assist in working with the new constraints. As part of the GST Project conducted across the state a total of 60 seminars were conducted.

The 2000 Conference centred around two of the Council's most important priorities - poverty and welfare reform. The WACOSS Poverty Commission, which met every two months, was able to make a significant contribution to the federal government's welfare reform agenda at that time.

The year 2000 was also an important landmark for Aboriginal Reconciliation. In National Reconciliation Week in May, 300,000 people marched across Sydney Harbour Bridge in support of the process. In West Australia an Aboriginal Reconciliation Conference marked the beginnings of a strategy between members of

the Stolen Generation and WACOSS, representing the community sector.

The new-look corporate WACOSS continued to grow its business skills and activities. It developed a media training program for people working in the welfare sector in partnership with Murdoch University's School of Journalism. Meanwhile its GST projects had been a huge success and for the first time its revenue exceeded \$1,000,000.

The face of WACOSS had certainly changed. There were corporate structures and "paying its way" practices in place, but always its underlying

principles were the values of social justice. However community criticism of these values was never far away, with the recurring theme that disadvantaged people were the "exploiters", rather than the "exploited" of society.

But there was more opportunity in the early years of the new century to have input into government policy development. Prior to the state election in early 2001, WACOSS had presented an extensive document, "Healing the Social Divide" to all parties and this was now informing the new government's policy on regional development, family policy, employment and education.

At that time, too, the Council created a senior policy position in Aboriginal affairs which was filled by Michael Wright. He was the first Aboriginal (Nyoongar) person to be employed in the Council of Social Services network and still works with Nyoongar families, mental health and drug and alcohol service providers.

WACOSS influence played a major part in the establishment of the Gallop State Government's Homelessness Task Force and continued to grow and strengthen its networks in the Emergency Relief Forum, the Aboriginal Disability Network, the Family Services Southwest and Midwest Networks and the Emergency Relief Sector Support Project.

The plethora of government reviews and consultations were always a challenge. In 2002 President Tony Pietropiccolo felt there was a need for clearer communication between government departments, citing the difficulties faced by the Homelessness Task Force in navigating these problems. Other challenges were the increasing tendency in society for litigation which could easily impact on small not-for-profit organisations.

However, one distinct way WACOSS was able to assist its member organisations as they

continued to struggle for financial liquidity was to help effect the abolition of competitive tendering as the sole funding mechanism used by government departments to purchase social services.

### A BROADER PERSPECTIVE

The pace of globalisation has increased enormously in the 21st century and its impact on the social landscape has been profound. It was necessary for WACOSS to stand at the front line to meet these challenges. The 9/11 terror attacks in the US galvanised a sense of fear and, regrettably, prejudice in some areas of society. In 2002 President Pietropiccolo saw that not just migrants and refugees, but all disadvantaged people could easily fall victim to this fear. A harsh criminal code and enforced institutional care were evidence this was happening.

The 2002 Conference, which aimed to tap into the broader perspectives of the western world and spell out ways West Australians, and WACOSS in particular, could work with them, was hailed as a huge success.

Other successes were the Emergency Relief Security Report Project, funded by the Lotteries Commission, the publication of the West Australian Emergency Relief Referral Directory and a Networking Day for member organisations.

By this time the Lotteries House premises were at full capacity, where a membership of 354 organisations was served.

At the 2002 AGM Director Shawn Boyle observed members left only when they could not afford the fees. Financial constraints were never far below the welfare sector surface.

It was, incidentally, Shawn Boyle's last year as Director. He had worked tirelessly in the position for more than seven years, and like many of his predecessors had helped WACOSS survive

changing and difficult times.

In 2003 the new Executive Director, Lisa Baker, who had worked for international organisations, including the United Nations, reiterated the need for a universal perspective and called on the council and its organisations to stay focussed on meeting people's basic needs - nutrition, shelter, healthcare and education.

Always there was bureaucratic finessing to be done, primarily to ensure the efficient flow of funding. In 2003 the Council negotiated a new agreement with the State Government that would provide greater consistency in contract funding. It made an important submission to the 2003-2004 state budget entitled "Thriving Communities" and commenced planning on a "Poverty" submission for 2005.

One notable achievement was the publication of "The Little Black Book" by WACOSS's Aboriginal Community Development. This contained accessible information for young Aboriginals. Indigenous training programs were also discussed and developed.

The Not-For-Profit Development Unit, which had won the 2002 Community Services Award for Developing and Supporting the Community Services Industry, continued to provide crucial support to the not-for-profit member organisations as they faced increasing demands on management and accountability. One example of help was The First-Click Project, which provided internet and email training for 755 people.

By 2004 the mining boom was in full swing in WA. While this may have meant greater prosperity for all, the welfare sector rightly observed the broadening gap between the "haves" and the "have nots". One response was to give member organisations right across the state a direct hand in policy development advice through the central Executive Director.

This strategy led to many submissions being made to government inquiries and consultations and, in turn, WACOSS representatives sitting on government committees. These included the Children and Young People in Care Advisory Committee, the Early Years Strategy, the Energy Reform Council and the Ministerial Consumer Council.

A special project held in that year, Employ Right, consisting of workshops held to assist community organisations with recruitment and selection of staff, underscores the continued objective of the Council to be a business force to be reckoned within the state.

In 2005, new President, Rae Walter included a new statistic in her Annual Report. The Australian Bureau of Statistics showed that non-government community services had provided 2.5 million "bed nights" for transitional services. But satisfaction with this could not eclipse the ever-pressing needs in the community. It was heartening to see that the State Government had signed the West Australian Non-government Human Services Industry Plan showing its commitment to work with peak organisations such as WACOSS.

