

WACOSS Response to the Service Priority Review

Major Themes

Introduction

The Western Australian Council of Social Service (WACOSS) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this review of the public sector's role and effectiveness in service delivery in WA on behalf of the community services sector and the disadvantaged and vulnerable citizens we support. We appreciate the manner in which the Service Priority Review Panel have reached out to consult and engage with us in undertaking this review on a very tight timeline.

The first theme of the Service Priority Review poses the overarching question - How can we build a public sector focused on community needs and open to new ways of working? From the point of view of the community services sector, we believe there are two key elements to any answer. Firstly, the fundamental driver for public sector reform needs to be on *public service* in the deepest sense. The citizen needs to be at the centre, and the focus needs to be on securing real and meaningful community outcomes. This *service* should be about responding to the needs and aspirations of the public as they identify and prioritise them, not about merely providing limited and grudging access to the services and supports we decide are important or in their best interests. We also need to remain cognisant of the fact that citizens are members of families and communities, not isolated individuals and so effective support services should look how to link in with and make the most of local and informal support mechanisms – strengthening community connectivity and resilience, not displacing it.

Secondly, a public service that is truly focused on how it can best serve the community must be working in partnership with the community services sector. This relationship needs to be based on mutual respect, an appreciation of our differences and strengths and the complementarity of our roles. Mission driven-community-based organisations can be a bridge between government and communities, particularly disadvantaged and vulnerable cohorts where issues of trust and power can limit honest and open engagement. Governments should have their own engagement mechanisms and feedback processes to support and encourage direct consumer participation, as well as supporting and encouraging community organisations and consumer advocates to facilitate citizen engagement in the co-design, co-production and co-evaluation of services and supports. Agreeing a common set of principles and practices based on our shared commitments can provide a basis for ensuring our expectations are aligned and realistic. WACOSS is currently developing and testing a *Co-design Toolkit* based on direction and oversight from the Partnership Forum, a series of workshops involving both public and community sectors, and evaluation of recent WA co-design case studies. [see page 37 below].

One key challenge is that open and effective consumer participation takes time and resources – it can be tempting for government agencies and service providers to think they already know what is needed, or that existing consultation processes and data provide sufficient information on community or cohort needs and aspirations. Furthermore, political decisions to invest in new programs and services often come with tight timelines for implementation – but we should not let the desire to start making a difference get in the way of the need to ensure we are delivering services efficiently and effectively.

When we are looking to transition to more integrated service models supported by longer service contracts (e.g. five years or more), we need to get the balance right in committing to and trialling place-based cross-government service co-design and co-evaluation processes. We need to ensure we have the capacity and time to do things properly and so should avoid trying to run out too many new services at once, spreading ourselves too thin and failing to learn the lessons along the way. Service providers and consumer organisations can lack the capacity to respond effectively if funding agencies suddenly announce a whole range of consultation and co-design processes for lots of small programs all occurring within a short period of time.

Finally, we remain focused on the fact that we are all entering into processes of review and reform, service design and community development in good faith and in recognition of our different and often complementary strengths, interests and responsibilities. We recognise and appreciate the contribution that can and should be made by a committed and well-organised public sector with a clear sense of purpose and public responsibility. Community sector leaders have become increasingly concerned by the trends we have seen within governments (particularly at the national level) that appear to be seek to devolve, abrogate and displace their responsibility for the delivery of community outcomes through public services and resource redistribution onto market mechanisms and individualised blame. Western Australia's vibrancy and prosperity owes a great deal to the success of the post-war welfare state, and shifting to an increasingly 'Americanised' approach to community governance will not serve us well in preparing for a future where the well-spring of our prosperity must shift from our natural resources to our human ones. We need to be investing now in our future through our children to build a brighter and smarter future in the West where no-one is left behind.

Consultation Process

WACOSS has sought to facilitate as wide engagement as possible with our sector during this period, and have shared information and coordinated input with other community sector peak bodies through the WA Peaks Forum. We have shared all available information on the review through our networks with the other community peaks, our members and through our other advisory committee processes. We are pleased by the manner in which a number of peak bodies have been able to dedicate time and resources to contribute to the review process, and their submissions, analysis and advice is included and acknowledged below (see Appendix 2). In particular, WACOSS would like to acknowledge National Disability Services WA, Shelter WA, the Western Australian Network of Alcohol & other Drug Agencies, the Southwest Metropolitan Partnership Forum, and the Youth Partnership Project for providing submissions to inform and support our response to the major themes of the Service Priority. Peak bodies have also shared with their members the online survey we developed in response to the three major themes and list of questions the panel circulated to us in May(see Appendix 1) and provided feedback on many of the key issues discussed in this submission.

While WACOSS has also shared this information with our regional members and included discussion of the review as part of a number of regional forums during the review period, we have not had the time and capacity to undertake the kind of regional consultation processes we consider desirable and appropriate. The delivery of services in regional Western Australia is particularly challenging, the needs of our regional communities and the capacities of their local services vary greatly, and it is clear the development of place-based approaches to more efficient and effective regional service delivery is a major priority for the review. WACOSS has recently commenced regional and sectoral consultations in preparation of our 2018/19 Pre-Budget Submission, which will continue through July and should feed into our response to the Panel's draft report in August. We are including the major themes and key issues

raised by the review as part of this consultation process, and also taking to heart the panel's request to us to seek practical examples and case studies of best practice initiatives in WA. We have included a number of case studies in the submission below and will endeavour to source and share more as they become available.

About the Community Services Sector

The Western Australian Council of Social Service is the leading peak organisation for the community services sector, representing approximately three hundred member organisations and affiliates, and the many organisations across the state involved in the provision of services to the community.

The Council is part of a national network consisting of the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS) and state and territory Councils of Social Service. Our national coverage strengthens our capacity to represent state interests.

We speak with, and for, the 515,000 West Australians who regularly access community services each year, whose voices and interests need to be brought to the attention of government, decision makers, media, business and the wider community. The Council also works to strengthen the capacity of individuals, communities and organisations in the not-for-profit community services sector by providing training, consultancy and sector development activities.

It should be noted that the not-for-profit sector plays a role distinct from that of the public or private sectors. Not-for-profit organisations are established to pursue a purpose or a mission, not for the pecuniary benefit of their members or individuals. The profit generated by the organisations is retained to support its' mission and beneficiaries, rather than be distributed to shareholders or owners. The community service sector is primarily made up of charitable and not-for-profit organisations, who also provide services in health, education and other services sectors in WA. Mission-driven and community-based service providers are increasingly involved in the front-line delivery of human services in Australia and internationally. They are increasingly a source of innovation in the delivery of more flexible and responsive services. We believe that the panel needs to ensure it considers not-for-profit services as well as public and private ones in its consideration of the major themes of the Service Priority Review and the opportunities for better services and outcomes.

Government is a significant procurer of the services provided by the not-for-profit sector, but not the only source of funding, program design or policy. The community sector is not an arm of the public sector, but it is responsive to and keen to support public sector reform and better social policy. It is a partner in driving positive outcomes for the community and addressing need. Through its relationship with government, the community services sector is placed in a unique position of witnessing and experiencing the ways in which government departments, services and contracts interact and impact on community. We believe we can play a critical role as partners in change, supporting cultural change within the public sector and facilitating greater engagement with service users and their communities.

At the same time, it is important to appreciate that front-line community services are often much more than the sum of individual public sector service funding programs and reporting requirements, and that a significant amount of service design and integration occurs within and between community service providers using multiple funding sources to deliver integrated place-based services. We believe there is a significant opportunity for the review to consider how reducing the duplication, overlap and unnecessary complexity of existing program funding models can enable more joined-up, responsive and flexible service models that are place-based and outcomes driven. In doing so, there is a significant opportunity

to reduce administrative costs within both public and community service sectors, but ensuring transparency and accountability for service quality and outcomes are critical to ensuring the best on-the-ground outcomes.

Transition Strategy

The process of amalgamating and re-directing existing Departments, reviewing and redesigning services, and pursuing other reforms to service delivery is likely to take some time and effort. We need to ensure that there is continuity of essential community services during what are likely to be complex and time-consuming review and reform processes. To this end, we have recommended to incoming Ministers that there needs to be a transition strategy for existing service contracts likely to expire during the review and reform period, so that disadvantaged and vulnerable Western Australians do not ‘fall through the cracks’ in the interim (and services do not become unsustainable or lose skilled staff).

The Council notes that there are likely to be places where current reform processes are already underway that are supported by the sector and align with WA Labor’s *Supporting Communities* reform directions. We do not necessarily want to stall their progress, lock in place existing dysfunctional arrangements or lose momentum and goodwill on current reform processes while considering (further) reforms. Examples may include the *Connecting Communities for Kids* joint-commissioning initiative in Cockburn/Kwinana (early childhood services), the *Early Intervention Family Support* strategy and capacity building for Aboriginal community-controlled family support services (child protection and family support services), the *Aboriginal Youth Services Expenditure Review* and initiatives in the Mirrabooka and the Midwest (youth services), and some of the youth justice reforms. Consideration should be given to how ongoing reform processes might be given some in principle commitment and supported to proceed, while ensuring there are opportunities for ongoing alignment with emerging initiatives and reform directions.

At the same time, there is concern that some Departments are rushing to put to competitive tender existing services without any engagement with the community service sector, alignment with the reform directions and commitments of the incoming government or compliance with the *Delivering Community Services in Partnership Policy*. It would be unfortunate if a significant proportion of ongoing funding for community service delivery was locked into five year contracts before the new government was able to consider the findings of the Service Priority Review and put in place its commitments to outcomes-based services and collaborative funding processes, precluding the opportunity to progress reform in a timely fashion.

To enable meaningful reform of government practices and services to occur without causing hardship for existing providers or service users, it is crucial that the following principles are followed:

- Commit to a clear **transition strategy** to ensure continuity of essential community services during any review period.
- Ensure the community services sector are **consulted** about the design and implementation of transitional arrangements.
- Ensure **contract extension** arrangements allow sufficient time and certainty for review processes and provide sufficient time for service transition or wind up if or when new arrangements are put into place.
- Identify agreed areas where **ongoing reform processes** can continue – without limiting the possibility for additional improvements and reforms arising from the reviews.
- **Avoid locking in** long-term service contracts for ongoing services during the review process where this precludes reform and does not align with the intent of policy and reform commitments.

Contents

Introduction.....	1
Consultation Process	2
About the Community Services Sector	3
Transition Strategy	4
Contents	5
Recommendations	6
Theme 1 – Customer-Focused and Outcomes-Based Service Design and Delivery	11
Citizens at the Centre	11
Integrated Services	12
Place-based Approaches	14
Early Intervention.....	19
Outcomes Frameworks.....	24
Theme 2 – Contemporary, Adaptable and High-Performing Workforce.....	26
Public Sector Workforce	26
Relationship with Government	27
Community Sector Workforce Development Strategy	29
Aboriginal Human Services Workforce Development Strategy	31
Theme 3 – Efficient and Effective Systems and Processes.....	34
Systems to Support Whole of Government Reform.....	34
Data Linkage.....	35
Contracting for Collaboration	36
Evidence-based Service Evaluation, Role of Consumers and Communities.....	38
Social Housing and Homelessness	39
Disability Services.....	41
Consumer Protection and Advocacy.....	42
Appendix 1 – Short Survey for Community Services Sector	43
Appendix 2 – Submissions to WACOSS from other organisations	44

Recommendations

Theme 1: Customer-focused and Outcome-based

CITIZENS AT THE CENTRE

- Put the **citizen at the centre** of whole-of-government reform processes
- Recognise that a focus on citizens is more than a focus on individuals and commit to community development processes that build inclusive and **resilient communities**, by facilitating and supporting local initiatives, active participation, volunteering and peer support.
- Provide simple, meaningful and effective mechanisms for **service user feedback** and evaluation of how effective services are in meeting their aspirations and agreed outcomes.
- Ensure service users, carers, families and those with **lived experience** are meaningfully engaged in the **co-design and co-evaluation** of services outcomes and support models
- Use the biennial **Our Communities** report as an opportunity for genuine community participation. Consider how to undertake a survey of community needs, priorities and aspirations as part of the report.

SERVICE INTEGRATION

- Put in place **mechanisms** for community service providers who are already delivering integrated service models based on funding from multiple programs, and departments to agree a **single reporting framework** and negotiate simpler funding arrangements moving toward a single contract
- Review existing integrated services to see where there are opportunities to develop **cross-government programs** and (pooled) funding models that deliver better outcomes and reduce administrative complexity.
- Develop a **whole-of-government service integration policy** that puts in place agreed definitions, principles and practices
- Develop a **framework and practice guidelines** for co-designing and jointly commissioning place-based service integration, through trials with *Regional Managers Forums* in partnership with local community services.
- Ensure that all co-design and joint commissioning processes are **data driven** and based on the best information currently available on community and cohort needs and previous service evaluations, consistent with [WA open data policy](#).
- Given the findings of the AYSIR about the fragmented short-term nature of **youth services**, lack of agreed service outcomes and the large number of government departments providing small amounts of funding, youth services should be a priority for trialling the joint commissioning of integrated service models (particularly for at risk cohorts)
- The **early years** (including early childhood development and care, parenting and family support services) is an excellent area to trial place-based joint commissioning approaches, given the existence of a well-developed outcomes framework (AEDC), strong community buy-in to initiatives and existing trials in [Cockburn Kwinana local government areas](#).

PLACE BASED APPROACHES

- Commit to and resource a series of **trials** of place-based **joint commissioning**, starting in one or two areas where there is the local capacity and good-will, as well as good information on community and cohort need.
- Ensure there is a strong **governance** model and community **engagement** process to drive trials and initiatives of place-based approaches in regional areas

- Address existing **barriers** to cross-government service integration and joint commissioning approaches, particularly **decision making and accountability** about program funds, service reporting and evaluation
- Build the **culture and capability** of the public and community sectors to develop and implement place-based integrated service models
- Ensure **whole of government reforms** including KPIs for Departments, Directors General [and Ministers] support and enable cross-government approaches, shared funding and accountability mechanisms
- Ensure **service users** and service providers are partners in the co-design and evaluation of place-based integrated services
- Empower *Regional Managers Forums* to become **regional ‘partnership’ forums**:
 - RMFs to **include local community sector** leaders as equal partners (consistent with the [partnership principles and behaviours](#))
 - RMFs to be responsible for the oversight of **place-based** trials and reforms
 - RMFs to be **resourced for collaboration**, including appointment of senior managers with the capacity to enact cross-government decisions
 - Significant **delegation** to RMFs from Government to progress place-based regional service integration (i.e. pooled funding and shared accountability)
 - **Share the learnings** across RMFs through exchanges, case studies, networking and conferencing.
 - Ensure direct ongoing **links** between the RMFs and the *Supporting Communities Forum*

EARLY INTERVENTION

- Develop and resource a cross-government project on the **evaluation of early intervention** strategies and service models, to explore design, efficacy and effective targeting, quantify the long term savings, and identify the ‘sweet spot’ of when and who to most effectively intervene
- Prioritise efforts to reduce the number of **Aboriginal children in out of home care** and **Aboriginal youth in juvenile justice** in partnership with Aboriginal community-controlled services
- Co-design an evidence-based strategy and pilot a diversion and intensive family support model to implement the WA Labor commitment to the **120 Families** project
- Implement the recommendations from the [Enhancing Laws Concerning Family and Domestic Violence Inquiry](#), including non-legislative recommendations.
- Develop a **whole of government early childhood strategy** to put in place the most efficient and effective combination of universal, secondary and intensive services and supports to best respond to developmental vulnerability and deliver the best return on investment through the life-course.
 - Build capacity and coordination across CPCs
 - Fund the coordination of **Early Years Networks** to improve collaboration and outcomes across early childhood education and care services.
 - Act on the review of parenting programs
- Trial an intensive family support strategy diverting youth from our justice system
 - Repeal mandatory sentencing laws
 - Provide alternative options for fine defaulters to reduce imprisonment for unpaid fines
 - Improve and increase access to rehabilitation services, including for those on remand or with short term sentences
 - Ensure timely access to effective post release services and continuity of care for people returning to communities
 - Invest in culturally appropriate early intervention programs and Aboriginal-controlled services

- Implement the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody

OUTCOMES FRAMEWORKS

- Ensure the community sector is an **equal partner** in the co-design of outcomes frameworks
- Build the capacity of the public and community sectors to **measure collective impact** and evaluate service efficiency
- Implement funding and accountability processes within government to ensure that rigorous **data-driven service evaluation** drives funding decisions
- Create a cross-government **social policy evaluation and research** unit to drive consistency in reporting and evaluation of outcomes.
- Put in place **timelines and processes** for service evaluation and commissioning processes that are transparent and timely and encourage continuous service improvement.
- Ensure outcomes frameworks are evidence-based.
- Ensure the *Our Communities* biennial report is an **open [three-way] collaboration** synthesizing reporting from Departments, Sector Peaks [and independent research institutions].
- Extend the **Partnership Forum EIFS Outcomes Framework** from its application in earlier intervention family support to provide a guiding and reporting framework across all human services

Theme 2: Adaptable Workforce

RELATIONSHIP WITH GOVERNMENT

- Ensure **high level leadership** of engagement with the sector at a Forum directed and supported by the Premier or Treasurer, with a strong independent chair and a key role for central policy leadership in DPC.
- A renewed Partnership Forum is only one of the mechanisms through which this relationship is expressed and reforms can be progressed. There needs to be **a range of mechanisms** to enable more effective engagement and implementation at regional and local levels, and with a wider range of stakeholders.
- A core problem is that the existing Forum has become increasingly less effective due to the combination of lack of **capacity to drive change** across Government, not having **key players at table**, and lack of capacity and **resourcing to enact decisions**. A new model for the Forum needs to address these issues.
- Develop **KPIs for the Forum** linked to the DG's and Departmental KPIs (and vice versa) consistent with Mark McGowan's [20/20/20 reforms](#) and the *Our Communities* reporting framework.
- Continue and build upon existing agreed **principles and behaviours** within the existing partnership policy, but with increased commitment to cross-government implementation, including in all contract and tendering processes.
- Incorporate **a range** of workshop and facilitated discussion processes to support wider engagement across both sectors in addition to the current meeting format.
- Get the right balance in Forum **membership** – target diversity, capacity and merit, while ensuring the Forum isn't too large to be effective.
- Provide sufficient resources (secretariat and project), including for Peaks to **engage more broadly** with their sectors on initiatives and policy development.