Spurred on by this WACOSS initiated a new policy structure where Policy Advisory Councils focused attention on the three priorities of the year - children, poverty and sector viability. A pre-election campaign was held to raise awareness of social issues and work on forums, submissions to government, policy papers, media releases and seminars - all propelled with characteristic WACOSS energy.

### 50 YEARS ON

We know change is inevitable. But it is sometimes the rate of change that can take our breath away. There is no doubt that change across many



WACOSS logotype from c. 1996 - c. 2005.

spheres has accelerated at a phenomenal rate in the 21st century. The delivery of welfare services is no exception. At the AGM in 2006 President Rae Walter reported that the state had 600 non-government agencies delivering welfare services with a turnover of half a billion dollars. But the struggle to find sufficient funding for these agencies continued and many were reducing their services or shutting down.

Fifty years on the challenge to provide for the needy in society was still present. To help the smaller agencies WACOSS reduced its fees, enabling more to join and continued to grow its training and consulting services.

Seminars at the Annual Conference, held on 4 and 5 May, point to WACOSS priorities. They include, "Is Poverty Anyone's Fault?" and "The Role of Non-Government Organisations in Diverting Young People From Crime".

The following year, 2007, saw a housing crisis emerge in the state with many people suffering from hardship and WACOSS and its organisations

struggling to find sufficient funding and staff to deal with the situation.

Finding staff was another major challenge as it was hard to match government and private sector salaries during the mining boom.

In 2007, too, the Council paused to evaluate the effectiveness of the three year strategic plan it had set in place in 2005. Its outcomes had been:

1. To lead the community services sector and influence government.
2. To maintain a vibrant, effective and sustainable sector.
3. To play a significant role in informing public opinion on social issues.
4. To have WACOSS as a viable and efficient organisation.

On revisiting these planned outcomes there were many successes and achievements. Standout achievements were the Building Networks Projects where staff was procured to work with

South Sudanese migrants, the West African Women's Group and the Muslim Women's Association and the housing crisis response, No Room in the Boom alliance.

Reviewers of the strategic plan were confident the Council had diversified and sustainable income streams, but 2008 saw the sparks of satisfaction fade. At the 2008 AGM, incoming President, Chris Hall saw the previous year as one afloat with opportunities where a state had been experiencing great prosperity, but had failed to meet the needs of many of its people.

More than 400,000 West Australians had been supported by social services agencies that in turn were experiencing threats to workforce viability. Executive Director Lisa Baker also found staff recruitment difficult, but confirmed a new strategic plan had been finalised and commitment to work with vulnerable West Australians had continued.



Lisa Baker. Picture: WACOSS

When Director Lisa Baker resigned at the end of the year, her dedicated work for the Council was acknowledged along with the fact that she had smoothed the way for her incoming replacement, Sue Ash, in the renamed office of Chief Executive Officer.

### CRISIS AND OPPORTUNITY

President Chris Hall hailed 2009 as a memorable one for WACOSS and for West Australia. There was an unprecedented focus on social policy development and sector reform with many government inquiries and reviews. As the impacts of the Global Financial Crisis hit, the number of people accessing welfare services increased by 20 per cent.

CEO Sue Ash felt her induction had been particularly thorough. She had weathered a change of government, handled the contingencies of COAG's National Reform Agenda and dealt with the aftermath of the GFC. An inaugural New Year breakfast had been held at Kings Park that year to bring people of the social services sector together and this was seen a huge success. Other initiatives had been a new union collective agreement to make staff salaries as satisfactory as possible, an interactive website where social issues could be highlighted, a Settlement Grant Program to meet the needs of new and emerging community groups and 62 training sessions that had been attended by a total of 1375 people. The Hardship Utilities Grant Scheme (HUGS) to avoid disconnection from essential services was also set in place.

An audit of the membership showed 238 member organisations, 32 social service individual members, nine associate organisation members, seven associate individual members and five honorary life members. This was



Sue Ash. Picture: WACOSS

certainly something of which WACOSS could be proud.

The three core policy areas to be addressed in the coming year were signposted as civil society, human rights and social inclusion.

Amid the highs and lows of the mining boom and the GFC, WACOSS had confirmed its corporate reputation and maintained its credibility as a reputable peak organisation.

## 2010s: A new partnership approach

The new decade saw the WACOSS brand and operation continue to develop in many ways. In following years, for instance, publication presentations became more user-friendly. Coloured graphics enhanced the Annual Report with tables, flowcharts graphs, photographs and pull-out comments, all making for more engaging and accessible information. Strategic Plans were published with each annual report and progressive outcome systematically recorded.

The Council co-ordinated individual community services and worked with peak organisations across the state. This strategy could be extremely advantageous, such as when in 2010 work with the Peaks Forum succeeded in bringing \$2.86 million of funding into the Community services sector.

The Peaks Forum became a bi-monthly event where the role of peak organisations in the regions they represented was developed. A portal for registration for training in the Community Services sector, especially in regional and rural communities, was also established.

A sense of greater cohesion among community services emerged with events such as the New Year Sector Breakfast, held in Kings Park at the end of each January, when non-government and government representatives from the community services community celebrated achievements and exchanged ideas. The Community Services Excellence Awards announced at the WACOSS Conference also drew entities in the sector together and highlighted their common purpose and impact.

Social policy now encapsulated new issues. Emergency Relief, Emerging Communities and Jobseekers were still priorities, but Climate

Change Readiness also now appeared on the list. WACOSS successfully tendered for a Climate Change Readiness Program with Jobseekers2 Communities, providing 14 unemployed skilled staff from not-for profit organisations with project administrative positions and 48 jobseekers with training to become Energy and Greenhouse Auditors.

Yet another example of WACOSS pragmatism and vigilance was its input into the Government Economic Audit Report highlighting the importance of the community services sector in improving social outcomes, providing great value for money.

An annual Cost of Living report has established where it tracked increases in typical living expenses against typical income, demonstrating the number of households who continued to fall further behind.



Chris Hall. Picture: WACOSS

### Reflections from Chris Hall, WACOSS President 2007 - 2011

*"The Liberal Barnett Government was elected in 2008 and established the Economic Audit Committee, a six-member panel of senior economic and public sector management specialists, including Timothy Marney, who was Administrative Chair and the Under Treasurer of the Department of Treasury and Finance and Professor Peter Shergold.*

*Mr Shergold was respected for his work in the development and implementation of a whole-of-government approach to policy development and program delivery. It was the audit committee's job to look at funding across all sectors.*

*By that time the GFC had struck and WACOSS was brought in to consult with the committee. The Council used the opportunity to make representations about the concerns it had been raising over many years with successive governments.*

*The community sector in WA had been seeking to achieve a 30 per cent increase in base government funding to address funding shortfall to ensure a sustainable and robust community services to the community, through fairer and more just wages for staff employed by the sector. WACOSS was also seeking the procurement of services reform, a reduction in government red tape, and a more professional relationship with government.*

*Salaries in the community sector were on the bottom of the ladder compared with government and the private sector - and about 30 per cent less than the government sector for comparable positions in the government and community sectors.*

*The sector at that time had unprecedented staff vacancy and turnover rates. Despite the fact the GFC had hit, commodities prices were still high and many people were leaving the sector to work*

in the resources industry.

WACOSS was primarily concerned about the viability of services to the community, many parts of which were doing things tough. The workforce crisis meant many services were closing their doors. The Economic Audit Committee's final report was released in October 2009 and contained 43 recommendations directed towards a more collaborative and innovative public sector focused on "Putting the Public First" and giving greater attention to social issues. The committee believed services were better provided and targeted by the private and community sectors. The report echoed the WACOSS Pre-Budget Submission of the year, "Putting People First".

Following the release of the EAC report, the WA Government established the WA Partnership Forum in April 2010 and it continues today. Its membership comprised 18 leaders from the public and community sectors, including WACOSS, with inaugural and independent chair Professor Peter Shergold.

The two key areas of focus for the Partnership Forum in its initial stages of operation included a review of community sector funding and procurement reform.

Some of the forum's early key achievements included recognition by the State Government of the essential role of the WA community services sector; the need for appropriately paid and trained staff; the underfunding of state contracts and the impact of this on service sustainability; the administrative burden on both sectors and the sovereign nature of NFP sector organisations and professional approach to business management.

The other key achievement of the Partnership Forum included a review of community sector funding and government decision making as part of the 2011-12 Budget process. In 2011, in total, the Government has delivered a \$1 billion social services package to help make the community sector more sustainable, thereby protecting services and support for disadvantaged and vulnerable people in the WA community.

As part of that package, the WA Government's 2011 State Budget announced funding for the not-for-profit community sector of \$604 million over the next four years. This funding was to address a shortfall in the amount paid by Government to the sector for the services they provide, to enable staff to be paid fair wages and help to ensure the sustainability of services.

The funding package also included various other initiatives such as investment in capacity and innovation and consumer engagement activities.

The above achievements resulted from a focus on the shared objectives and aspirations of the public and community sectors for the WA community; a high level leadership and will from the Premier and the public and community sectors to make the partnership work; genuine commitment to building relationships and trust; and central government agency coordination and support, including secondments to and from the NFP sector.

The planets had aligned. There have been many learnings along the way and the journey continues..."

Chris Hall pays tribute to Chief Executive Officer Sue Ash (2008-11) who was instrumental in changing WACOSS by leading more strategic engagement with government and negotiating policies, and influencing policy and funding, by doing this behind closed doors rather than only criticising in the media. This can be a fine line, but WACOSS performed a key role in this way.

*In interview with Christina Granger.*

In response to the drought, WACOSS was contracted to deliver the Beyond Farming Package across rural areas. This initiative enabled peer support and mentoring for farmers who may have been forced to leave the land. Provided by other farmers with similar experiences, this program was highly commended.

In 2011 President Chris Hall was able to report on some remarkable results. A Partnership Forum with the Barnett Government had been established in 2010 to achieve more collaboration between the public and community sectors. This forum had paved the way for an unprecedented \$1 billion social service package in the 2011 state budget. In the 2011 Annual Report the President acknowledged the "perseverance, commitment and effort of so many people across the sector" who had achieved this result. The challenge now was for the funding to be implemented and agreed reforms to occur.

That year, in partnership with MODAL, leadership training specialists, a six-year partnership to deliver Community Leadership Programs was established, including a Diploma of Business tailored for the community sector.

The Peaks Forum was now an important event on the calendar. Meeting quarterly, it provided opportunity for information exchange and networking ideas for projects and activities, but was also a source of valuable policy input for WACOSS to take up and drive. It was the important task of the Council to identify cross-sector priorities of the 36,000 workers in the community sector and translate them into efficient action.

In 2012 CHOGM came to Perth and incoming president, Francis Lynch, highlighted the Council's involvement in the Commonwealth People's Forum. Another highlight, Fair Work Australia's Equal Remuneration ruling, was good news for the sector's equal pay case.

CEO Irina Cattalini paid tribute to the statewide

input for the pre budget submission, Closing the Divide, and noted the board meeting held at Roebourne - the first ever WACOSS board meeting to be held outside Perth. She recognised that increased regional focus resulted in increased membership, which in turn enabled a broader pool of ideas for ultimate support of the disadvantaged and vulnerable, which was the core business of the Council.

Emergency Relief workshops were held in rural areas enabling 156 participants to gain training in emergency relief, financial literacy and advocacy and referral skills.