COMMUNITY SECTOR WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

- Develop a **community services workforce development strategy** in conjunction with the community sector, unions and teaching institutions that addresses the growing demand for services and workers

ABORIGINAL HUMAN SERVICES WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

- Develop an **Aboriginal workforce development strategy** that provides incentives and support to increase Aboriginal employment in human services contracts.
- Support the development and build the capacity of **Aboriginal community-controlled organisations** to deliver community services, measure and report on service outcomes.
- Ensure **service procurement processes** support the development of ACCOs and that service contracts enable **partnerships** between ACCOs and mainstream service providers to build capacity and **transfer responsibility** for service delivery over time.

Theme 3: Systems and Processes

WHOLE OF GOVERNMENT REFORM

- Develop guidelines and resources for cross-agency and **cross-disciplinary co-design**
- Build the **culture and capability** of the public and community sectors to develop and implement place-based integrated service models

DATA LINKAGE

- Release the **WA Open Data Review Report** by the WA Chief Scientist
- Pursue **reforms** to make data more accessible and affordable for researchers, government and the community, including legislative changes to establish an **independent authority** and a centralised **data repository** or data commons
- **Fund data collection** on service outcomes as part of service contracts
- Use **shared outcome frameworks** to drive cross-government outcomes as part of the *Our Communities* reporting and place-based integrated service reforms
- Ensure **data linkage and analytics** is central to the reformed Partnership Forum / *Supporting Communities Forum*

CONTRACTING FOR COLLABORATION

- Put in place clear KPIs at both upper and middle management levels in the public service to drive a genuine commitment to the *Delivering Community Services in Partnership Policy*, place-based reforms and co-design processes.
- The implementation and commitment on a state level to the [*Principles for a Partnership-centred approach*](#) when putting program funds to tender and engaging in delivery of services of development initiatives in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities.
- The WA Government **review current contracts** to assess the likely effect of the ERO on service delivery levels, sustainability of programs and service providers and seek to reduce the risk to sustainability of organisations.
- Adopt the recommendations of the report authors that provide practical guidance on **assessment**, including the use of an *indicators of sustainability tool*.
- Identify and commit **funding** to ensure continuity of service delivery where necessary.

EVIDENCE-BASED SERVICE EVALUATION, ROLE OF CONSUMERS & COMMUNITIES

- Facilitate the better sharing of experiences across different programs, services and portfolios through the development of good practice guides.

SOCIAL HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

- Continue to encourage and support innovation in homelessness services, including better integration between short-term and longer-term housing solutions.
- Develop a community housing policy and growth strategy that provides greater strategic direction to enable specialisation, innovation and investment
- Co-design in partnership with the community housing and service sector a one-stop shop for all housing and homelessness assistance and tenancy support needs with a shared assessment framework and database at its core.

DISABILITY SERVICES

- Develop a framework to measure outcomes and to influence funding allocations.
- Develop a strong evidence base to support the delivery of better human services outcomes in Western Australia including investing in the development of a critical data mass (and data linkage policy) to inform decision making and drive efficient investment decisions. The development of a strategic data asset creates a line of sight between organisational and market outcomes and quality of life outcomes for people with disability and as such connects the interests of consumers to the sustainability of the supply side, and to government policy settings.
- Collaborate and partner with the WA disability sector in the co-design and implementation of quality services including embedding a high-level mechanism to oversee reform in the sector and aligned sectors.
- Focus on developing service integration across key related portfolio areas of health, disability, justice, housing, education, training and employment.
- Invest in collaborative service models which must demonstrate service integration including the piloting of models in targeted priority areas.
- Explore opportunities for co-location of human services and government facilities.
- Invest in a workforce development strategy to meet projected need, particularly in relation to the delivery of the NDIS in WA.
- Invest in building a strong disability sector that provides increasing and diverse choice for people with disability across WA, including regional and remote, and in particular through the WA Disability Services Industry Plan that will provide a clear pathway outlining where the sector is now and how it can best make the transition to where it must be at full NDIS roll out.
- Invest in partnership with the Commonwealth to implement the agreed national NDIS Quality and Safeguarding Framework and supporting ICT system infrastructure.

CONSUMER PROTECTION AND ADVOCACY

- Fund independent energy consumer representation in Western Australia, with a focus on undertaking research, policy and advocacy work that promotes the wellbeing of particularly disadvantaged and vulnerable people.

Theme 1 – Customer-Focused and Outcomes-Based Service Design and Delivery

Citizens at the Centre

In Theme 1, the Service Priority Review poses the question as to what new or innovative methods could the public sector use to make sure the community has access to the government services it needs (Question 1.5). Fundamentally, that question is answered by putting citizens right at the centre of service design and delivery. Services need to take a strengths-based approach to build on the capacity and aspirations of individuals and families to deliver meaningful outcomes. Families experiencing complex need and entrenched disadvantage are already strong in important ways, but we need to get behind them to make them stronger – especially in the face of inter-generational trauma. We need to recognise the critical role that stronger families can play as the primary source of support and care for those facing significant life challenges. Co-design processes that engage service users and those with lived experience of overcoming disadvantage can play a critical role in making our services smarter.

Community plays a crucial role in assisting individuals and families to respond to and overcome life challenges. Community and culture are key sources of strength and resilience for Aboriginal families seeking to overcome a history of exclusion and disadvantage. Our community has become more unequal in recent years, with increasing numbers left behind during the boom struggling to keep up with the cost of living and at increasing risk of financial hardship. We need to rethink how we prioritise the policies and supports that provide the social safety net we all rely on one way or another on our journey through life – to support and enhance the resilience of our most vulnerable. The *Our Communities* report could provide an opportunity to actively reach out in novel and engaging ways to encourage input from citizens that captures what they most value about their communities, what kind of community they aspire to build, and how we might work together to make those dreams a reality. A good model for this kind of consultation and engagement are the voice of children and youth reports undertaken by the [Commissioner for Children and Young People](#).

In tightening economic times with a global economy that is sluggish and increasingly resource limited, we need to reflect that it is by supporting and engaging those most excluded from our economy and society that we will give the greatest boost to our productivity in the longer term to create the best of all possible futures.

Recommendations:

- Put the **citizen at the centre** of whole-of-government reform processes
- Recognise that a focus on citizens is more than a focus on individuals and commit to community development processes that build inclusive and **resilient communities**, by facilitating and supporting local initiatives, active participation, volunteering and peer support.
- Provide simple, meaningful and effective mechanisms for **service user feedback** and evaluation of how effective services are in meeting their aspirations and agreed outcomes.
- Ensure service users, carers, families and those with **lived experience** are meaningfully engaged in the **co-design and co-evaluation** of services outcomes and support models
- Use the biennial *Our Communities* report as an opportunity for genuine community participation. Consider how to undertake a survey of community needs, priorities and aspirations as part of the report.

Integrated Services

When considering examples of service innovation (Question 1.5), as well opportunities for collaboration in designing and delivering public services (Question 1.4), the clear candidates are service integration and place-based collective impact.

Service integration and place-based collective impact approaches offer significant opportunities to redirect fragmented program and service funding to deliver more joined up and transformative outcomes, and to reduce the burden of managing and reporting against multiple service contracts to deliver a single on-the-ground support service. Youth services provide an excellent example of where fragmented and short-term funding and a lack of measureable outcomes continues to hold us back, as demonstrated in the findings of the Aboriginal Youth Service Investment Review (AYSIR).

Effective outcomes for those with complex needs, entrenched disadvantage and a history of trauma will not be achieved within one department or portfolio alone, but require an integrated approach across our service system. Place-based collective impact models, cross-agency co-design processes and joint commissioning strategies can be challenging, time consuming and resource intensive but they are essential to achieve improved outcomes. We should not simply be pursuing service integration or reform for its own sake, but actively targeting our efforts to where they will make the greatest difference for our most marginalised citizens – and ensure the greatest return on investment for limited service funding. We need to be measuring the impact of these interventions so we can determine whether our efforts are proving cost-effective and demonstrating measurable longer-term savings across our service system.

Service integration and place-based collective impact are the focus of the current phase of reforms, embodied in the AYSIR, Regional Human Service Reforms (RHSR), and the Connecting Communities for Kids pilot in the Cockburn Kwinana region (CCK). These reforms are focused in areas where there is complex need and entrenched disadvantage, where comparatively small cohorts are accessing multiple services and supports (at significant cost), but still achieving poor outcomes. The assumption is that more integrated wrap-around services can address the underlying causes of dysfunction and deliver transformative life outcomes – but we need a mechanism to fund, jointly commission and collectively design these services. Other collaborative community-based initiatives include the [Youth Partnership Project](#) and [Armadale Youth Intervention Project](#) as well as the [Not In Our Town](#) project on the Dampier Peninsula.

WA Labor’s **Supporting Communities** policy commits to:

- Work with the community services sector to breakdown barrier between government and stakeholders
- Streamline procurement processes and cut red tape for the community sector
- Improve funding security and trial more collaborative (less competitive) funding models
- Deliver an agreed-upon framework to measure outcomes across the community services sector
- Produce a biennial *Our Communities* Report

The first three points can be dealt with effectively in the context of the *Services Priority Review* by engaging with the community services sector to implement place-based collective impact models, cross-agency co-design processes and joint commissioning strategies, as discussed above. The last two points can be addressed by jointly developing a whole-of-government and whole-of-sector outcomes framework that drives shared reporting for the biennial communities report.

We note that there are many current examples where individual service providers are already bringing together funding from multiple government departments, programs and grants to deliver a single integrated service. In these circumstances it should be possible to introduce a process across government to agree a single set of service outcome measures that the community service provider reports against across these contracts, and to review funding arrangements with a view to amalgamating existing arrangements into a single aligned contract over time. This would reduce administration and reporting for both public and community sectors, and provides an opportunity to co-develop funding programs driven by community service needs rather than departmental structures.

Recommendations:

- Put in place **mechanisms** for community service providers who are already delivering integrated service models based on funding from multiple programs, and departments to agree **a single reporting framework** and negotiate simpler funding arrangements moving toward a single contract
- Review existing integrated services to see where there are opportunities to develop **cross-government programs** and (pooled) funding models that deliver better outcomes and reduce administrative complexity.
- Develop a **whole-of-government service integration policy** that puts in place agreed definitions, principles and practices
- Develop **a framework and practice guidelines** for co-designing and jointly commissioning place-based service integration, through trials with *Regional Managers Forums* in partnership with local community services.
- Ensure that all co-design and joint commissioning processes are **data driven** and based on the best information currently available on community and cohort needs and previous service evaluations, consistent with [WA open data policy](#).
- Given the findings of the AYSIR about the fragmented short-term nature of **youth services**, lack of agreed service outcomes and the large number of government departments providing small amounts of funding, youth services should be a priority for trialling the joint commissioning of integrated service models (particularly for at risk cohorts)
- The **early years** (including early childhood development and care, parenting and family support services) is an excellent area to trial place-based joint commissioning approaches, given the existence of a well-developed outcomes framework (AEDC), strong community buy-in to initiatives and existing trials in [Cockburn Kwinana local government areas](#).

Connecting Communities for Kids Case Study

Connecting Communities for Kids(CCK) is an initiative overseen by the Joint Commissioning Committee Partnership who provides overarching governance and the Joint Leadership Team that has operational responsibility for the initiative. The Project aims to improve the health and wellbeing of children in the Cities of Cockburn and Kwinana by 2024, measured by Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) outcomes. The project is also demonstrating a place-based, community driven approach to partnership and collaboration.

Using aspects of the collective impact approach and Platforms Framework, CCK takes a long-term view to achieve improved outcomes through coordination, common strategic leadership and community co-design in service planning, prioritisation and delivery. CCK is providing an enabling environment for integrated service delivery as envisaged in the Partnership Forum's Strategic Direction 2016—2017.

The Woodside Development Fund has committed \$2 million over the next five years to fund CCK.

Place-based Approaches

WACOSS believes that, if done well, a place-based approach to commissioning integrated services can *significantly* reduce duplication and administration costs while delivering better outcomes for our communities.

The areas where there is the greatest potential for a collaborative approach to service integration to deliver significant outcomes are the regional, youth and early year's reforms pursuing place-based collective impact models. While there is strong high-level commitment to these reform processes, and work has been underway to identify reform opportunities and to engage regional human service managers' forums and local community service providers – we have yet to see any significant progress in the joint commissioning of cross-disciplinary integrated service models.

Building on our experience to date and learning from the Connecting Communities for Kids pilot, there are arguably three things that need to happen to enable the joint commissioning of place-based integrated services. First, we need to **build the capability** of both public and community sectors so that contract managers and service coordinators have the capacity to deliver integrated services. This requires both the development of processes and procedures as well as a change of culture and practice in both sectors. Regional human service managers need clear direction and support from their departments that empowers them to make decisions if they are to effectively engage in these collaborative processes.

Secondly, we need to ensure there is **a mechanism** to allow the combining of resources across existing programs and departments to commission integrated services. The shift from accountability for individual program budgets with specified deliverables to a wider accountability for achieving strategic outcomes has been a critical component of the mechanism of government reforms in New Zealand. Within Government agencies this has enabled greater budgetary flexibility linked to increased accountability for achieving population and cohort outcomes and targets. There is clearly a role for Treasury in supporting and enabling **a pooled budgeting and contracting model** that supports place-based service integration, with clear reporting and due diligence.

Thirdly, we need a clear model of decision making and accountability for the **joint commissioning** process. This requires agreement of a shared outcomes framework against which services are commissioned, report and are measured and hence a shared reporting and accountability process. While

there have been attempts in the past to achieve similar outcomes by identifying one particular government department as the 'lead agency' who then have responsibility for oversight through their existing reporting processes, this is unlikely to produce truly shared governance and the cross-disciplinary aspects of service integration tend to be subsumed. A more effective approach is to develop shared reporting and accountability frameworks where all agencies and services are responsible for jointly reporting to Parliament for the delivery of shared outcomes against local and regional plans and targets. The ***Our Communities*** report provides precisely this opportunity.

A series of **place-based collective impact trials** should be undertaken as part of the regional reform agenda, with the joint commissioning of youth services in the Midwest region and Mirrabooka local area; early childhood education and care services in the Pilbara region and Cockburn/Kwinana local area; and intensive family support services in the West and East Kimberley regions. Oversight and support of these trials should enable the development and implementation of case studies that acknowledge the unique challenges of each locality and can inform the creation of guidelines and resources to support joint commissioning processes.