Another initiative of 2012 was Empower WA. Here the Council partnered with other bodies including the Conservation Council of WA, Australian Youth Climate Coalition, Living Smart and Unions WA to provide information, training and events on renewables, efficiency, transport, and energy economics across the community. This was surely a true indication of its ability to think broadly and see the big social picture.



*Francis Lynch. Picture: WACOSS*

Indeed, "The Big Picture" was theme of the 2012 Annual Conference where a range of consultation forums and seminars was provided in areas pertaining to the key priorities of the Council. Some subtle shifting of focus for community needs is seen in the attention given to culturally, linguistically and diverse communities, and therapeutic outcomes for children and adults who have experienced abuse.

A worthy landmark achievement of 2012 was the use of social media for the first time where delegates to the Annual Conference were able to engage with the program and its topics.

WACOSS Management Support Online was another significant implementation. The Department of Regional Development Community Resource Branch provided 105 Community Resource Centres subscriptions to this service, giving small and regional organisations a valuable resource for self-paced learning about governance and management operations.

The core mission of WACOSS has never been far from its key agenda. In his 2013 Annual Report President Francis Lynch gave a salutary reminder to members that they spoke for the 515,000 West Australians who regularly accessed community services. He reiterated the dual role of the Council which was to firstly meet the needs of social service providers and secondly, to meet the needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged people.

In her report, CEO Irina Cattalini, hailed the pre budget submission "Stronger Together" as a signature annual publication. Its focus on care and support of people in need, safe and secure housing, support for children and young people, and help with basic living costs again reflected the basic WACOSS mission. In 2013 WACOSS established the Infant Mental Health Project with the Mental Health Commission and played

a central role in implementing Child and Parent Centres at public school sites to improve access to early learning, and child and maternal health and wellbeing in vulnerable communities.

Housing of juveniles in adult prisons was another area of social policy where Council muscle was exerted, as was the possibility of raising the minimum wage to improve the lot of many young West Australians, including those working in the community services sector.

Once again Social Policy Consultations, Forums and Seminars were held right across the state. The Kimberley, Great Southern, Peel and Midwest regions are cited and participant comments published in the Annual Report include, "Excellent, I learned relevant information I can pass onto clients", and "Great information. I liked the combination of theory and applied training." Topics explored were issues such as "Smart Metres: Risks and benefits for low income households" and "Phone and Internet: Know your rights."

As well as extending its reach through seminars and webinars, WACOSS also maintained its high professional standards through sector training. Its public calendar of workshops points to topics such as "Effective Grant Writing", "Charing Meetings" and "Communicating and Connecting with Aboriginal Clients".

2014 proved to be a year when community service providers across Australia were called to attention. Incoming President Steve Joske heralded real concern for comments filtering down from Canberra such as the "end of the welfare state" and "end of the era of entitlement". It was evident that the sector would have to do more for less and WACOSS had to play an even more influential role in representing the voice of disadvantaged people.

CEO Irina Cattalini called for COSS workers across the country to join forces to have their voice heard in Canberra.

The Annual Conference held at the Perth Exhibition and Convention Centre with the theme "The Difference We Make" was highly successful, with 41 concurrent workshops centred around four succinct key areas: role, relationships, the future and our business.

A particularly worthy note of 2014 was the advancement of Reconciliation WA. WACOSS was proud of its strong connections with this area of social change and pledged its continuing support around corporate services and financial management to improve the opportunities it gave to Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders.

Along with the critical pre-budget submission, which covered housing, cost of living children and families there was another significant newcomer to the Council's range of initiatives - the Self-Regulation Initiative. The Thinker in Residence, Dr Stuart Shanker presented workshops on developing a child's or young person's ability to deal with stressors effectively and return to a baseline of being calmly focused and alert, attracting 1727 people to these highly successful events.

DropIN, another great WACOSS success, was launched in 2014. Here was an online platform where people across the sector could meet and collaborate, network, share and store documents, interact with government partners, universities and the corporate sector.

The continued health and effectiveness of WACOSS was perhaps best expressed in the statistics scattered through the Annual Report. There were 372 delegates at the Annual Conference along with 65 presenters. WACOSS also had 1972 Twitter followers and 247,572 page views of its website.

In the Annual Report of 2015, President Steve Joske addressed the range of goals of the Strategic Plan by pointing to the many achievements on the WACOSS scoreboard. He saw standout achievements as the new

early childhood initiatives such as Connecting Communities for Kids in Cockburn and Kwinana and the new Early Years Networks Support Program.

## 2016 and beyond

As WACOSS enters its seventh decade it faces more complex challenges than ever before. But many of its core concerns remain and it is tackling these with expertise, wisdom and commonsense approach the organisation has gained over the past 60 years of grassroots service.

It's a hard slog, being a peak body and trying to influence – not control - the community sector and government is hard work, along with trying to bring together all peak bodies with a single, credible voice. That requires providing a central point of leadership while recognising different core bodies.

There is now increased and greater complexity of need in WA, with a cocktail of homelessness, mental health, and drug and alcohol issues.

The social indicators are going the wrong way and the sector is more fragmented.

Policies that encourage competition between organisations have done the sector a disservice, they haven't helped collaboration and co-operation.

There's a need for consolidation.

We need to reboot system (and) WACOSS has a role in encouraging collaboration, mergers and alliances.

Despite all the changes over the past six decades the fact remains that the community sector is vital to a civil society.

WACOSS is still struggling to pull together money to produce a directory – just as it did back in the 1950s - but now the Council wants to build a real-time online directory for the digital age for a much more complicated community service sector.

The financial pressures are indeed a constant challenge. As the rate of growth of WA's economy has continued to slow over the past year with the downturn in commodities markets, there has been significant disruption and uncertainty for the community services sector, predominantly as

a result of tendering processes and cuts to service funding.

Recent Commonwealth service tenders also led to significant service disruption and a reduction in funding levels, affecting many regional services in particular.

Changes announced in September 2016 by Federal Social Services Minister Christian Porter are likely to lead to further change and disruption.

### COLLABORATION CALLS

WACOSS believes that it is in times such as this that strong partnerships between government and the community sector are more critical than ever to determine how limited resources are best used for the people who need them most.

As the Council said in its 2016 Budget submission document, Leaving No One Behind – and as is being found in other jurisdictions in Australia and overseas – “genuine, long-term cost saving for government can only come through reducing the demand on expensive statutory services through the early intervention programs that the community service sectors supplies”.

With this in mind co-designing services, cross-portfolio collaboration and investment in early intervention are vital.

Collaboration with government and among other community organisations is one of the Council's key aims in its efforts to advocate as effectively as possible for the disadvantaged into the 21st century.

The Partnership Forum helps manage the relationship with state agencies and the not-for-profit community sector and encourage more integrated service delivery. But there is constant tension between having a good relationship with government while also needing to be independent, especially when a lot of services have mixed government and community sector funding.

### INFORMATION SHARING

There are more complex and entrenched needs now, and WACOSS is moving towards integrated services and outcomes-based contracts to get better outcomes with the fewer funds available for the state's most vulnerable people.

These moves towards better integration and an even stronger outcomes focus than ever before have come out of, in particular, Regional Services Reform processes, as well as youth reforms including the Aboriginal Youth Service and the Early Years - Collective Impact Project in Cockburn and Kwinana.

There are a lot of statistics about how beneficial early years intervention services can be and there is potential for more impact if we pool resources. In regions, too, there is potential for more collective impact if there is service integration.

Decisions about programs must be made on good data and evidence. With tightening resources and growing costs, for example in juvenile care, WACOSS has been leading the way nationally and internationally in data linking to prove the value of social investment and proving the case for better intervention as a way of achieving better outcomes for people – and saving money in the long-term.

It also vital for WACOSS to demonstrate how the community sector, with its intimate knowledge of specific local needs, can provide services better than the corporate sector.

To this end, WACOSS called for an Effective Open Data Policy in its 2016 Budget submission.

This involves better access to data and more effective service evaluation to help deliver more targeted, evidence-based and integrated wrap-around services needed to tackle entrenched problems for people with complex needs.

In line with its tradition of offering practical, low-cost solutions to problems it faces, WACOSS

suggested in its Budget submission: “Making data available in a format useable in MS Excel as the default should be achievable at little to no cost to agencies and reduce the costs incurred by requests for publicly available data in useable formats.”

### **GIVING CONSUMERS A VOICE**

There is a new push for reform in the sector with the aim of giving consumers of services a bigger voice and changing service delivery models to empower people.

Service providers need to be sensitive to partnering to help build capacity, to step back and let users take more control.

In its Budget submission, WACOSS called for a co-design toolkit containing principles, guidelines, frameworks and case examples to support the empowerment of consumers.

### **NEW FOCUSES AND CHALLENGES**

While WACOSS has adopted a more regional focus under current CEO Irina Cattalini, it has continued its tradition of being at the forefront of advocating for quality care for children.

In this area, progress has started involving cross-agency and cross-sectoral collaboration in pilot initiatives, such as the Connecting Community For Kids project in Cockburn – Kwinana.

This project aims to bring together parents, local services, and industry and civic leaders to improve the lives of children from pre-birth to eight years, given the strong evidence that the foundation for good health and wellbeing starts from pre-birth.

WACOSS has long argued for more targeted early intervention to reduce the longer-term costs of crisis and tertiary services, and it is clear that the WA Government has taken this to heart through its investment into early years services, child and

parent centres, child health nurses and more.

But in its 2016 Budget submission, WACOSS calls for the Government to develop an overarching state-wide plan for the provision of early childhood development services in WA. It has also put forward a “social investment” approach to reducing long-term costs of state services for an easily identified disadvantaged cohort with poor long-term prospects.

Another important proposal in that document was for a sustained commitment to the resourcing and implementation of the WA Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drug Services Plan 2015-2025.

The Council acknowledged this as “an excellent example of a collaborative planning process across the public and community sectors.”

Among other new challenges is the need to change the attitude encouraged by some in government that vulnerable and disadvantaged people are a drain not a resource that can help lift the economy.

Along with changes in industrial relations laws, there is a growing danger of community sector services being “Uberised” – that is being contracted out to private sector and workers employed with low pay and poor conditions.

The Council is focused to ensure the community sector doesn’t lose people to the private sector and workers in the community sector aren’t living in poverty themselves.

Affordable training for the community sector, for example digital skills, is also vital. WACOSS now provides online solutions for the sector to share information and collaborate.

One way in which WACOSS is using online solutions is DropIN. This online platform helps community sector organisations engage with consumers more effectively by allowing, for example, different groups to plan meetings, share documents, and ask for support and feedback.

There is also an Early Years Networks Portal purpose built for service providers in this sector.

### **A BROADER VISION**

WACOSS began with some support and encouragement from the British Council for Social Service and Ms Ash stepped up the Council’s international engagement with the 2011 CHOGM in Perth when WACOSS instigated the first Indigenous People’s Forum at CHOGM.

Under Ms Cattalini, WACOSS is now taking a lead role in the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), through the new WA SDGs Network. The network brings together civil society in WA to develop and promote solutions, policies and public education for sustainable development.

### **TRUE TO ITS ROOTS**

As WACOSS forges ahead into its next decade in a stronger position than ever, the present and past two WACOSS CEOs have been strong females who have taken a leadership role within the sector.