It is critical that these processes to co-design and jointly commission place-based integrated services have as their starting point **a shared understanding** of the problem being tackled, the cohort services are being designed for (and with), the extent and relative effectiveness of existing services, and the population outcomes being sought. This is where WA's commitment to and investment in its Open Data Policy is critical to delivering impact, by ensuring access to relevant data and cross-agency data linkage to support data-driven co-design and commissioning.

Data linkage can enable the public and community sectors in WA to better measure outcomes, demonstrate return on investment and understand risk factors to better target at-risk cohorts to enable earlier intervention strategies. There is significant public sector data on community need and service outcomes that include data generated as a result of the reporting requirements of contracted social services. As a result, WA has significant opportunity and potential to develop data linkage capacities that could provide transformative outcomes for the community. We are concerned however, that WA currently lacks shared capability and capacity across our public, research and community sectors to undertake the strategic analysis required to deliver on this potential. A collaborative approach that includes independent capacity within the community sector is needed to prove truly effective.

The recent inquiry and (as yet unreleased) report of the *Expert Panel on Data Linkage* led by WA Chief Scientist Professor Peter Klinken considered many of these issues, as did a data linkage roundtable of thought leaders and policy makers convened by WACOSS in partnership with the WA Government in April. We recommend the SPR committee considers the recommendations of this report (which we have not yet seen) and advocates for its public release. We have also suggested to the Minister for Science, Hon. Dave Kelly that we could re-convene the thought-leaders' policy roundtable as an advisory panel on these issues, should he need advice on the implementation of a more effective data linkage policy.

- Commit to and resource a series of **trials** of place-based **joint commissioning**, starting in one or two areas where there is the local capacity and good-will, as well as good information on community and cohort need.
- Ensure there is a strong **governance** model and community **engagement** process to drive trials and initiatives of place-based approaches in regional areas [link]
- Address existing **barriers** to cross-government service integration and joint commissioning approaches, particularly **decision making and accountability** about program funds, service reporting and evaluation

- Build the **culture and capability** of the public and community sectors to develop and implement place-based integrated service models
- Ensure **whole of government reforms** including KPIs for Departments, Directors General [and Ministers] support and enable cross-government approaches, shared funding and accountability mechanisms
- Ensure **service users** and service providers are partners in the co-design and evaluation of place-based integrated services

SWMPFF Davis Park Case Study

The South West Metropolitan Partnership Forum (SWMPFF) brings not-for-profit and government service providers together with business and community members (including local residents, clients, and/or members of civil society) to facilitate collaborative problem solving of community needs and the implementation of a coordinated, place-based approach to address these.

The first site chosen for this approach was Davis Park, Beaconsfield. The responses to an initial survey of Davis Park residents informed all the initiatives undertaken. The inclusion of Davis Park residents in the working group formed to steer the project, together with the organisation of regular community events, is the main mechanism being used by the SWMPFF to ensure its members can regularly obtain feedback from the residents and review initiatives as necessary.

The project's action plan centred on:

- Providing educational or vocational and recreational activities for young people.
- Conducting parenting support programs for parents/guardians of young children.
- Development and implementation of strategies to address anti-social behaviour, vandalism, drug and alcohol abuse.
- Tidying up the physical environment.
- Calendar of regular social events (whole-of-community as well as Davis Park targeted).

WA Police reported that drug dealing had been significantly disrupted in Davis Park as a result of the SWMPFF's collective focus on the community.

WA Police and the Department of Housing reported that the strong relations they developed through the SWMPFF enabled them to deal more speedily and effectively with crime and anti-social behaviour.

Regional Managers Forums

In Theme 1, the Service Priority Review is seeking to understand how public sector service delivery can best meet the needs of regional communities (Question 1.2). The Council has advocated for a number of years for greater engagement of the community sector in regional planning processes and the need to increase the capacity of regional community sector networks to contribute to the analysis of regional needs, programs and policies to support regional collaboration. Recent regional consultations have raised some concerns about the sustainability of medium-sized regional service providers who have in the past played a critical role in civil society at the local level, and we are concerned this ongoing trend may reduce the capacity of local services to participate in these critical regional service improvements. Some dramatic shifts in Commonwealth service funding have contributed to an underlying trend to reduce the

number and increase the scope of service contracts across governments, resulting in a loss in regional capacity, less service planning and decision making at the local level, and a greater role played by larger organisations with centralised management models.

WACOSS has welcomed the State's commitment over the past few years to a significant regional reform process by investment through a regional reform fund, the development of Strategic Regional Advisory Councils in Kimberley and Pilbara, and engagement of local community services with regional human service managers in District Leadership Groups to deliver a more collaborative approach to regional service delivery. These reforms create the possibility for a more inclusive and joined-up approach to regional social planning, greater coordination of program and service design to deliver more integrated and appropriate regional services, and the development of a joint commissioning model.

The engagement of existing regional human service managers' forums with local community service providers and community leaders, backed by clear direction and endorsement at high levels within the State Government and public service, can create a mechanism for place-based decision making. This process should begin with sharing across agencies and services of data on community need and service evaluation to enable clearer alignment of target cohorts and program outcomes.

It is critical for the community services sector to engage in these planning and decision-making processes to secure the best outcomes for regional communities. Keeping the membership of these District Leadership Groups open to regional services who commit to participate is likely to deliver better outcomes than restricting membership or seeking a limited approach to 'representation' of the sector, provided group size remains practical for effective functioning, participants are committed and their participation remains consistent.

Recommendations:

- Empower *Regional Managers Forums* to become **regional 'partnership' forums**:
 - RMFs to **include local community sector** leaders as equal partners (consistent with the [partnership principles and behaviours](#))
 - RMFs to be responsible for the oversight of **place-based** trials and reforms
 - RMFs to be **resourced for collaboration**, including appointment of senior managers with the capacity to enact cross-government decisions
 - Significant **delegation** to RMFs from Government to progress place-based regional service integration (i.e. pooled funding and shared accountability)
 - **Share the learnings** across RMFs through exchanges, case studies, networking and conferencing.
 - Ensure direct ongoing **links** between the RMFs and the *Supporting Communities Forum*

Regional Service Mapping

Better information on population or cohort coverage and service outcomes is critical to both improve service access and to enable service planning and evaluation, enabling services to best meet the needs of regional communities (Question 1.2). The Council has consistently raised concerns about the lack of information on service location and coverage and the misalignment of the reporting boundaries across government agencies and contracts.

Recent service mapping undertaken by the Regional Services Reform Unit in the Kimberley and Pilbara is an essential first step in building a common whole of government service directory and reporting framework.

At least six government agencies regularly produce their own service directories, which are restricted in scope and updated on an irregular basis. Current structures are resource intensive and slow to respond to dramatic shifts in funding policy and changes in service provision. Due to their limited and fragmented nature, they do not deliver the kind of effective access and referral service that would be available through a more comprehensive, interactive and up to date service.

The Council recommends a cross-government co-design process to develop and agree upon the structure, categories and parameters of a shared regional community service reporting framework going forward. New programs and services would then commence reporting against these shared protocols and boundaries, with existing contracts and initiatives transitioning over time, and metropolitan services easily added in.

The Council has recently developed a simple, intuitive and accessible [interactive directory](#) for emergency relief services that enables service providers to take control of updating their own data.

ER Connect Case Study

In 2014 WACOSS created an online version called ER Connect directory via DropIN as per our funding contract. The [WACOSS ER Directory on DropIN](#) has been developed into a customised data solution with the capacity for agencies to update their own information independently in real time. This mostly removes the need for a centralised body to manually update and maintain the integrity of the data collected and ensures that agencies have the up-to-date information they need to deliver their services to clients.

ER Connect operates by way of drop down list and is mobile friendly. This will enable and encourage users to consider if they require other services. One challenge service users can encounter when accessing emergency relief for the first time is the use of jargon, drop down lists and layman language will ensure greater accessibility.

For those 'frontline' staff whether they be government agencies, social support agencies, NFP's local government, community resource centres, medical practices or churches will have at their fingertips a resource that they can trust, as they help their clients and patients determine their needs and the services most appropriate to them.

Building on this system it is possible to provide a comprehensive, self-sustaining accessible and up-to-date online directory of the social services to support professional referrers, individuals and families to navigate our complex service system. The use of this online technology can both improve the accuracy, currency and credibility of the information publicly available and facilitate a more informed, collaborative and connected social service sector. Mapping support services to develop a complete picture of where services are will also assist in identifying service gaps, facilitate integrated service planning, and play a critical role in disaster response and recovery.

Recommendations:

- Align contract reporting requirements across government to ensure consistent reporting of service areas, access, eligibility, support provided and outcomes (where available)
- Create an accessible, self-sustaining and up-to-date online directory of social services in Western Australia

Early Intervention

We know from Term of Reference 3, that the Service Priority Review is seeking the delivery of transformative public policy and service delivery that is different, better and lower cost. While it is often taken as accepted wisdom that an ounce of prevention is cheaper and easier than a ton of cure, the public and community sectors together face a significant challenge in demonstrating that investment in prevention and early intervention strategies is actually able to reduce the cost of future service use and deliver better outcomes. The key challenge is how we close the evidence gap for early intervention strategies – to enable us to target the delivery of intensive services to those cohorts most at risk of poor long-term outcomes and then demonstrate ‘bankable’ savings in the projected and likely avoided cost of acute or longer-term support across the service system.

As a result of our consultations with the sector and analysis of at-risk cohorts and community priorities as well as evaluations of existing services and supports, the Council recommends the priority areas for investment in the development and evaluation of early intervention strategies should be:

- Aboriginal children and families at-risk in the child protection and justice systems,
- young people transitioning to independence from out-of-home care
- mothers, infants and young children at high risk of early developmental vulnerability
- Women and children at risk of family and domestic violence on first contact
- Aboriginal children and youth at high risk of suicide and self-harm

The [Earlier Intervention Family Support](#) initiative currently being developed by the Department for Community Services (formerly Child Protection and Family Support) is attempting to address aspects of this problem, in combination with a commitment to building the role and capacity of Aboriginal community controlled services [link] in providing intensive family support and out of home care services. The EIFS strategy focuses on those children at immanent risk of being taken into care, which is not what is usually understood as ‘early’ intervention, and the question remains as to whether this is ‘just in time’ intervention or diversion, or whether intervening sooner would be more cost effective. More needs to be done to ensure we are collecting and linking the data and undertaking the necessary analysis to improve the targeting of intensive family support to enable services to intervene sooner and more effectively.

The key challenge is determining *how early* to intervene with *which families* to be most effective. The strategy is currently focused on intervening with high-risk families on the threshold of formal statutory interventions. On the one hand, there is the risk that if we are not intervening early enough there may be little services can do at that point to improve child safety and prevent removal. The later we intervene the more challenging and costly the support required may be. On the other hand, preventative service models can struggle to identify those most in need, potentially delivering services based on limited resources to families who may be at less risk of child removal, while missing those most in need.

Data linkage and outcomes measurement are critical to enabling us to effectively target services and demonstrate the long-term savings to the State Budget of transformative wrap-around interventions. There is an emerging opportunity to link multi-agency state and federal data to enable a better understanding of risk factors and support a more targeted early intervention approach. To this end, we recommend development of a pilot project that combines data linkage and the *Earlier Intervention Outcomes Framework* developed by the Partnership Forum to develop intensive family support models delivered by Aboriginal community controlled services.

Recommendations:

- Develop and resource a cross-government project on the **evaluation of early intervention** strategies and service models, to explore design, efficacy and effective targeting, quantify the long term savings, and identify the ‘sweet spot’ of when and who to most effectively intervene
- Prioritise efforts to reduce the number of **Aboriginal children in out of home care** and **Aboriginal youth in juvenile justice** in partnership with Aboriginal community-controlled services
- Co-design an evidence-based strategy and pilot a diversion and intensive family support model to implement the WA Labor commitment to the **120 Families** project
- Implement the recommendations from the [Enhancing Laws Concerning Family and Domestic Violence Inquiry](#), including non-legislative recommendations.

Early Childhood Development

Research on early childhood development provides clear evidence of the value of early investment in education and care, particularly for children with developmental vulnerabilities and those growing up in disadvantaged areas. A whole of government approach is needed to effectively reduce childhood vulnerability and deliver better well-being outcomes across the life-course. Health, education and community services all have critical roles to play, as do strong families and communities.

With increasing rates of childhood vulnerability in a number of our local communities, an integrated, across government focus on early childhood development is needed, based on holistic policy, planning, contracting and service delivery. We need a system of universal access to children and family services that are able to identify those most developmentally vulnerable and provide additional support when it can make the biggest difference to young lives.

Evaluation of developmental outcomes in other states points very clearly to the impact of universal access to responsive services. Queensland does not have a universal children services system and has the lowest preschool attendance and the highest percentage of developmentally vulnerable children of any state. Conversely, Victoria has the lowest percentage of developmentally vulnerable children and the highest pre-school attendance as a consequence of what is arguably the strongest system of universal services in Australia.

Western Australia has prioritised investment in early childhood development and care in recent years. WACOSS believes it is critical that we continue to focus resources in this area into evidence-based programs that demonstrate a strong return on investment. The presence of a strong evidence base in this area and our international leadership in developmental research make this an excellent area in which to demonstrate best-practice approaches to service evaluation and improvement.

Child and Parent Centres

Child and Parent Centres (CPCs) are an important and valued service co located with schools that provide integrated services combining education, health, parenting and playgroups for families with young children at risk. CPCs do not operate in all areas and significant gaps exist in communities not within CPC catchments. In 2016 the Education Department of WA completed an independent evaluation of the outcomes of services and supports provided by CPCs across the State, however this report has not yet been released. The sector is keen to see the results. This information needs to inform continuous learning about what works across CPCs.

WA Labor committed to introduce an additional new CPC in Ellenbrook which, when taken with the six regional Parenting Centres take over from the Commonwealth by the State in 2015/16, will bring the total number of CPCs up to twenty-two.

WACOSS has highlighted the value of targeted early intervention as a means of reducing the longer-term costs of crisis and tertiary services. Investment in early childhood development provides some of the strongest evidence of significant returns on investment throughout the life-course. However, those with the greatest educational need are often the least likely to be able to access available services. It is sometimes difficult for families to access the support they need due to their ineligibility for services or because of specific criteria and long waiting lists.

Connecting Early Years Networks Project

A powerful example of collaboration in designing and delivering services (1.4) are Early Years Networks (EYNs). EYNS are voluntary, unfunded collaborations of people from community services, government agencies (primarily the Departments of Health and Education), parents, carers and community members. EYNs play a fundamental role in improving outcomes for vulnerable and disadvantaged young children. There are forty-seven EYNs throughout metropolitan, regional and remote Western Australia, comprised of thousands of members. A recent evaluation report indicates that EYNs are increasingly influencing improvements in outcomes for children in the early years. These networks provide a simple and cost-effective way of boosting the capacity of early childhood services to deliver better services by supporting shared learning and best practice.

The Connecting Early Years Networks Support Project was initially funded by Woodside and Lotterywest and received in kind support from the Department of Local Government and Communities. Since 2015, the project has been providing extensive training and support to EYNs. A recent evaluation provides substantial evidence demonstrating that the project has built the capacity and sustainability of EYNs, supported the development of emerging networks, and provided up-skilling in key areas to improve their effectiveness and engagement in local communities.

The project has built its success through integrated cross-government partnerships that drive a collective approach to improving the lives of vulnerable children in the early years. This is being achieved at local levels because EYN members belong to the communities in which they are invested. Project funding is set to run out in June 2017.

The recent independent evaluation of the project, comparing evaluations over the periods January to June 2016 and June 2016 to March 2017, identified the following points:

- That thirty-seven (37%) of respondents use Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) data to identify areas where the network could support and plan activities to improve educational outcomes for children, and twenty-three (23%) use this data to inform training and community events.
- That sixty-eight (68%) of EYNs now have a strategic plan focusing on improved outcomes for children in the early years.
- Evidence of increased knowledge and information sharing within and across EYNs.
- An increase in community member engagement in networks (37.5% to 46.2%), and in parent, family member and carer engagement (40.6% to 46.2%).
- An increase in partnership opportunities within the network as a result of people coming together and building relationships, and increased parent and community engagement and connection.

The CEYN project has built its success on integrated cross-government partnerships that drive a collective approach to improving the lives of vulnerable children in the early years. Investment in the CEYNSP from State Government departments will ensure this important work is continued, consolidating partnerships between the government, not-for-profit community sector and community members to ensure that

children are healthy, resilient, and have the opportunity to thrive. The Department of Local Government and Communities have agreed to provide funding of \$100,000 for one year and to co-locate the CEYN Program at the *Parenting Centre of Excellence* alongside other leading strategists and policy advisors in parenting, providing significant in kind support including information technology and office facilities. More funding is needed to ensure this is a viable and ongoing cross-government initiative, so WACOSS has met with the Departments of Education and Health, and the Regional Reform Unit, seeking \$100,000 from each of these government departments.

Recommendations:

- Develop a **whole of government early childhood strategy** to put in place the most efficient and effective combination of universal, secondary and intensive services and supports to best respond to developmental vulnerability and deliver the best return on investment through the life-course.
- Build capacity and coordination across CPCs
- Fund the coordination of **Early Years Networks** to improve collaboration and outcomes across early childhood education and care services.
- Act on the review of parenting programs

Programs to Assist Young Offenders and their Families

The current ‘tough on crime’ approach is failing to make Western Australian communities safer.

WA has the second highest imprisonment rate in the country, only after the Northern Territory. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders comprise 38 per cent of the adult population in Western Australian prisons, despite making up less than 4 per cent of the state’s population. Aboriginal adults are 18 times more likely to be in prison than non-Aboriginal adults in WA, with Aboriginal youth 39 times more likely to be in detention than non-Aboriginal youth

WA Labor committed to introduce **Target 120** to provide targeted services to some of our most at youth risk and their families. There are some reservations within at-risk youth services about whether ‘multi systemic therapy’ is the best service model and whether it is likely to be practical and effective to target WA’s 120 worst juvenile offenders and their families (as they are likely to be already detained in Banksia Hill and may not be the easiest group to reach). Nevertheless, the broader concept of trialling an intensive family support program diverting youth from our justice system has great merit. Furthermore, there is likely to be significant overlap with those families at high risk within our child protection system where there is significant work underway in engaging with at-risk families and building the capacity of Aboriginal community-controlled services. There is also an opportunity to look at broadening this approach and building on the learnings from the work of Kimberley Institute and the development of the *Broome Model*, which blends Justice Reinvestment with social enterprise.

By getting smarter and focusing on strengthening families and communities, and supporting members of our community who are returning from prison, we can increase community safety. Western Australia should follow the holistic, evidence based approach of [Social Reinvestment](#) – based on the three complementary pillars of *healthy families, smart justice* and *safe communities*. Social Reinvestment includes a justice reinvestment approach whereby money that would be spend on building more prisons and justice services in the future is invested into community-based diversion and rehabilitation programs to reduce the need for them. More than that, it recognises that investing in improving the wellbeing of people most at risk of future imprisonment through targeted prevention and early intervention strategies and creating more positive opportunities and life choices is more effective and less expensive than the growing cost of the continuing cycle of re-imprisonment. One small-scale example of community-based diversion is the [Strong Tomorrow](#) project in Armadale, where WA Police work together with local community services to divert young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from crime and the justice system.

Social Reinvestment WA Case Study

Formed after the Banksia Hill Riots, *Social Reinvestment WA* is a coalition of Aboriginal organisations, the community services sector and social justice advocates.

The coalition has developed a holistic, evidence-based *Social Reinvestment Framework* to drive more effective prevention, diversion and rehabilitation for individuals at risk of coming into contact with the justice system, with the aim of a long term reduction in crime, increase in community safety and a more effective justice system.

Under the Social Reinvestment approach, the enormous resources currently wasted on a failing prison system are freed up to be spent on improving the wellbeing of people, families, and communities. Social Reinvestment strategies work to improve opportunities, health, and education in at risk communities, and allow people to rebuild their lives after their sentence, so they can contribute to their community.

This issue was on the Partnership Forum agenda and an issues paper prepared and discussed, but it did not progress any further during the last term of government. The pressure to rein in the growing costs of justice services and deliver better life outcomes for at risk youth together with the strong alignment with WA Labor policies and prior commitments to ‘justice reinvestment’ policies create a strong driver for action.

Recommendations:

- Trial an intensive family support strategy diverting youth from our justice system
- Repeal mandatory sentencing laws
- Provide alternative options for fine defaulters to reduce imprisonment for unpaid fines
- Improve and increase access to rehabilitation services, including for those on remand or with short term sentences
- Ensure timely access to effective post release services and continuity of care for people returning to communities
- Invest in culturally appropriate early intervention programs and Aboriginal-controlled services
- Implement the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody

Outcomes Frameworks

The Service Priority Review seeks to understand what key outcomes the public sector should be trying to achieve (Question 1.3). In order for that question to be answered, a process needs to be undertaken by government of co-designing, with the community services sector as an equal partner, common outcome frameworks. In the absence of common outcome frameworks within and across government agencies, much of our existing service and program level data is fragmented and incommensurate – simply not suitable for the task of measuring how effectively we’re tackling the key problems at a local, cohort or population level. Many community service providers implement their own data systems and use evaluation frameworks designed specifically to improve the quality of their services. On the one hand, this results in richer and more meaningful data on service and cohort outcomes that government agencies and service reviews may not be aware of or take into account. On the other hand, these disparate approaches have emerged because services have seen a need Governments have not been addressing to use data to drive better service evaluation and improve service quality and effectiveness. The end result is an undesirable level of fragmentation. Without some central leadership and process for agreeing on common framework, standards and models community services may be reluctant to invest time and energy in developing systems and building evaluative capacity, or will continue to do their own thing and focus on the outcomes and metrics most relevant to their mission and operating environment. Recent work in the early years has demonstrated the value of having a common framework for assessing developmental vulnerability, with the Australian Early Development Census providing a foundation for implementing collective impact approaches and enabling a better understanding of the lifelong return on investment in early childhood education and care. Governments may be reluctant to commit to the full cost of undertaking this work, but should also be mindful of the opportunities to partner with the Commonwealth, other state governments, research institutions and the community sector to develop shared projects that align with major research and development priorities and can attract matching funding.

There is clearly a pressing need to develop a shared outcomes framework to measure meaningful progress and service performance against agreed priorities using common data protocols. The commitment of WA Labor to deliver an agreed-upon framework to measure outcomes across the community services sector and produce a biennial *Our Communities* Report could be provide the impetus to make this happen. The Services Priority Review is likely to find that its task of evaluating service impacts and analysing their return on investment is hampered by the lack of common performance measures and meaningful data on community need. To this end, we hope that the committee will also make recommendations about establishing evidence-based approaches to making funding decisions in the medium and longer term. We remain concerned that, despite significant time and effort spent by service providers collecting data and reporting against service contracts, there do not seem to be rigorous and transparent processes in Treasury and Finance to use this reporting to drive funding decisions at both a service and program level.

There is a strong case for a central unit within the State government with expertise in evaluation that can advise and work with the public and community sectors. This could also possibly be linked to the creation of a central data repository with responsibility to facilitate and support data access and linkage and oversee data protocols and quality. One model of this is the formation of [SUPERU](#) in New Zealand to oversee the analysis and reporting role within their social investment framework. Previous WA Labor Governments have had a central policy development unit within Department of Premier and Cabinet, with strong links into (or secondments from) Treasury. Combining this approach with responsibility for

cross-government leadership on research and evaluation might ensure a stronger influence on community outcomes (Social Policy Evaluation and Research also makes for a nice acronym - SPEAR).

WACOSS recently submitted a Capacity Building Grant proposal for co-development of a shared outcomes framework across community services in Western Australia between government and non-government agencies. The framework will provide a jointly agreed structure for reporting outcomes in the biennial *Our Communities* report. It will identify high level and strategic outcomes that provide government and the community sector with an inter-connected suite of impact indicators to scaffold service delivery and inform measurement methodologies.

Because this framework will assist in bridging siloes in service delivery and promoting greater service integration to deliver cross-government outcomes, it can play a critical role in overcoming barriers to achieving the whole of sector reform targets announced as part of the Service Priority Review. WACOSS has proposed a 12-month timeframe for co-development of the shared outcomes framework in line with the contract, but we are open to discussing what work we might prioritise in the next couple of months to better align with the needs and interests of the service priority review.

As the peak council of the community service sector in Western Australia, WACOSS is well placed to assume a shared leadership role in this project with the Department of Premier and Cabinet and Treasury to facilitate effective engagement between government and community sectors in the development of a high-level outcome framework.

Recommendations:

- Ensure the community sector is an **equal partner** in the co-design of outcomes frameworks
- Build the capacity of the public and community sectors to **measure collective impact** and evaluate service efficiency
- Implement funding and accountability processes within government to ensure that rigorous **data-driven service evaluation** drives funding decisions
- Create a cross-government **social policy evaluation and research** unit to drive consistency in reporting and evaluation of outcomes.
- Put in place **timelines and processes** for service evaluation and commissioning processes that are transparent and timely and encourage continuous service improvement.
- Ensure outcomes frameworks are evidence-based.
- Ensure the *Our Communities* biennial report is an **open [three-way] collaboration** synthesizing reporting from Departments, Sector Peaks [and independent research institutions].
- Extend the **Partnership Forum EIFS Outcomes Framework** from its application in earlier intervention family support to provide a guiding and reporting framework across all human services

Theme 2 – Contemporary, Adaptable and High-Performing Workforce

Public Sector Workforce

The questions raised under this theme go to issues concerning public sector workforce expectations, performance management, leadership, support, collaboration, knowledge sharing, accountability and diversity, as well as regional workforce issues. These are critical issues for the public sector to address and resolve, just as many of them are equally of current concern within the community sector. While we haven't necessarily got the capacity or the necessary knowledge and insights into public sector management processes to respond to them with detailed recommendations, there are a number of areas where our interests and issues overlap that we will comment on below. Certainly the quality, strength and consistency of public sector management impacts quite immediately on us, particularly in relation to clarity of communications, consistency in the application and implementation of policy and procedure, and the transparency and rigor applied to the evaluation of tenders, services and programs. These things have a fundamental impact on the quality and effectiveness of the services we deliver (both separately and jointly) and on the trust and common purpose that underlies our working relationships. We would suggest that anyone undertaking serious work on reshaping and strengthening the public sector workforce by seeking to change public sector management and culture should take the time to consult one-on-one or in small confidential groups with community service managers to get more immediate insight into their lived experience and the potential impacts (and perhaps unintended consequences) of any reforms.

Our consultations with community sector leaders have indicated there is a real concern that there has been a reluctance within the public sector to act on poor performance, inappropriate or inept management. The perception is that there is often a lack of oversight or accountability for key elements of the management of programs and outcomes, and a lack of mechanisms for external stakeholders to provide feedback on performance. There appears to be a reluctance to address poor performance directly, and people appear simply to be moved around within the public service with little action taken. WACOSS and other peak bodies sometimes find ourselves interceding behind the scenes to seek to avert or remedy poor process or bad decisions (which we do with caution and reluctance, without taking sides). While we are always pleased if we are able to secure better outcomes for service users, we have not seen evidence of a process to 'close the loop' on accountability when a mistake is rectified to put in place mechanisms to ensure it does not happen again.

Our consultations also indicate that the community sector supports in principle the commitment to set KPIs for senior managers within government and would like to see appropriate accountability extended throughout the public service. The caveat and the concern we have is that such an approach will have a strong impact on the focus, priorities and culture of public servants, so it is absolutely critical to get the KPIs right and ensure there is an ongoing process of reflection, consultation and evaluation of performance criteria and achieved outcomes. There is a real risk that setting strong internal accountability processes without ensuring there is a strong focus on the outcomes for the public as the primary concern, and secondarily for the strength of relationships with key partners and stakeholders, could lead to a public service that is more inwardly focused, stratified and siloed. For example, often the bane of our existence (as service providers reliant on some percentage of government funding) is the contradiction between the principles, practices and procedures we develop, negotiate and agree at a high level with senior public servants and the over-riding need to implement a commitment or a decision made by an individual Minister or by Cabinet on a tight timeframe. This is often a political response to high profile issue where the need to be being seen to do something quickly always trumps the desire to

do it properly in a way that addresses the underlying causes or associated problems, is efficient and effective, and integrates with the other services and supports citizens in need may be relying on. Certainly there is a balance to be struck between the desire to design better systems and the need to act decisively on imperfect information when we know enough about what is required to make a difference, but too often knee-jerk reactions result in ineffective responses that further complicate the service system those in need must navigate. A more considered response can be equally politically effective, as doing the right thing can create more opportunities for Ministers to announce developments and responses at key stages of the co-design and implementation process.

These issues are critical to the Service Priority Review's terms of reference 1&2 – achieving cultural change in the public sector and promoting a culture of collaboration in the achievement of outcomes for the community. The emphasis on the achievement of outcomes driving collaboration and cultural change is a critical one, as is the primacy of these being outcomes that are for and identified and valued by the community (and, in the case of most community services, particularly those most vulnerable, disadvantaged and excluded).

Further, there is an opportunity to support greater learning and collaboration and strengthen understandings and relationships by targeted and judicious use of public sector secondments within community sector peaks.

Secondments to service providers are also possible, but care would have to be taken about where this might create probity or perception issues in relation to competitive tendering processes.

Relationship with Government

The relationship with Government during the Barnett era was developed as a result of the Economic Audit Committee (see the [Putting the Public First](#) report) and then defined by the [Delivering Community Services in Partnership Policy](#), which was guided by the [Partnership Principles and Behaviours](#) and overseen by the [Partnership Forum](#). WACOSS has both been an active partner in these arrangements and a constructive critic of their limitations, highlighting the ongoing barriers within government to their effective implementation. We strongly recommend that the *Service Priority Review* panel reviews the benefits, achievements and limitations of the partnership approach taken in WA and compares it to public sector reform efforts in Victoria (in particular, and to a lesser extent NSW) that have sought to adopt and adapt some of these reform approaches but taken different paths. We would suggest that you speak to inaugural chair Peter Shergold about his learnings from the forum and experience in Victoria as well as his predecessor Robyn Kruk (if you have not already done so).

WA Labor's *Supporting Communities Policy* includes a commitment to work in partnership with the sector, to develop a more collaborative approach to procurement, and to continue the Partnership Forum, while "...ensuring these relationships are extended to a much broader range of stakeholders." While there is ongoing concern about the effectiveness of existing Partnership Forum arrangements, there is also recognition of the need for a high-level mechanism for sector engagement with Directors General and policy makers to drive and oversee whole of government human services reform and provide governance of the partnership policy. This is arguably both more critical and challenging during a period of economic restraint. We expect the incoming government to review existing arrangements and reform them to better fit their approach to collective decision-making and reform agenda.

Our consultations with the community sector suggest a high level of commitment to a partnership approach, appreciation of the high-level commitment within government, and commitment to the partnership principles and behaviours. There remains some concern that high-level commitment hasn't translated down to the operational level in many places, as a result of a number of factors. Key among these is the need for a change in public sector culture, as identified by the Service Priority Review. There is a high degree of inertia among some public servants who appear comfortable with existing ways of doing things, focused on internal incentives, overly risk-averse (while focused on internal and political risks, rather than the risk for service users) and reluctant to give up certainty and control. Often principles and shared outcomes are agreed and supported at a high level within the public service, but the blockage to effective implementation arises within middle management. There are a number of instances where collaborative approaches to outcome-based service design have been frustrated at the procurement level, such as in specifying tendering criteria or contract reporting outcomes.

In the absence of KPIs related to cross-government and cross-sector collaboration or accountability for joint outcomes there is also concern that some Directors General and other senior public servants have been free to choose to not participate, or to do so in an occasional and superficial manner. Some participants expressed frustration that they felt they had devoted time and effort to processes where it appeared public servants were merely paying lip service to principles of consultation and collaboration and that the end result had been little different to business as usual. There is a lot of scepticism about the insincere use of the term 'innovation' in service tenders, where service providers who have put effort into developing innovative approaches feel they have missed out in favour of business-as-usual approaches because they have not conformed to narrow expectations about the service model.

We note the key questions relating to this theme circulated by the Service Priority Review panel focused on collaboration and the sharing of knowledge and expertise *within* the public sector (2.4 & 2.6), whereas much of our concern has been about the opportunities for sharing and collaboration *between* the public and community sectors. It is important to note that from our perspective some of the best examples of cross-agency collaboration within the public service have often been driven or facilitated by engagement with external stakeholders, and that we are often surprised to find ourselves playing a knowledge-sharing and even match-making role across different departments. A recent example is the roundtables we held on data linkage with public sector thought leaders at our 2016 conference and again in early 2017, where we ended up spending more time on information sharing than anticipated as we discovered many exciting and related initiatives if different departments were unaware of each-other. Some appeared connected at an individual level, with knowledge shared among practitioners, without awareness at a policy or program management level that might enable more effective connection.