It’s fitting that a woman, Irina Cattalini, is at its helm when most of the workers who have done its vital grassroots work in the sector were also women - and the Council was started in no small part thanks to the tireless efforts of Gwin Ruston.

## APPENDIX 01: Committee members appointed at the 1956 meeting

### CHAIRMAN

Rev. A. C. Eadie

### PROVISIONAL COMMITTEE

Mrs G. W. Ruston  
Miss M. Walters  
Miss E. R. Williams  
Dr C. Anderson  
Mr C. J. Knight.

### THE AD HOC COMMITTEE

Dr. C. Anderson  
Mr E. Benjamin  
Mr. R. Bowyer  
Mr. C. Cornish  
Miss I. Glasson  
Mr. H. Grieg  
Mr. R. Hewitt  
Miss J. M. Hill  
Mr G. R. Hitchin  
Mrs F. Hummerston  
Mr. C. J. Knight  
Mrs. M. Picton-Warlow  
Mrs G.W. Ruston  
Miss. M. Talbot  
Miss M. Walters

### OTHERS WHO PLAYED A SIGNIFICANT PART AT THE FIRST AD HOC COMMITTEE

Mr J. G. Picton-Warlow  
Miss Williams  
Miss F. Pitman  
Mr F. Cross

## APPENDIX 02: Organisations represented at the meeting of March 16, 1956

Alexandra Homes  
Air Force Association  
Association of Apex clubs  
Association of Civilian Widows  
Australian Association of Social Workers  
Australian Legion of Ex-servicemen and Women  
Australian Red Cross Society  
Boy Scouts Association  
Braille Society  
British Medical Association  
Central Methodist Mission  
Child Guidance Clinic  
Child Welfare Department  
Civilian Maimed and Limbless Association  
Crippled Children's Society  
Deaf School  
Education Dept. Guidance Branch  
Girl Guides Association  
Kindergarten Graduates Association  
Kindergarten Union of W. A.  
King Edward Memorial Hospital  
Lady Gowrie Child Centre  
League of Home Help  
Marriage Guidance Council  
Mentally Incurable Children's Association  
Methodist Homes for Children  
Ministering League Convalescent Home  
Missions to Seamen  
Parents and Citizens Association  
Pensioners League of W.A.  
Presbyterian Children's Homes  
Presbyterian Old Folks Homes  
Prisoners Aid Association (Prisoners Department)  
R.A.A.F. Welfare Fund  
Royal Perth Hospital  
Salvation Army  
Services Canteen Trust Fund  
Silver Chain District and Bush Nursing Association  
Sister Kate's Home  
Slow Learning Children's Group  
State Unemployment Relief  
Victoria League, Wanslea Children's Home  
W.A. Dietetic Association  
W.A. Institute and Industrial School for the Blind  
Women Justices Association  
Women's Service Guilds  
Y.M.C.A  
Y.W.C.A

## APPENDIX 03: WACOSS Presidents

Mr Harold Thomas Stitfold, (first president of Council), 1957 – 1958

Professor Eric Galton Saint, (second, long-standing president of Council), 1958 – 1968

Professor C B Kidd, (Professor of Psychiatry, UWA), 1968 – 1971

Brigadier Hunter, Jan 1971 – Aug 1973

Mr W Harwood, 1973 – 1975

Mr W A Carson, 1975 – 1978

Mr J H Baker, 1978 – 1980

Mr L E Smith, 1980 – 1981

Father Barry Hickey, 1981 – 1983

Professor Jim Ife, 1983 – 1984

Rev Peter Allan, 1985 – 1988

Mr Doug Robertson, 1988 – 1992

Maria Harries, 1993 – 1995

David Gilchrist, Nov 1995 – Nov 1996

Ian Carter, Nov 1996 – 1999

Sue Ash, 1999 – 2000

Tony Pietropiccolo, 2000 – Nov 2004

Rae Walter, Nov 2004 – Oct 2007

Chris Hall, Oct 2007 – 2011

Francis Lynch, 2011 – 2013

Steve Joske CSC, 2013 –

## APPENDIX 04: Executive Officers/ Executive Directors and Chief Executive Officers

Mrs Gwin Ruston, longstanding secretary of Council from 1956 until 1968, First Executive Officer of WACOSS, 1963 – 1968 [although not paid for that role, but CAB role]

Mrs Elaine Shaw – first formally recognised paid officer, Sep 1968 to May 1969

Mrs Margaret O Stephenson – from May 1969 - 1978

Dr Taus (briefly)

Mrs Diane Silver, 1977/78 - 1980

Anne Bartlett (Sinclair), 1980 – 1984

Ms Robyn Barrow, 1985 – March 1991

Christine Haimes, (interim director)

Bindi Other-Gee, May 1991 - 1995

Shawn Boyle, 1995 - Jan 2003

Lisa Baker, 2003 – 2008

Sue Ash, 2008 - 2011

Irina Cattalini, 2011 - 2016

### OTHERS IN EARLY DAYS

Mr Henry Greig (chairman of first ad hoc committee, see below)

Dr Colin Anderson (first chairman of executive committee) 1957 – 1968

Miss Irene Glasson, 1954 – 1957 (her death), social worker who moved the motion at public meeting in 1956 that a Council of Social Services be formed

First provisional committee, 1954 – 1956,

Mrs Gertrude (Gwin) Ruston, Miss Mary Walters, Miss Eleanor Williams, Dr Colin Anderson, Mr Cliff Knight.

## APPENDIX 05: WACOSS Premises

From 1956 until 1963 the Council had no fixed premises and operated through quarterly Council meetings, monthly executive Committee meetings, and meetings of sub-committees. Various organisations lent premises for these purposes.