We also note the question (2.5) relating to drawing on the knowledge and expertise of the *private* sector, which we have interpreted as extending to the *not-for-profit* sector. The distinction is we believe an important one that impacts on many of the ongoing debates about what is appropriate and effective in the delivery of public services. On the one hand, there is the issues around public trust and the perceived appropriateness of 'outsourcing' public services to the private sector, with some arguing that market competition will drive more effective service delivery and others arguing it is inappropriate to profit from services directed to the most vulnerable, or to divert resources to shareholder returns that might deliver more services to those with unmet need. Public sector unions often criticise community services as 'privatisation', despite many of these charitable service pre-dating the commitment to the welfare state and deriving much or more of their income from other sources. From our point of view, the focus should be on community outcomes as the key criteria for defining service quality, efficiency and effectiveness. We remain concerned that effective market competition on community services (particularly those

dealing with vulnerable people with complex needs) is not really possible in the absence of reliable and comparable information on service outcomes, such that 'testing the market' via competitive tenders is either reduced to competition on price (and through-put at the expense of outcomes or quality) or to a desk-top exercise on who can write the most compelling tender. In many ways these are more important issues in relation to Theme 1 (community outcomes) and Theme 3 (efficient systems), however it is important to note that in circumstances where services are being delivered both by public sector agencies and by external providers, any measures relating to the assessment of workforce performance can have unintended consequences for service outcomes. There is an ongoing concern where public sector agencies have responsibility for funding and evaluating external services as well as delivering the same or similar services internally that conflicts of interest can arise where there is not sufficient separation and independence between these roles. Greater transparency and public accountability is needed in these circumstances, which could provide a driver for reducing duplication and service system complexity while also providing opportunities for service improvement.

Recommendations:

- Ensure **high level leadership** of engagement with the sector at a Forum directed and supported by the Premier or Treasurer, with a strong independent chair and a key role for central policy leadership in DPC.
- A renewed Partnership Forum is only one of the mechanisms through which this relationship is expressed and reforms can be progressed. There needs to be **a range of mechanisms** to enable more effective engagement and implementation at regional and local levels, and with a wider range of stakeholders.
- A core problem is that the existing Forum has become increasingly less effective due to the combination of lack of **capacity to drive change** across Government, not having **key players at table**, and lack of capacity and **resourcing to enact decisions**. A new model for the Forum needs to address these issues.
- Develop **KPIs for the Forum** linked to the DG's and Departmental KPIs (and vice versa) consistent with Mark McGowan's [20/20/20 reforms](#) and the *Our Communities* reporting framework.
- Continue and build upon existing agreed [principles and behaviours](#) within the existing partnership policy, but with increased commitment to cross-government implementation, including in all contract and tendering processes.
- Incorporate **a range** of workshop and facilitated discussion processes to support wider engagement across both sectors in addition to the current meeting format.
- Get the right balance in Forum **membership** – target diversity, capacity and merit, while ensuring the Forum isn't too large to be effective.
- Provide sufficient resources (secretariat and project), including for Peaks to **engage more broadly** with their sectors on initiatives and policy development.

Community Sector Workforce Development Strategy

[Modelling projections](#) by the State Training Board Workforce Scenarios project show faster than average long term employment growth for the health care and social assistance industry compared to the average of all industries (out to 2030), reflecting a steadily ageing population into the future. The health and social services workforce is predicted to **triple by 2030** – but there currently is no workforce development strategy. In 2014, the Commonwealth Department of Employment also [estimated](#) that Australia will need an additional 230,000 social care and support workers over the next five years. Most of these jobs are likely to be in aged care and disability services, areas where we have an ageing workforce and in which

individual funding models have increased workforce insecurity and led to uncertain hours and incomes as well as changing work conditions. Developing and sustaining a skilled community services workforce is both a challenge and an opportunity.

There is increasing concern about how we best achieve the aspirations of user directed services, manage service system costs with increasing demand and constrained funding, and still manage to attract and develop a skilled caring workforce to deliver quality services. There is some concern that the “uberisation” of service models could mean increasing numbers of workers effectively employed through apps and have no certainty about the work hours or income on a day-to-day basis, and that increasing levels of employment risk and liability passed onto service users unaware of the implications.

Many existing small to medium service providers lack access to the necessary capital to transition easily from an up-front grant funding model to individualised service payments in arrears. Maintaining our current skilled workforce is one issue, addressing skill gaps to develop a future workforce capable of tackling complex needs and comfortable in delivering collaborative wrap-around services across disciplinary boundaries, is another.

Western Australian charities employ **7.0% of the WA workforce**. This is **more than 93,000 staff** – 47,000 full-time and 46,000 part-time. By way of comparison, the Manufacturing sector employs 98,900 or 7.2%, Mining employs 112,100, or just over 8.0% and the Agriculture, forestry and fishing sector only 31,200, or 2.2%. As such, the not-for-profit sector is a significant (and fast growing) driver of economic activity in WA.

WA charities generated **\$14.1bn of income** in 2014 and spent \$13bn on expenses. **59%** of that income is self-generated and raised by donations, fees for service, social enterprises or returns on investments.

More than half (58%) of expenditure by WA charities, or **\$6.68bn**, was spent on employee wages, which is generally spent within the WA economy, and often within the local geographic area in which the charity operates, creating a multiplier effect. Staff on lower average salaries tend to spend a higher proportion of their salaries on daily living expenses.

One of the key differences between not-for-profits (NFPs) and other organisations is the capacity for NFPs to attract and use volunteers to deliver services and administer their business. Nine out of ten WA charities report being supported by volunteer workers. Volunteering not only improves the cost effectiveness of the NFP sector, but has a range of social benefits, including improving community cohesion, along with improving engagement and the mental health of individual volunteers.

Changes in staff costs and availability can have a significant impact on the sustainability of charities. For example, upward pressure on wage costs due to overall economic growth, or even growth in specific public sector wages (for example increase in salary award rates for teachers and nurses), can have a deep and immediate impact on charity costs. Similarly, charities’ wages costs are impacted by policies such as the National Disability Insurance Scheme, which is expected to result in workforce shortages for organisations in aged care and related industries that employ staff with similar qualifications.

Nationally, the not-for-profit sector is expanding faster than the Australian economy, growing approximately 3.2% per annum against GDP growth of 2.9%. In WA in the same period, the Gross State Product only grew by 1.9%.

The Victorian Government [recently committed](#) half a million dollars to help establish a new research and teaching organisation, the [Future Social Service Institute](#) to transform the social support and care sector into an economic powerhouse by recasting it as a strong industry with professional career paths. This will

involve the rollout of new qualifications, initially at the vocational level, that will attract the best high school graduates. If we get this right, Australia's brightest Year 12 students will increasingly look to social support and care as their first career choice.

As people with disability are [disproportionately more likely](#) to live outside the capital cities in areas that also include large numbers of disadvantaged job seekers, a community services workforce strategy could be used to bolster employment in regional and outer suburb areas suffering from the decline in manufacturing and mining related jobs.

Recommendation:

- Develop a **community services workforce development strategy** in conjunction with the community sector, unions and teaching institutions that addresses the growing demand for services and workers

Aboriginal Human Services Workforce Development Strategy

The Service Priority Review posed the key question of how the public sector can increase the diversity of its workforce (2.7). Reviews of various policies and initiatives seeking to [increase public sector workforce diversity](#), including for instance employment of [people with a disability](#) or [Aboriginal staff](#) have demonstrated that good HR policy and practice is necessary but not sufficient to impact on employment outcomes. Processes have been put into place to avoid discrimination and provide practical support, but in practice they have [had little impact in improving outcomes](#) and increasing the numbers of disadvantaged and excluded groups within the public service. In contrast, mission-driven community-based organisations are more likely to proactively employ staff from excluded groups, but may lack the appropriate policies and supports to ensure they are able to do so effectively. Arguably the public sector could more easily and cost-effectively meet targets for employment diversity outcomes by providing incentives and appropriate training and support as top-ups to service contracts. This can have the added benefit of increasing the accessibility and effectiveness of services by including those with lived experience.

There are **two critical enablers** to achieving better life outcomes that the human service reforms need to address to ensure they have a significant impact on the gap in life outcomes and economic participation of Aboriginal families and communities:

- They need to develop **more sustainable and resilient economies** in regional and remote towns and Aboriginal communities;
- They need to create **more responsive, accessible and appropriate services** that effectively engage with Aboriginal families to produce transformative outcomes.

Both of these outcomes will require a planned, strategic and sustained strategy to develop a skilled Aboriginal workforce, and build and support sustainable Aboriginal organisations and businesses. Where those businesses already exist the new regional reform procurement policy should provide a constructive income stream.

We believe that an **Aboriginal Human Services Workforce Development Strategy** is the best way to achieve these outcomes. This appears to be a gap in both the current [regional reform strategy](#) and in [Aboriginal workforce strategies](#) that focus on more traditional roles in infrastructure and construction.

The regional reform [Roadmap](#) highlights the importance of workforce development, and identifies private industry as the main driver of regional economic activity, along with suggestions that there may be opportunities to increase public sector employment, and to include employment outcomes in tenders for public infrastructure. We understand that a regional Aboriginal employment package is being developed, which will include a public sector workforce, government contracting initiatives, procurement from Aboriginal businesses, and some form of Aboriginal workforce development strategy.

Given the ongoing and projected **growth of the service and caring economy**, high levels of **community need** for services and support, and the critical role that **Aboriginal community-controlled services** are likely to play in improving **access and engagement** to deliver better health and life outcomes for Aboriginal families. There is a strong argument for a greater focus on Aboriginal employment in health, education and community services. [Aboriginal community-controlled health services](#) have been a leader in this field in WA and the transfer of knowledge from their lived experience is likely to be crucial in the development other Aboriginal community controlled community services, particularly in the family support, child protection and youth services

Not-for-profit community service organisations are well-placed to play a critical role in the development of a skilled and caring Aboriginal workforce. They will be willing and motivated to employ and train local Aboriginal workers, but many regional providers may **lack the capacity and resources** to do so effectively.

There is a significant risk that a strategy that does not address these gaps and challenges would be setting up Aboriginal people, communities and community services to fail.

A combination of contracting requirements, additional incentives, and training support is likely to deliver the most effective outcomes. Contracts over a certain size might have minimum employment and training requirements, additional resources made available to leverage increased employment outcomes, and access to targeted support to ensure Aboriginal workers are work-ready, have access to additional training where necessary and their supervisors have access to appropriate information and assistance.

In addition to supporting and encouraging the development of Aboriginal workers, larger community service contracts should include provisions and resources to enable the development of **local community-controlled services**. There is a clear trend within human service provision towards fewer contracts with larger organisations, which is assumed to reduce the administrative burden of contract management within government, reduce the potential duplication or overlap between service providers, and improve service efficiency. This trend, however, works against the interests of smaller local services, potentially making it difficult to develop a local workforce, or increase perceived ownership and local responsiveness of services. Mainstream service providers may be well-placed to play a critical role in the development of local community controlled services, potentially through developing operational models whereby they may continue to provide backbone support or oversight in finance, governance, service reporting and HR. Service contracts need to be able to support the transfer of responsibility and control over time. The national community sector peak bodies have developed [Partnership Principles](#) for mainstream community services delivering services to Aboriginal cohorts and communities.

We acknowledge the commitment of the Department for Child Protection and Family Support to put in place an [Aboriginal Services and Practice Framework](#) and commit to develop an [ACCO strategy](#), as well as the support they have provided for the formation of a [Noongar Child Protection Council](#) (to whom WACOSS is also providing some assistance). At the same time, Aboriginal community leaders argue that, with Aboriginal children making up 54% of all children in care in WA (despite representing around 4.5% of their age cohort), Aboriginal child protection and family support services should now be the 'mainstream' services, rather than an emerging area of specialization.

Recommendations:

- Develop an **Aboriginal workforce development strategy** that provides incentives and support to increase Aboriginal employment in human services contracts.
- Support the development and build the capacity of **Aboriginal community-controlled organisations** to deliver community services, measure and report on service outcomes.
- Ensure **service procurement processes** support the development of ACCOs and that service contracts enable **partnerships** between ACCOs and mainstream service providers to build capacity and **transfer responsibility** for service delivery over time.

Theme 3 – Efficient and Effective Systems and Processes

Developing an effective, efficient and responsive service system designed to meet the needs of families and communities is critical. An effective service system should seek to deliver sustained and transformative outcomes that improve the circumstances and prospects of service users and target the greatest assistance to those most in need or excluded. An effective system should also be able to identify those at risk sooner, enabling early intervention that can prevent the development of disadvantage. This in turn can reduce the need for more intensive support and the costs associated with lifetime service provision. As different individuals and families need different levels of support at different times, it is important that there are pathways from universal services to more targeted and intensive services.

To build an effective service system, we require overarching frameworks across government to engage children, young people and their families with government agencies and community sector organisations that support them in a common approach.

One of the Service Priority Review's key terms of reference (8) is about achieving greater economies and efficiencies in public sector administration, including reducing bureaucracy and red-tape (as well as workforce management processes and renewal – as discussed above). The Council believes that what is arguably the biggest opportunity to reduce unnecessary bureaucracy within both public sector agencies and community service providers is to support more integrated services and programs (as discussed in the section on Service Integration on page 12 above). This includes moving towards longer-term service contracts (e.g. 5 years), reducing the number of smaller grant programs where they are predominantly used to support components of integrated services, reducing duplication across government (for instance, where 14 different government agencies are all be funding youth services in the one region), and progressing the commitment to outcomes-based contracting. Our consultations with the community services sector highlighted that many sector leaders still feel that there is a way to go on delivering the commitments made towards red-tape reduction, uniform contract terms and outcome-based contracting under the *Delivering Community Services in Partnership Policy*.

Systems to Support Whole of Government Reform

WACOSS and the sector's main interests in whole of Government reforms are how we produce better outcomes for disadvantaged and vulnerable communities. In particular, how we work together to enable integrated and place-based service models for key at-risk cohorts with complex needs will be critical. Achieving better outcomes will depend on the mechanisms across government including policy, funding, accountability and procurement practice, designed to support cross-government and place-based approaches.

A number of the [strategic policy recommendations](#) listed on page 4 of our recent *Pre-Budget Submission* directly address opportunities and next steps in whole of government reforms aimed at delivering more efficient and effective services that produce better outcomes.

1. Develop guidelines and resources for cross-agency and **cross-disciplinary co-design**
2. Build the **culture and capability** of the public and community sectors to develop and implement place-based integrated service models
3. Pilot a **place-based pooled-budgeting model** to commissioning of integrated early years, youth and family services in three trial sites
4. Develop **shared reporting and accountability mechanisms** for integrated service outcomes

5. Develop a framework and practice guidelines for **service integration** through place-based trials with Regional Managers Forums and District Leadership Groups
6. Implement the WA **Open Data** policy to ensure all data on community service provision and outcomes is easily accessible
7. Extend the **Partnership Forum Outcomes Framework** from its application in earlier intervention family support to provide a guiding and reporting framework for all human services
8. Use **data linkage** on risk factors to explore the costs and benefits of the timing and intensity of family support interventions to reduce Aboriginal child removal rates

These strategic policy recommendations outline key strategies and measures to develop and implement integrated services, joined-up place-based strategies and to develop targeted early intervention strategies that achieve transformative outcomes to reduce the rising cost of tertiary and acute services (as discussed in relation to Theme 1). Significant opportunities to improve the efficiency of service design, delivery and reporting exist through developing clear and consistent processes and guidelines across government, implementing effective shared information systems for communication, reporting and evaluation, and by developing and agreeing shared outcomes frameworks that support common approaches to reporting and ensure consistent evaluation of service efficiency and effectiveness.

Data Linkage

Through better access to data and the capacity to engage in data linkage, the State Government can open up the possibility for services to better measure outcomes and demonstrate return on investment, and to better understand risk factors and target at-risk cohorts to enable earlier intervention strategies. There is significant public sector data on community need and service outcomes already available, including data generated as a result of the reporting requirements of contracted social services. Evaluations of cohort and community need, service coverage and effectiveness often struggle because this data is inaccessible, incomplete, or incommensurate. WA has significant opportunity and potential to develop data linkage capacities that could provide transformative outcomes for the community. WA has in the past been a national and even international leader in data linkage, particularly in relation to child health and development. In recent years we have failed to capitalise on this expertise or to progress whole-of-government reforms on data linkage. Recent initiative in other states (including SA, Victoria and NSW) have demonstrated that changes in policy and relatively small investments in infrastructure can enable significant gains in knowledge and understanding to drive more efficient and effective services.