In 1963 the Citizen's Advice Bureau was begun by WACOSS, run by Mrs Gwin Ruston as a paid Director. At the same time she was made Executive Officer of WACOSS. No salary was paid for this role, but she carried out much of the work on the same premises.

Firstly – in a small office in Boans department store – **January 1963**

Then a small office in a government building at 76 Murray St Perth – **late 1963 – 66/67**

Then another office in same building, cnr Pier St (still called 76 Murray St)

94 Pier St (same building as previous)

19 Irwin St, from between **72/73** annual report and **74/75** annual report

11 Freedman Rd, Mt Lawley; Brewer St, Perth; Hay St, Perth **1979 - 1989** (exact years unknown)

Lotteries House, Stirling St, Perth **1989 – 1999**

City West Lotteries House, 2 Delhi St, West Perth **1999 –**

The following premises were used in addition to the Head Office addresses:

Level 2, 22 Queen St, Fremantle **2009 – 2011**

27 Oxford Close, West Leederville **2012 – 2014**

## APPENDIX 06: WACOSS Members 2016

### SOCIAL SERVICE ORGANISATION

0-9

360 Health & Community  
55 Central Inc

A

Ability Focus Wheatbelt  
Aboriginal Alcohol & Drug Service Inc  
Aboriginal Choice Australia Pty. Ltd.  
Aboriginal Health Council of WA  
Aboriginal Legal Service of WA  
Access Housing Australia Limited  
Accessibility  
AccordWest  
Adoption Research & Counselling Service Inc  
Advocacy South West Inc  
Advocare Inc  
Aged and Community Services WA  
Airport City Community Services  
Albany Youth Support Association  
Allambee Counselling Inc  
Anglicare WA  
Armadale Community Family Centre  
Association for Services to Torture and Trauma Survivors  
Australian Association for Infant Mental Health Inc WA Branch  
Australian Association of Social Workers WA Branch  
Australian Christian Churches WA  
Australian Red Cross

B

Blind Citizens WA Inc  
Broome C.I.R.C.L.E. Inc  
Busselton Family Centre Inc

C

Calvary Youth Services Mandurah Inc  
Cancer Council Western Australia  
Carnarvon Family Support Service Inc  
Catholic Outreach  
Centacare Family Services Geraldton

Centacare Kimberley Association Inc  
Central Agcare Inc  
Central Desert Native Title Services Ltd  
Centrecare Inc  
Child Australia  
Childcare Association of WA  
Children's Services Support Unit  
Christmas Island Neighbourhood Centre  
Chrysalis Support Services Inc  
Citizens Advice Bureau of WA Inc  
CLAN WA Inc  
Coalition for Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Detainees  
Coeliac Society of WA  
Communicare Inc  
Community Employers WA  
Community First International Ltd  
Community Legal Centres Association WA Inc  
Community Vision Inc  
CommunityWest Inc  
ConnectGroups - Support Groups Association WA  
Continence Advisory Service of WA Inc  
Co-operation Housing

D

Darling Range Connect Inc  
Diversity South Inc

E

Eastern Region Domestic Violence Services Network Inc  
Echo Community Services  
Edmund Rice Centre  
Employment Law Centre of WA Inc  
EON Foundation Inc  
Escare Incorporated  
Esperance Crisis Accommodation Service  
Even Keel Bipolar Support Association Inc

F

Facilitatrix  
Fairbridge Western Australia Inc  
Family Day Care WA Inc

Family Inclusion Network of Western Australia Inc  
Federation of Housing Collectives  
Financial Counsellors Association WA Inc  
FinUCAre  
Foodbank WA Inc  
Foothills Information & Referral Service Inc  
Foundation Housing Ltd  
Foundations Care  
Fremantle Environmental Resource Network  
Fremantle Multicultural Centre WA Inc  
Fremantle Women's Health Centre Inc

G

Genetic and Rare Disease Network  
Geraldton Regional Community Education Centre  
Glyde-In Community Learning Centre Inc  
Goldfields Women's Health Care Centre  
Goodstart Early Learning  
Gosnells Community Legal Centre Inc  
Greenfields Family & Community Centre Inc  
GROW WA  
Growing Change Australia Ltd

H

Habitat For Humanity WA Inc  
Haemophilia Foundation WA Inc  
Harold Hawthorne Community Centre  
Harvey Community Resource Centre Inc  
Headwest (Brain Injury Association of WA Inc)  
Health Consumers' Council WA Inc  
HelpingMinds  
HepatitisWA Inc  
Holyoake Australian Institute  
Hope Community Services Inc

I

IBN Corporation Pty. Ltd.

Identity WA  
Indigo Junction  
In Town Centre Inc  
Injury Control Council of WA  
Italo-Australian Welfare and Cultural Centre Inc

**J**

Jade Lewis and Friends Inc  
Jewish Care WA Inc  
Jigsaw Search & Contact Inc  
Joongari House  
Justice, Ecology and Development Office, Catholic Archdiocese of Perth

**K**

Kalparrin  
Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa  
Katanning Regional Emergency Accommodation Centre Inc  
Kidsafe WA Inc  
Kira Incorporated  
Knights of the Southern Cross  
Kwinana Early Years Services Inc

**L**

LAMP Inc  
Langford Aboriginal Association  
Leading Age Services Australia WA Inc  
Learning and Attentional Disorders Society of WA Inc  
Life Without Barriers  
Lifeline WA  
Linkwest Inc  
Living Proud Inc  
Local Drug Action Groups Inc