Fundamental barriers to data linkage in Western Australia are the lack of explicit data standards and protocols across government departments and agencies, and the lack of a clear role or body driving the interpretation and promotion of data. The cost of data access and the bureaucracy involved in gaining it are currently significant barriers in WA. Given data linkage is mostly managed through the Department of Health there can be significant barriers, delays and costs for data linkage projects where health is not a partner or a driver. Other states have created and resourced independent bodies whose role it is to support and promote data linkage, reducing access barriers and charges and proactively partnering to develop innovative applications.

The absence of Privacy Laws in WA potentially creates a barrier to data sharing, as Commonwealth agencies and other jurisdictions can be reluctant to share and link data in the absence of clear assurances of privacy protection and compliance. State Government Agencies may also be reluctant to link data sets in the context of a lack of clear guidelines and protocols about data protection.

There is no central database of social research in WA that agencies, institutes and universities can draw upon to facilitate policy development, which in turn siloes research and actively discourages data sharing.

Data needs to be at the centre of policy development and evaluation in this state, but in order for that to occur, there needs to be clear leadership in setting priorities for social and 'public good' outcomes and a mechanism for commissioning research and analysis to achieve them.

These issues were discussed in more detail in our recent submissions to [national](#) and state inquiries. We are currently awaiting the release of the [WA data linkage inquiry](#) chaired by WA Chief Scientist Professor Peter Klinken and recommend the panel take up this issue with the expert advisory committee. WACOSS recently chaired a roundtable of policy makers and thought leaders from across the public, research and community sectors, which could provide the basis for the formation of an advisory committee on the implementation of its findings.

Contracting for Collaboration

Significantly more system change is required to effectively address the challenges faced in supporting people and their family's wellbeing. Silo approaches continue to impede effective data sharing as people transition from detoxification facilities or acute hospitals to community based supports. The co-location of some government and community sector services are an important step towards more integrated service delivery. More work is required, however in order to maximise the benefits for service users that come from genuine partnerships, open sharing of information and fully collaborative practice. Further investment in early intervention and prevention is also required to reduce reliance on acute care and to prevent readmission and relapse.

The Department of Finance has played a key role in the implementation of *the Delivering Community services in Partnership* policy by assisting government agencies and NFP community sector organisations to build capacity so that they may respond effectively to the associated funding and contracting reforms through the *Fostering Partnerships Program*. The terms of reference for the program already encompass regional and remote service delivery, defining outcomes and enabling co-design processes, innovation and citizen-centric services. Given the focus on the regional reforms and the commitment to develop mechanisms for cross-agency and cross-sectoral decision-making in the agreed strategic directions for the Partnership Forum, there is a strong case to prioritise assistance to agencies and service providers involved in regional place-based collaborative service design and increase the level of resources available. This support is likely to be particularly critical where cross-government and cross-sectoral collaborations are involved (that is, co-design processes involving multiple government agencies, service providers and programs across portfolios) and there is a need to bridge the gap between different service models and conceptual frameworks to bring together population and service outcome data across different disciplines.

To date, the co-design processes have largely been at the service level (involving an individual government agency and existing providers) and contracting models limited to a lead service-provider model with little scope for collaborative partnerships or the transfer of responsibility over time. There are some examples of 'collective impact' approaches involving multiple agencies, such as *Connecting Communities 4 Kids*, the *Youth Partnership Project*, and the *South West Metropolitan Partnership Forum*. *Good Practice Guidelines* for government agencies collaborating with community service providers have been developed, as well as more specific guides and resources for particular sectors, but these are single agency program co-design models without either cross-disciplinary or service user engagement.

WACOSS is currently in the process of developing a draft [Codesign Toolkit](#) based on collaborations with a number of Government departments and community sector peaks. The definitions and principles on which the toolkit is based were developed through a joint workshop with the Partnership Forum. The project will deliver on one of the forum's [Strategic Directions](#) and it is hoped the processes and guidelines developed will be promulgated across government through the Funding and Contracting Services unit to inform and direct consistent co-design practice across government. Future development of the toolkit will include practical testing and further development as well as a focus on mechanisms and processes for cross-agency and cross-disciplinary co-design.

For genuine partnership and a commitment to co-design to become embedded practice within the public sector, strong KPIs are needed to be put in place at both upper and middle management levels. Without these, the efficiency of the public sector is compromised and its relationship with the not-for-profit sector is impaired.

Procurement policies need a strong focus on contracting for positive outcomes, external monitoring of standards and increased engagement of service users in the planning implementation and evaluation. This would allow existing services to provide more choice so that services can better match the needs of individuals and their families and increase the likelihood of services being provided closer to the communities in which people live.

The implementation of the DCSP reforms were intended to cause a shift to outcome-based contracting and to services tendering 'the true cost' of service delivery – either by tendering the cost of a fixed level of service delivery (where outcomes are specified), or tendering the level of service to be delivered for a fixed service cost. However, the extent to which community service providers and government contract managers fully appreciate the implications of the ERO and have an adequate understanding of how to cost it into longer term contracts remains unclear.

In 2012, the Fair Work Commission issued an Equal Remuneration Order (ERO) requiring human services agencies to pay annual increases of between **23%** and **45%** over 8 years (to 2020). Current annual pay rises as a result are between 5% and 6%. With over 400 organisations providing contract services to WA Government agencies, the impact on sustainability of organisations, services or programs is a problem.

Research on 19 major not-for-profit agencies in WA by the *Curtin Not-for-profit Initiative* has found that:

- There will be a negative financial impact on all organisations covered by the relevant awards.
- The impact varies depending on whether agencies are already paying over award rates.
- 6 of the 19 agencies reported reduced profitability or no longer profitable in the short term.
- 5 agencies expected high impact (i.e. unprofitable and increasing losses).
- In the longer term the numbers of agencies impacted rose to 7 and 8 respectively.
- 4 agencies expected to become unprofitable directly as a result of the ERO.
- Of the 282 programs reported, 8 organisations that were either unprofitable before the ERO or became unprofitable as a result of the ERO, deploy 182 programs which were impacted negatively by the ERO by 10% or more.
- A logical consequence would be to discontinue those unprofitable programs and thereby reduce the apparent losses from operations but the analysis is not conclusive on this.
- The reduced profitability of programs and organisations is an issue of concern to government as a purchaser of services, as profit is directly related to sustainability.

WACOSS is particularly concerned that a **growing gap** between reduced indexation rates for service funding and scheduled award wage increases under the ERO will inevitably lead to reductions in service delivery levels and/or service quality, and may threaten the ongoing financial viability of some small to

medium community organisations delivering essential community services. The public and community sectors face a shared challenge in how we meet our aspirations to both deliver efficient and effective services to those most in need and provide fair and just wages during tight economic times.

Service reforms discussed earlier (*service integration, place-based strategies, targeted early intervention*) offer opportunities for more efficient and effective services, but these reforms will take time and initially only occur in specific places or for specific cohorts. In the meantime, we need a *transition strategy* that ensures our most vulnerable and disadvantaged citizens have access to essential front-line services.

WACOSS continues to encourage its members to embrace a principled approach to partnering with and supporting Aboriginal community controlled organisations in the delivery of service based on nationally agreed best-practice principles. Guidelines developed by ACOSS and national Aboriginal peak organisations encourage not for profit community service providers to commit to partner fairly rather than compete, to empower Aboriginal organisations, recognise their existing capacity and unique community role, and share knowledge both ways on a journey that will increase their resilience and effectiveness with a view to stepping back and handing over control. Many of the same issues and principles equally apply to how larger organisations might partner with smaller, specialist, regional ones.

Evidence-based Service Evaluation, Role of Consumers and Communities

It is crucial that the public sector retains and further develops its expertise in service evaluation and program development so that service design and procurement decisions reflect real knowledge of community needs, local capacity and expertise. There are significant lessons to be learned from recent Commonwealth tendering processes (such as the [Indigenous Advancement Strategy](#) and the [DSS 'broad-banding' tenders](#)) where effective regional and local service providers were often displaced by competitive tenders from larger 'outside' organisations, many of whom over-represented their local capacity and relationships and then struggled to deliver comparable levels of service.

It is extremely important that we openly communicate and learn from what hasn't worked or what has got in the way of service reform or cultural change within organisations. We have learnt a lot about the challenges involved in the procurement of outcome-based services, and independent analysis of recent tendering processes has clearly shown the value of getting the consultation and co-design processes right before entering into a competitive tender. The engagement of service users (as well as service providers) in the co-design and co-evaluation of services is one area that offers the potential to deliver more effective and responsive services, but we face significant challenges in doing this well. There is a lot we can learn by better sharing experiences across different programs, services and portfolios through the development of good practice guides.

An example of *poor* evidence-based service evaluation was the decision in the 2015-16 WA Budget to cut funding to metropolitan financial counselling services provided by the Department for Child Protection and Family Support, which is facing budgetary pressures as a result of the growing costs of children in care, with a 40% increase in the number of children removed into out of home care during this term of government. The critical problem for both government and the community is that financial counselling services are a cross-cutting early intervention that impacts not only on child protection, but also across housing and homelessness, justice, mental health, family and relationship services, alcohol and drug services, and legal services, people with a disability, electricity, gas and water utilities. When services are

timely and effective they function to minimise the drive in expensive statutory services and maximise people's ability to manage their own finances and commitments.

The announcement of the service cuts highlighted the lack of service evaluation and inadequate analysis of the costs and benefits of service outcomes. It also made it clear that we need to have a more nuanced discussion of the difference between services duplication and inefficiency versus the integration of specialist roles across the service system. This is an example of where the provision of wrap-around services, with financial counselling integrated into emergency relief, tenancy support or legal advocacy services to deliver joined-up and effective outcomes is likely to greatly out-weight the administrative efficiency of offering a single financial counselling service across an entire region.

Recommendation:

- Facilitate the better sharing of experiences across different programs, services and portfolios through the development of good practice guides.

Social Housing and Homelessness

Community housing serves a crucial role across the state in the provision of stable housing and support for those transitioning out of homelessness as part of the social housing mix. In particular, it contributes to social development through the community's engagement in and with not-for-profit housing associations, provides flexible options that meet a diversity of needs, encourages innovation, and designs and secures joint ventures between public and private investors.

The community housing sector needs greater clarity to enable it to plan, invest, partner and innovate. In order for this role to be undertaken effectively and in line with the Government's housing and homelessness aspirations, it is essential that a clear community housing and growth strategy is developed. A shared direction and longer term strategic priorities need to be developed in partnership with the community housing sector to drive planning and investment decisions.

Key to ensuring that a tenancy, once obtained, can be sustained is ensuring that the tenant has the access to housing that is appropriate for their situation and is provided with access to the services that they need.

These supports need to be available from point of first contact to beyond the point where the tenant is transitioning out of social housing. The public housing system is not providing this currently, which means tenants are more at risk of losing their tenancies than they would be otherwise.

Community housing organisations conduct a full assessment of tenancy history, risk factors and support needs at the point of application. This enables early intervention for those who need support with their tenancies, improving outcomes for the tenant and reducing costs longer term.

By partnering with the community housing sector, the Housing Authority would be able to develop a shared assessment framework and joint waitlist that could be used to determine at the beginning who are the tenants for whom the public housing system and its current level of support is appropriate and effective.

For those for whom that level of support is insufficient, a targeted and integrated housing support system, co-designed with the community housing sector, would enable the provision of the intensive and specialist support they may require to transition into and stabilise their tenancy.

As the community housing sector already uses their own needs-assessment frameworks to assess the needs of potential tenants and has established relationships with other service areas, incorporating these systems and expertise into a shared framework and support system is crucial to its success.

An example of this model in practice can be seen with the Tasmanian Government's Housing Connect. It functions as a one-stop shop for all housing and homelessness assistance and support needs. It provides access to public and community housing, private rental assistance, emergency accommodation and support services. A core component to the success of Housing Connect is a common assessment framework and shared database. This enables front door staff to undertake assessments, case planning and referrals to support services.

Housing Connect is delivered in partnership with community organisations for government, creating a more coordinated and integrated model that supports long-term stable housing outcomes.

WACOSS has welcomed the announcement of a new National Housing and Homelessness Agreement (NHHA) to provide ongoing and indexed funding. The NHHA will combine funding currently provisioned under the National Affordable Housing Specific Purpose Payment (NAHSPP) and the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH).

The Federal Budget also included the establishment of the National Housing Finance and Investment Corporation (NHFIC) to operate an affordable housing bond aggregator to encourage greater private and institutional investment and provide cheaper and longer-term finance to registered providers of affordable housing. It also included an additional 10 per cent CGT discount to resident individuals investing in qualifying affordable housing, and introduced new rules that enable Managed Investment Trusts to acquire, construct or redevelop property to hold for affordable housing.

Homelessness Services in WA

In Western Australia, the current NAHA agreement funds vital homelessness services. The Department of Child Protection and Family Support (CPFS) receives 15.68% of the total NAHA funding allocation to WA to support homelessness programs. The majority of these funds are allocated to direct service delivery for crisis and transitional accommodation services, with the remainder allocated to support services. Across Western Australia, approximately half (47%) of the funding for the state's 104 homeless services come from the Commonwealth via NAHA and NPAH.

Department of Child Protection and Family Support have informed community services their current contracts for NPAH and NAHA are only secure to June 2018. As part of the NHHA, the Federal Government will provide nationally an additional \$375.3 million over three years from 2018-19 to fund ongoing homelessness support services, with funding to be matched by the State and Territory Governments. The current \$115 million of annual homelessness funding provided under NPAH is maintained through 2017-18.

Recommendations:

- Continue to encourage and support innovation in homelessness services, including better integration between short-term and longer-term housing solutions.
- Develop a community housing policy and growth strategy that provides greater strategic direction to enable specialisation, innovation and investment
- Co-design in partnership with the community housing and service sector a one-stop shop for all housing and homelessness assistance and tenancy support needs with a shared assessment framework and database at its core.

Disability Services

This is a time of significant reform and change within the disability services sector. As discussed above under *Community Sector Workforce Development Strategy*, the projected growth for the disability services workforce is considerable, coming as it does on the back of the considerable investment in the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

Delivering on the principles and investment of NDIS, regardless of which model the State Government decides to implement, requires concerted action in order to maximise the potential benefits for service-users.

These actions include embedding stronger accountability mechanisms to measure progress on outcomes, providing investment into the strategies of the Disability Services Industry Plan and implementing a disability services workforce plan, as well as ensuring that a well-resourced and highly skilled agency oversees and delivers more effective implementation of the National Disability Strategy as well as the transition to the NDIS.

The following recommendations have been outlined by NDS WA in their submission, which can be found in Appendix 2 of this document.

Recommendations:

- Develop a framework to measure outcomes and to influence funding allocations.
- Develop a strong evidence base to support the delivery of better human services outcomes in Western Australia including investing in the development of a critical data mass (and data linkage policy) to inform decision making and drive efficient investment decisions. The development of a strategic data asset creates a line of sight between organisational and market outcomes and quality of life outcomes for people with disability and as such connects the interests of consumers to the sustainability of the supply side, and to government policy settings.
- Collaborate and partner with the WA disability sector in the co-design and implementation of quality services including embedding a high-level mechanism to oversee reform in the sector and aligned sectors.
- Focus on developing service integration across key related portfolio areas of health, disability, justice, housing, education, training and employment.
- Invest in collaborative service models which must demonstrate service integration including the piloting of models in targeted priority areas.
- Explore opportunities for co-location of human services and government facilities.
- Invest in a workforce development strategy to meet projected need, particularly in relation to the delivery of the NDIS in WA.
- Invest in building a strong disability sector that provides increasing and diverse choice for people with disability across WA, including regional and remote, and in particular through the WA Disability Services Industry Plan that will provide a clear pathway outlining where the sector is now and how it can best make the transition to where it must be at full NDIS roll out.
- Invest in partnership with the Commonwealth to implement the agreed national NDIS Quality and Safeguarding Framework and supporting ICT system infrastructure.

Consumer Protection and Advocacy

Western Australia is currently the only state in the nation where there is no funding for consumer research and representation in the regulation of its energy and water markets or for protection and advocacy for low income and vulnerable consumers who may be adversely impacted by changes in market policy or unfair practices by market participants. Within the National Electricity Market (NEM) consumer research and representation is funded by a modest levy on market participants (that is, energy utilities) with research and advocacy commissioned and managed by Energy Consumers Australia. WACOSS was funded to play this role in WA between 2005 and 2013.

Energy and water are essential domestic service. Disconnection from energy and water can have severe social and economic ramifications for individuals, families and communities. Electricity, gas and water support fundamental human needs including food, hygiene and shelter. It supports equipment that is critical to wellbeing and independence, and it enables and supports community engagement and family life.

Fundamental to ensuring access to a reliable, safe, affordable supply is effective regulation developed on principles of best practice consumer protection. Western Australia remains the only state in Australia without funded consumer research and representation in our energy and water markets.¹ Without it, we cannot expect to see best practice consumer protection or be sure that we are not paying too much for our power and water. The move to full retail contestability as part of the Western Australian Electricity Market Review makes the need for that consumer representation all the more essential.

Research shows that negative energy market outcomes, such as market failure or affordability problems, have greater consequences for vulnerable consumers. If full retail contestability is entered into without the appropriate consumer protections in place, the result could be costly for our economy and our community. The voice of consumers is essential in developing the support, concessions and awareness needed to enable vulnerable consumers to engage in a new energy market.

Western Australia began a process of transitioning into the National Electricity Market with the transfer of regulatory responsibility for the wholesale electricity market from the WA Economic Regulatory Authority to the Australian Energy Market Operator on 1 October 2016. The process was then halted by Parliament, and it is unclear as yet what reform arrangements are planned to help WA transition to cost reflective pricing.

In this critical period of electricity market reform, the Council calls on the State Government to fund ECA to provide consumer representation and research. Without it, the community and consumers cannot be assured that their interests will be considered or protected through both the reform process and in the final product.

Recommendation:

- Fund independent energy consumer representation in Western Australia, with a focus on undertaking research, policy and advocacy work that promotes the wellbeing of particularly disadvantaged and vulnerable people.

¹ WACOSS (2014) *Consumer research and representation in Western Australian electricity, gas and water markets*

Appendix 1 – Short Survey for Community Services Sector

Customer focused and outcomes-based service design and delivery

1. What key outcomes should the public and community sectors be trying to achieve?
2. How can results be measured and shared with the community?
3. Where are the best opportunities for collaborative service design and delivery?
4. Are there examples of best-practice service design and delivery we should share and build on?

Contemporary adaptable and high-performing workforce

5. How can the public and community sectors better share knowledge and expertise?
6. How can the public sector performance management and accountability framework be strengthened to give incentives for collaboration?
7. How can we develop and support a sustainable and quality workforce across WA with a focus on regional areas?

Efficient and effective systems and processes

8. What process and system changes could better enable targeted, flexible and innovative services and help us adapt to new economic and social conditions?
9. What are the key barriers to more effective services, and how can we overcome them?
10. How can government contracting and purchasing practices be improved to get better results?
11. How can we use data on service outcomes to drive investment in better services?

Appendix 2 – Submissions to WACOSS from other organisations



Service Priority Review - Disability Services

Executive Summary

The community sector plays a pivotal role in the delivery of quality human services to Western Australians most in need. The disability sector is in the midst of a period of massive change that brings with it considerable challenges but also the prospect of a better future for people with disability and their families. Harnessing the opportunities and resolving the issues will require significant investment, resourcing and commitment to strengthen our community's capacity to assist people with disability.

The information provided by National Disability Services WA (NDS WA) identifies reform priorities that can assist deliver better outcomes for people with disability. Importantly these align with the McGowan Government's Supporting Communities and Plan for Jobs election commitment policies. The prime consideration is to deliver quality social and economic outcomes for Western Australians in the key service areas of health, disability, justice, education and transport.

Our Focus

The focus of NDS WA is to advance the social and economic inclusion of people with disability and build a strong and dynamic disability support market thus enabling the successful implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

AS the NDIS in WA is implemented, a key consideration must be are the right services in the right place and time for the right price, delivered in a manner consistent with the best available evidence and consistent with the preferences of people with disability. Right services are those that are: evidenced based, have a positive effect in relation to quality of life and personal goals, and delivered in a manner consistent with the expressed preferences of people with disability. We note the tension between 'choice and control' and 'what works, for whom, under what circumstances, at what cost' and the important market stewardship role of the State Government particularly in relation to mitigating against market failure in thin regional and remote communities.

The State Government must continue to invest in improving the lives of people with disability in WA across its portfolio areas in addition to its investment in the NDIS to fulfil its obligations

to implement the National Disability Strategy. The NDIS only provides funding supports for individuals. The State Government has a vital role to continue to improve the social and economic inclusion of people with disability in our community.

To achieve these priorities, the State Government must play an important leadership role in driving cultural and systemic change to deliver innovative, higher quality and more cost effective services to Western Australian individuals and communities.

NDS WA believes that the Service Priority Review presents an opportunity to consider the following on how to best shape the delivery of higher quality and more efficient services to people with disability in Western Australia.

Service Priority Reforms

1. As a first priority, develop a framework to measure outcomes and to influence funding allocations.
2. Develop a strong evidence base to support the delivery of better human services outcomes in Western Australia including investing in the development of a critical data mass (and data linkage policy) to inform decision making and drive efficient investment decisions. The development of a strategic data asset creates a line of sight between organisational and market outcomes and quality of life outcomes for people with disability and as such connects the interests of consumers to the sustainability of the supply side, and to government policy settings.
3. Collaborate and partner with the WA disability sector in the co-design and implementation of quality services including embedding a high-level mechanism to oversee reform in the sector and aligned sectors.
4. Focus on developing service integration across key related portfolio areas of health, disability, justice, housing, education, training and employment.
5. Invest in collaborative service models which must demonstrate service integration including the piloting of models in targeted priority areas.
6. Explore opportunities for co-location of human services and government facilities.
7. Invest in a workforce development strategy to meet projected need, particularly in relation to the delivery of the NDIS in WA.
8. Invest in building a strong disability sector that provides increasing and diverse choice for people with disability across WA, including regional and remote, and in particular through the WA Disability Services Industry Plan that will provide a clear pathway outlining where the sector is now and how it can best make the transition to where it must be at full NDIS roll out.
9. Invest in partnership with the Commonwealth to implement the agreed national NDIS Quality and Safeguarding Framework and supporting ICT system infrastructure.

Introduction

The WA disability sector has grown significantly over past decade in line with the growth in funding directed to the sector. Its economic contribution will become even more important as the State transitions to the NDIS resulting in significant increases in its contribution to Gross State Product (GSP) and jobs growth.

Under the current disability funding arrangements, there was a total of \$908 million worth of expenditure for the provision of disability related supports and services in 2015-16, which included community-focused support (\$336 million), accommodation services (\$336 million), coordination and individual support (\$147 million), and family support (\$89 million).

In 2015-16, the total funding provided to the sector is estimated to have generated \$1.4 billion in activity across the WA economy, \$941 million in incomes and 10,507 direct and indirect jobs (in full-time equivalent employee terms).

Under the future funding arrangements where the NDIS is fully implemented, total funding in WA for the provision of disability supports and services is expected to increase by 92 per cent to \$1.7 billion. Of this total, coordination and individual support is forecast to increase by 95 per cent to \$286 million; community-focused support is forecast to increase by 93 per cent to \$648 million; family support is forecast to increase by 91 per cent to \$170 million; and accommodation support is forecast to increase by 90 per cent to \$638 million.

Importantly the Service Priority Review should note that our research through the WA Disability Services Industry Plan modelling has identified the level of funding estimated under the NDIS in 2019-20 is projected to generate:

- **\$2.7 billion in activity across the WA economy;**
- **\$1.8 billion in incomes; and**
- **20,144 direct and indirect jobs (in full-time equivalent employee terms).**

This is a significant opportunity for WA both in terms of economic growth and job creation – adding \$2.7 billion in GSP and 20,000 jobs. These are quite profound numbers taken in the current context of the subdued State economy and high unemployment numbers, particularly for youth.

It strongly aligns with the McGowan Government's strong commitment to jobs growth and to grow and diversify the State's economy. WA simply cannot just rely on the mining's sector into the future to generate economic activity and jobs. NDS WA highlights this will assist the State Government to meet its commitment to build a strong, diverse, efficient and resilient economy that can ride out the ebbs and flows of the mining sector cycle.

Working in partnership with the State Government, we have an opportunity to build strong communities and help to grow and diversify the State economy – something that is desperately needed. A high quality workforce that strengthens the safeguards and provides greater choice for people with disability is a vital part of building vibrant services in local communities across all parts of the State.

1. Customer-focused and outcomes based service design and delivery

Customer-focused and outcomes based service design and delivery is critical to the delivery of the broad outcomes of the National Disability Strategy and the principals that the NDIS is founded which remain compelling. Both will require action by the State Government and innovative thinking to deliver better service outcomes for people with disability in our State. This is also important to the work of the Service Priority Review in its deliberations on how to

best deliver human services to Western Australians in the context of the significant fiscal challenges faced by the State.

Delivering on the National Disability Strategy

The ambitions of the National Disability Strategy complement those of the NDIS. Inclusive transport, technology, justice, housing, health and education systems are imperative for a viable NDIS that has capacity to increase the social and economic participation of people with disability. Implementation of the Strategy will also reduce the cost of crisis services in the hospital, justice and income-support sectors.

Given the anticipated transition to the NDIS in 2017, NDS WA believes it is now even more critical for the State Government to continue to focus on investing in mainstream services and deliver better outcomes for people with disability in WA across the six policy areas of the National Disability Strategy.

The Service Priority Review provides a timely opportunity to embed stronger accountability mechanisms to measure progress with the delivery of outcomes across each outcome area of the National Disability Strategy.

ACTION

Implementing an accountability outcomes based framework

NDS WA has strongly advocated that the National Disability Strategy requires a clear performance and accountability framework to ensure all sectors understand and do their part. Better implementation of the Strategy requires agreement to a common and robust reporting framework

The release of a new 2010–20 National Disability Strategy Second Implementation Plan² and the recent Senate Community Affairs References Committee: National Disability Strategy 2010–2020 inquiry are positive and provide the impetus to re-think how governments report on progress across a range of sectors: from public transport to housing design; from education to employment; from justice to health. However, real progress requires clearly delegated responsibilities and measures of progress, dedicated funding and monitoring (including yearly reporting to parliaments).

A common reporting framework should be established to enable the tracking of key performance indicators (both quantitative and qualitative) over time. This report should be tabled in Parliament annually, reported by jurisdiction.

Examples of possible indicators

- ✓ participation of people with disability in public sector employment
- ✓ proportion of public transport that is accessible
- ✓ setting and monitoring of targets for the implementation of the Disability Education Standards
- ✓ proportion of new housing built to a various levels of accessibility
- ✓ proportion of people with disability satisfied with their hospital stay compared with the general population

² Department of Social Services, 2016, 'National Disability Strategy Second Implementation Plan', DSS, Canberra

- ✓ proportion of people with severe or profound disability reporting poor or fair health outcomes compared with the general population
- ✓ proportion of the prison population with intellectual disability and with cognitive impairment

Principles to deliver the National Disability Strategy

To maximize opportunities to deliver quality services in the six policy outcomes areas of the National Disability Strategy, and more broadly to build bridges with other connected areas of community service delivery, a new approach needs to be considered that ensures funding reaches those in need and that good policy is put into practice. The development and implementation of silo based policy solutions that are not integrated across human services has led to sub optimal outcomes for individuals and communities. The Service Priority Review presents a real opportunity to address this.

ACTION

- ✓ Adopt core service design principles to support all service delivery and to support individual models of care / person centered service delivery
- ✓ Embed these principles to be used to deliver the National Disability Strategy into the State Government's policy development and approval processes.
- ✓ Develop a holistic, whole of government approach to delivering services to people with disability.

Core principles to delivering high quality effective individualised disability services

- ✓ There must be mandatory co-design and engagement with key stakeholders including people with disability and service providers.
 - Co-design of service with communities: to understand what services are need where: creates awareness and buy in in local communities
 - Creation of opportunities for communities to collaborate on similar issues – achieves a local focus, buy in and engagement
- ✓ The high level Community Roundtable mechanism (Community Services Group) established by the McGowan Government should be used to assist with the prioritizations of human service delivery and to identify opportunities for the delivery of integrated services across sectors. Key tasks of focus should include to:
 - Identify service integration opportunities with other services across other sectors and in particular for people with high and complex needs.
 - Ensure targeted investment in innovative service design and delivery.
- ✓ Promoting collaboration and partnership in all aspects of service design and delivery (public and NFP sectors).
- ✓ Investment in pilot trial programs in critical areas demonstrating service integration models.
- ✓ Exploring the development of regional hub service delivery approaches across human services portfolios including health, disability, education, training and justice.
- ✓ Early intervention focus, as a component to all programs.
- ✓ Investment in service innovation across key portfolios in human service delivery e.g. social bonds approach with housing e.g. innovation fund.

- ✓ Investment, in partnership with the Commonwealth to implement the agreed the national NDIS Quality and Safeguarding Framework and supporting ICT system infrastructure.
- ✓ Develop and invest in an e- market to better inform and expand choice for people with disability.

Priorities to ensure full access and inclusion for people with disability in economic, cultural, social, civil and political life through increased participation

The State Government's effort to deliver on the outcomes of the National Disability Strategy must focus on the following core areas of service delivery. There must be careful consideration of how these services can be best delivered to Western Australian with disability, particularly around the integration of services across responsible government agencies and in regional and remote communities.

Priority areas of action include:

- ***Commit to fully accessible education by 2020***
Education; Training; and Community Services (Disability Services Commission)
- ***Strengthen the focus on employment by creating job opportunities***
Premier and Cabinet; Public Sector Commission; Community Services (Disability Services Commission); Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation; Training and Workforce; and Finance
- ***Provide access to suitable, stable and affordable housing***
Community Services (Housing, Disability Services Commission, Local Government and Communities); Treasury; and Premier and Cabinet
- ***Accessible community infrastructure***
Planning, Lands and Heritage; and Transport
- ***Adequate and accessible transport infrastructure***
Transport; and Planning, Lands and Heritage
- ***Inclusive communication and information systems***
Community Services (Disability Services Commission); Premier and Cabinet
- ***Equal access to rights protection and justice***
Community Services (Disability Services Commission); Child Protection and Family Support; Justice; Police; and Western Australian Electoral Commission
- ***Better health and wellbeing outcomes***
Community Services (Disability Services Commission); Health; and Mental Health Commission

Delivering the NDIS in WA

The NDIS will double the funding of disability supports and provide choice and control for people with disability and their families which NDS WA fully supports. This insurance

approach must focus on early intervention as a priority and be supported with adequate investment in appropriate strategies to build the capacity of the sector and build more choice for people with disability.

The NDIS provides people with disability with real autonomy and decision making power to choose the services that best meet their individual circumstances. While the levels of autonomy under individualised funding can vary depending on whether a person with disability self-manages their funds, has a family member or service provider manage it for them, or elects for shared management, there is a greater capacity for people with disability to exercise choice.

Critical to realising the vision of the NDIS in WA is the growth of a dynamic, sustainable and values-driven disability sector. Without this, people with disability and their families will not have the choice and quality of support that the NDIS promises. The risks facing the disability sector are risks to the Scheme as a whole. They are substantial and require urgent mitigating action.

NDS WA proposes practical measures to reduce the avoidable pressure and risk – and so help secure the future of the NDIS.

WA Disability Services Industry Plan

It is vital that the roll out of the NDIS across WA be informed and supported by credible evidence based data which is underpinned by comprehensive engagement with the disability sector and people with disability.

The experience from the implementation of the NDIS across other jurisdictions has flagged high risks for the NDIS market. The 'Independent Review of the Readiness of NDIS for Transition to Full Scheme' (written by Robyn Kruk) highlighted the need for “both immediate and short term actions to strengthen mitigation and responses in relation to potential market failure or provider collapse; and to support provider readiness and market development.”

In anticipation of the full roll out of the NDIS in WA, NDS WA has commissioned ACIL Allen Consulting to develop a WA NDIS: Disability Services Industry Plan to provide a clear framework for the WA disability sector to transition to full NDIS implementation in WA. The underpinning driver of the Industry Plan is the NDIS and the associated impact it has had on people with disability, disability service providers, government, and broader industry stakeholders during the transition to a new operating environment.

The detailed Industry Plan report provides critical information and includes:

- An overview of the NDIS including the experiences of all States and Territories with the roll-out of the NDIS and any transitional strategies implemented;
- A profile of the WA disability sector, an overview of its current strengths, limitations, opportunities and threats, the current and future economic impact and anticipated workforce growth;
- Strategic themes emerging from ACIL Allen’s research and consultation with the sector;
- Strategies, actions and initiatives recommended by ACIL Allen to ensure the sector is well prepared for the full implementation of the NDIS in WA; and
- Recommended next steps to successfully implement the Industry Plan.