**M**

MacKillop Family Services  
Margaret River Community Resource Centre Inc  
Marnja Jarndu Women's Refuge Inc  
Meerilinga Young Children's Foundation Inc  
Melville Cares Inc  
Men's Health & Wellbeing WA  
Men's Outreach Service Inc  
MercyCare Ltd  
Midland Information Debt and Legal Advocacy Service Inc  
Midland Women's Health Care Place Inc  
Milligan Community Learning and Resource Centre Inc  
Mission Australia  
Moorditj Koort Aboriginal Corporation

**N**

Nardine Wimmin's Refuge Inc  
New Life Welfare WA Inc  
Ngala Community Services  
Ngarliyarndu Bindirri Aboriginal Corporation  
Northcliffe Family & Community Centre  
Northern Districts Community Support Group

**O**

One World Centre  
Orana House Inc  
Outcare Inc

**P**

Palmerston Association Inc  
Parents Without Partners WA Inc  
Parkerville Children and Youth Care  
Pat Thomas House Inc  
Patricia Giles Centre Inc  
Peel Community Development Group  
Peel Volunteer Resource Centre  
Peel Youth Services Inc  
People with Disabilities WA Inc  
Perth Asian Community Centre  
Perth Home Care Services  
Perth Inner City Youth Service  
Playgroup WA Inc  
Protective Behaviours

**R**

Regional Development Australia Pilbara  
Relationships Australia Western Australia  
Richmond Wellbeing  
Rise Network Inc  
Ruah Community Services

**S**

Samaritans Crisis Line  
Sandalwood Family Centre  
Save the Children WA  
Second Harvest (Australia) Inc  
Shelter WA  
Shine Community Services  
So Change Inc  
South Coastal Women's Health Services  
South Lake Ottey Family & Neighbourhood Centre Inc  
South West Aboriginal Medical Service  
South West Counselling Inc  
South West Emergency Care for

Children Inc  
South West Refuge Inc  
Southcare Inc  
Southern Districts Support Association  
Spirit of the Streets Choir Inc  
St Bartholomew's House Inc  
St John of God Outreach Services  
St Patrick's Community Support Centre  
St Vincent de Paul Society WA Inc  
Sussex Street Community Law Service Inc

**T**

Tenancy WA  
The Bump WA  
The Claddagh Association of WA  
The Family Planning Association of WA Inc  
The Salvation Army WA Social Program  
The Shopfront  
The Spiers Centre Inc  
Therapy Focus Inc  
Tom Price Youth Support Association Inc

**U**

Uniting Church Community Service and Outreach Network  
UnitingCare West

**V**

Volunteer South West Inc  
Volunteer Task Force Inc

**W**

WA Blue Sky Inc  
WA Network of Alcohol and Other Drug Agencies  
WA No Interest Loans Network Inc  
Walpole Community Resource Centre  
Wanslea Family Services  
Waratah Support Centre SW Inc  
Waroona Community Resource Centre Inc  
Welfare Rights & Advocacy Service  
West Stirling Neighbourhood House  
WestAus Crisis & Welfare Services  
Western Australian AIDS Council  
Western Urban Associates WA Inc  
Wheatbelt Agcare Community Support Services Inc  
Women's Council for Domestic & Family Violence Services WA  
Women's Health Resource Centre Inc

**Y**

Yaandina Family Centre Inc  
YMCA Perth Inc  
Yorganop Association Incorporated  
Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia  
Youth Futures WA Inc  
YouthCARE

**Z**

Zonta House Refuge Association Inc

**SOCIAL SERVICE  
INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS**

Amal Ihdayhid  
Ann Deanus  
Ann White  
Anna Presser  
Anne Jennings  
Annie Buckeridge  
Cameron Poustie  
Chrystie Flint  
Francis Lynch  
Graham Cox  
James Paxman  
Jessica Karlsson  
Joe Calleja  
Jorgen Mackie  
Kylie Hansen  
Lorna Woodley  
Louise Lamont  
Lyneve Cannon  
Maria Harries  
Michelle Gust  
Noel Harding  
Rae Walter  
Renay Grech  
Richard Mavros  
Roger Cooper  
Shauna Gaebler  
Simon Colquhoun  
Sonia Hall  
Vicki Hamersley  
Vik Jeyakumar  
Vivienne Williams

**ASSOCIATE  
ORGANISATION  
MEMBERS**

City of Bayswater  
City of Cockburn – Human Services

City of Kwinana  
City of Nedlands – Community Services Department  
City of Swan Lifespan Services  
Community Development Team  
Grant Thornton  
IKON Institute of Australia  
Kalico Consulting

**ASSOCIATE  
INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS**

Hon. Alanna Clohesy MLC  
Alex Coughlan  
Hon. Amber-Jade Sanderson MLC  
Amber-Rose McQueen  
Angela Lemon  
Anna Melton  
Anne Courtney  
Christie Mildenhall  
Dave Kelly MLA  
Graeme Carty  
Jeff Simper  
Julian Keys  
Kate Goodman  
Hon. Ken Travers MLC  
Linda Savage  
Lisa Izydorski  
Lisa Baker MLA  
Lorraine Gibson  
Hon. Lynn MacLaren MLC  
Mary Gurgone  
Nandita Naroth  
Senator Rachel Siewert  
Shirley van Schagen  
Simone McGurk MLA  
Hon. Stephen Dawson MLC  
Hon. Sue Ellery MLC  
Senator Sue Lines

**HONORARY LIFE  
MEMBERS**

Anne Sinclair  
Brenda Harper-Nelson  
Moira Rayner  
Terri Coughlin  
Peter Sirr

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**wacoss**  
WA COUNCIL of  
SOCIAL SERVICE

*Ways to make  
a difference*



*WACOSS stands for an inclusive, just and equitable society. We advocate for social change to improve the well-being of Western Australians and to strengthen the community services sector that supports them.*