To support the NDIS transition, it is critical that the State Government invest in implementing the WA Disability Services Industry Plan. The Industry Plan provides a clear pathway outlining where the sector is now and how it can best make the transition to where it must be at full roll out. It highlights the importance of the WA disability sector working in close partnership with the State Government to improve the life of people with disability in our State. This will assist in building a strong disability sector that provides increasing and diverse choice for people with disability across WA, including regional and remote locations.

ACTION

- ✓ Invest in the WA Disability Services Industry Plan by supporting support the strategies in the Plan to ensure the sector is well prepared for the full implementation of the NDIS in WA.
- ✓ Develop capacity to ensure that market failure risks are monitored, and that market failures are prevented and mitigated as part of its market stewardship role.
- ✓ Develop regional and remote NDIS plans for each of WA’s nine regional development areas to support local communities that are at risk of market failure under the NDIS. This should include: targeted workforce planning at a local level, regional pricing models reflecting the true cost of service provision across the nine regional development areas (such as the additional costs associated with travel and employee compensation), regional start-up support to establish new service providers in regional and remote areas that have service delivery gaps and put in place suitable intervention strategies and responses, including a provider of last resort mechanism.
- ✓ Build the business intelligence of disability sector organisations by improving access to data and information pertaining to the NDIS, people with disability and the broader disability services market. This should include good consumer and market information that is readily accessible.
- ✓ Ensure the successful implementation of the NDIS in WA is based on a policy of co design. Key considerations to successfully implement the Plan include:
 - Developing shared understanding of the Plan through a strategic workshop of industry leaders, government, and representatives of people with disability in order to ensure there is and a facilitated discussion to develop and agree the key elements of the implementation strategy.
 - the establishment of a governing council to oversee and guide the implementation of each strategy and the corresponding initiatives.
 - The establishment of outcomes and KPIs to understand what success will look like in implementing the Industry Plan.

- The establishment of defined actions and accountabilities for each initiative to create a link between the initiatives identified in the Plan and the outcomes identified by the governing council.
- The communication of the Industry Plan and the progress of its implementation to ensure buy-in across the sector, with government, and in particular with people with disability.
- The establishment of an annual review process where the implementation of the Plan is measured against the established KPIs, and the strategies in the Plan are reviewed to assess their appropriateness.

2. Contemporary, adaptable and high-performing workforce

The success of the NDIS in WA is ultimately dependent on organisations in the sector having a workforce that is able to adapt and implement the changes required.

Recruiting and retaining a sufficient and skilled workforce in regional and remote areas is a challenge and the NDS WA Industry Plan has identified there are a range of factors that work against trying to attract workers to their sector in regional settings, including:

- the higher wage costs or supports that organisations must generally pay or provide to attract workers;
- the lack of training in rural settings, with a perception from potential employees of limited professional development opportunities;
- the lack of infrastructure (such as communications) in regional and remote towns, which makes moving to these areas a less attractive option for potential employees; and
- the perception of isolation that potential employees may associate with working in a rural setting.

The Industry Plan also reinforces that the capacity and capability of the WA disability services sector must be built and enhanced during the transition to full Scheme NDIS, including the workforce and regional services provision.

In particular, new roles and skills will be required within the sector and the types of skills that were seen as most important in the future included:

- emotional intelligence, caring and social communication, which are especially required by frontline support workers;
- customer engagement and management, which is required to better understand and respond to the needs and wants of people with disability;
- commercial acumen, which is required to operate in a more competitive and financially aware operating environment;
- marketing, which is required to better engage people with disability;
- data literacy, which is required to better utilise individualised organisational data; and
- technological literacy, which will be required given technological advancements and the higher utilisation of technology in service delivery.

NDIS Workforce and Jobs Growth in WA

Western Australia

The WA Disability Services Industry Plan modelling has identified the level of funding estimated under the NDIS in 2019-20 is projected to generate:

- \$2.7 billion in activity across the WA economy and
- 20,144 direct and indirect jobs (in full-time equivalent employee terms).

Regional WA

By regional area, total future funding and jobs growth is forecast to increase by:

South West

78 per cent growth to \$139 million generating approximately 1400 jobs;

Peel

152 per cent growth to \$104 million generating approximately 900 jobs;

Wheatbelt

355 per cent growth to \$90 million generating approximately 800 jobs;

Mid-West

318 per cent growth to \$60 million generating approximately 600 jobs;

Great Southern

145 per cent growth to \$59 million generating approximately 580 jobs;

Goldfields-Esperance

221 per cent growth to \$41 million generating approximately 390 jobs;

Kimberley

224 per cent growth to \$26 million generating approximately 230 jobs;

Pilbara

194 per cent growth to \$21 million generating approximately 180 jobs; and

Gascoyne

444 per cent growth to \$8 million generating approximately 80 jobs.

The Industry Plan articulates the need for consideration of preemptive investment strategies to build the workforce capacity of the disability sector. It is critical that these focus on building, attracting and retaining a skilled workforce to minimize skill shortages and maximise the State's ability to respond to new NDIS opportunities.

For example, of critical importance is the role of the Department of Training and Workforce Development which can play a vital training role in this area, to work with the disability sector and Government to build a NDIS workforce that is productive, inclusive, efficient and mobile.

ACTION

- ✓ The State Government consider the WA Disability Services Industry Plan including the implications for service delivery and the market and the anticipated significant growth it will generate in economic activity and jobs in WA.
- ✓ Develop and implement a State workforce plan for the disability services sector to address capacity and capability requirements.
- ✓ Use the work and recommendations from the Industry Plan to invest in developing the quantum, type and quality of disability sector workforce needed for the future and for NDIS implementation.

The following priorities should be incorporated into a State disability sector workforce plan:

1. Understanding workforce needs: An evaluation of the sector's workforce needs should be undertaken, which will be used as the primary evidence base for future workforce initiatives and policy.
2. Organisational self-assessment: Each organisation within the sector should evaluate their own workforce with tools such as NDS' Workforce Wizard, with a focus placed on the roles, skills, proficiencies and overall quality of their current workforce; and any difficulties their current workforce is experiencing during the transition to the NDIS and in adopting the principles of the NDIS.
3. Education and training: A review of the education and training currently provided to workers in the sector should be undertaken to determine whether it is appropriate, effective and efficient in the context of meeting the future workforce needs under the NDIS.
4. Targeted planning at a local level: Workforce plans should be developed and implemented for each of WA's nine regional development areas to:
 - a. identify local priorities, challenges and opportunities;
 - b. identify and implement local workforce initiatives that are targeted to the particular circumstances of each region;
 - c. strengthen local networks by ensuring that LACs have a strong level of engagement across the local community, including an understanding of the full range of supports available in each region (for example, community, informal, mainstream and specialist supports); and
 - d. be integrated into the existing strategic plans and Regional Investment Blueprints in each of the nine regional development areas.
5. Amending the Industrial Award: The WA disability services sector, relevant union bodies, NDS WA and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry (WA) (both with their national bodies), should discuss and agree on necessary amendments to the current Industrial Award, the Social, Community, Home Care and Disability Services Industry Award. In particular, amendments that would allow for more flexible work arrangements to better align with the person-centred principles of the NDIS.
6. Promoting the sector: A marketing campaign should be developed and implemented to promote career and professional development opportunities in the WA disability sector. This campaign should be targeted towards:
 - a. university students in specialised fields like allied health (such as speech therapists, occupational therapists, psychologists, physiotherapists), and business and commerce (such as accounting, management, marketing, human resources, information technology, data analytics);
 - b. vocational education and training students in fields such as dietetics and nutrition, information technology, direct support and customer service;
 - c. displaced workers from other sectors of the WA economy;
 - d. workers from other sectors of the WA economy seeking a career change or returning from a career break; and
 - e. overseas workers looking for career opportunities in Australia.
7. Regularly review: A State workforce plan, which is the basis of the above workforce initiatives, should be reviewed annually, with progress measured

against key workforce indicators. This will ensure that emerging risks are addressed, and the long-term requirements of WA's disability sector workforce are met.

Other actions

- ✓ Develop in partnership with the disability sector a targeted investment policy in VET and tertiary education in accordance with the above and specifically mapping and gapping of current and future skillset needs.
- ✓ Increase connectivity between education and workforce training through a range of measures: such as more frequent forecast modelling of workforces required by regional areas (e.g. 12 monthly forecasting) of workforce required per regional area), provide grant incentives for young people to be mentored whilst developing skills (life and education) within employment growth areas; increasing the combination of online units and workplace experience from Year 11 onwards; continue to expand the community hours to be completed by students and marry these with the growth employment areas
- ✓ Invest in technology to support regional and remote workforce development and build capacity and mobilise workforce including across human service sectors.
- ✓ Support incentives to attract regional workers: mining and resource companies have resource capacity to do this (e.g. subsidised housing, vehicles and living cost allowances). The NFP community sector does not have this capacity with the existing pricing frameworks.
- ✓ Explore industrial award reforms to improve the sustainability of services. The current award conditions impact on the ability of organisations to provide sustainable services. The government imposed pricing framework is not sufficient to cover the additional costs of delivering services in the regions including capacity to recruit qualified staff.
- ✓ A greater focus on developing whole of region/ community capability, not the skills in individual organisations.
- ✓ Investment in promoting career pathways in the disability sector, particularly in regional areas. This is in recognition of the disability industry as a growing employment industry offering a good employment and work.

3. More efficient and effective systems and processes

The Service Priority Review panel will also need to consider what impact the implementation of the NDIS in Western Australia will have on disability services provided by the State Government outside of the Scheme - specifically those allocated to oversee the administration and the operation of the existing service system.

The recent Machinery of Government changes announced by the McGowan Government will result in the merging of a number of government agencies (including the Disability Services Commission (DSC) into a larger Department of Communities. NDS WA acknowledges the benefit of co-location of the DSC with 'like' human service agencies,

particularly with the design and delivery of more efficient and integrated holistic services across marginalized and disadvantaged communities.

We also highlight that a well-resourced and highly skilled agency will be required to deliver the more effective implementation of the National Disability Strategy as well oversee the transition to the NDIS in WA. It is important that the critical functions of the DSC are reviewed and enhanced to make this possible.

ACTION

Key systemic reform priorities

- ✓ As part of the new Department of Communities, ensure that a well-resourced and highly skilled body oversees and delivers more effective implementation of the National Disability Strategy as well as the transition to the NDIS.
- ✓ Implement an accountability outcomes based framework with reportable performance indicators around service delivery quality and efficiency. KPIs should include social and economic participation rates.
- ✓ Build the research and evidence base to support the National Disability Strategy and implementation of the NDIS in WA.
- ✓ Investment in data aggregation and pooling (across government and the NFP sector) to inform the evidence base providing consistent measuring, tracking and benchmarking by market segments over time within the context of the development of a long term data strategy.
- ✓ Consider the important market stewardship role of the State Government to avoid market failure in the delivery of disability services in regional and remote communities and to ensure provision of last resort services. For regional and remote centres (such as north-west) there is a need to consider choice and control in the context of the small market for services and often a single provider (or no provider) servicing these small or remote communities. This requires consideration of pragmatic allocation models – for example, a single provider providing services to a collection of remote communities to enable economies of scale and allow providers sufficient billable hours to attract staff to the position.
- ✓ Embed the principle of co-design and adequate testing for all system design.
- ✓ Identify opportunities for the co-location of human services particularly in regional and remote parts of the State and in particular using government facilities more efficiently.
- ✓ Streamlining procurement processes and reduce red tape and duplication. A priority is to streamline service provider reporting requirements to reduce administration demands on the NFP. Although this was meant to have occurred with the implementation of the DCSP policy, but has increased for the disability sector, often with the same information being in require different formats to different offices within the same Government Agency.
- ✓ Adequate investment in ITC infrastructure including online portals between government and NFP organisations.

Contact: Julie Waylen

NDS WA State Manager

Western Australia

Ph: 08 9208 9805

Mob: 0419 938 307

Email: julie.waylen@nds.org.au

Web: www.nds.org.au

National Disability Services (NDS) WA is the peak industry association representing community disability service providers in WA working to improve life opportunities for people with disability. We are part of a national association, National Disability Services, the peak industry body for non-government disability services. Our purpose is to promote and advance the delivery of quality services for people with disability.

NDS WA represents the vast majority of the disability sector, with over 100 organisational members drawn from not-for-profit disability services in metropolitan, rural and remote regions. NDS nationally represents over 1,100 non-government organisations, which support people with all forms of disability. Collectively, NDS WA members provide services to thousands of West Australians with a disability, their families and carers. They provide the full range of disability services from home support, respite and therapy to community access and employment. NDS WA provides information and networking opportunities to its members and policy advice to the State Government. Our members are located across WA and range from small support groups to large multi-service organisations.

The purpose of NDS WA is twofold:

- To increase the capacity of disability service providers to operate efficient and effective services, through the provision of information and advice, networking opportunities and access to training and development support; and
- To influence and support the WA Government to provide a policy environment that is responsive to the needs of people with disability and their service providers.

Our role includes policy development and advocacy on behalf of people with disability, support of disability services and the provision of a range of access and inclusion services through ACROD Parking, Companion Card, Community Living and Participation Grants and support for the Changing Places Network.



Western Australian Network of
Alcohol & other Drug Agencies

WANADA Input into Service Priority Review Submission

What key outcomes should the public and community sectors be trying to achieve?

WANADA considers that public and community sectors should include the capture and reporting of individual, organisation and systems outcomes.

From the perspective of the alcohol and other drug sector, individuals present with complex and co-occurring health and wellbeing issues. Individual outcomes need to determine that individual needs have been met.

Organisation outcomes are required to inform and demonstrate evidence-based informed practice.

Systems outcomes should include process-oriented outcomes to capture and measure things such as collaborations and partnerships that deliver long term, sustainable health and wellbeing improvements for the Western Australian public. These outcomes must be clearly linked to regularly reported KPI data that include target reductions (e.g. hospitalisation and imprisonment rates).

How can results be measured and shared with the community?

WANADA submits that systems outcomes be shared with the community. These outcomes can be directly connected to departmental KPI's (for example, reduced prison numbers and children in care).

To grow confidence in public sector service delivery, the community need to be informed of:

- Current KPI measures
- Intended timeframe KPI targets that both reflect community expectations and are supported by evidence-based rationale (to manage community expectations)
- Evidence-informed strategies to achieve the desired targets
- How strategies are monitored to ensure transparency and informs sector planning and regulation

Any measurements need to address the following:

- Confidentiality and privacy concerns, particularly where data and reporting can contribute to stigma and discrimination
- Existing data and outcomes measurement and infrastructure limitations
- Resource and administrative burden on reporting entities
- Data integrity
- Co-design requirements involving community sector services, to ensure all parties' data needs are addressed (e.g. accessibility and publication)

- Clear policies and procedures governing data ownership, informed consent, and the appropriate use of data

Where are the best opportunities for collaborative service design and delivery?

While individuals typically present to services with complex and co-occurring issues, collaborative service design and delivery needs to add value to improving individual outcomes.

As such there needs to be:

- Recognition and support for the maintenance of specialist services
- Recognition, support and resourcing for partnerships and collaborations between specialist services and across sectors.

As an example, there is a need for capacity building across human services to provide enhanced brief and early intervention, and shared- and through-care referral to specialist services for people presenting with alcohol and other drug issues. Capacity building of this nature will enhance service confidence in addressing complex and co-occurring issues as well as confidence in the system of specialist services. WANADA strongly cautions collaborative approaches that focus upon the generalisation of service delivery, at the expense of specialist, accredited services designed to address specific health and social issues.

Are there examples of best practice service design and delivery we should share and build on?

In recognition of the impact of alcohol and other drug issues across government agencies, there is a Drug and Alcohol Interagency Strategic Framework for Western Australia. The Framework has the potential to inform and support best practice service design and delivery within the public sector through coordination of relevant agency strategies to achieve shared objectives (KPIs) and outcomes. While the structure is promising, there is a way to go before the Framework could be identified as an example of best practice. The inclusion of aspirational and achievable systemic targets, coordination of focussed and purposeful strategies, and measurement monitoring (as above) would enhance the current model.

What new or innovative methods could the public sector use to make sure the community has access to the government services it needs?

As per the Western Australian Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drug Services Plan 2015-2025, alcohol and other drug treatment and support services need to effectively more than double to meet modelled projections of community demand. The Plan establishes a common understanding between the community, community services and government for the need for additional services. The Plan was informed by considerable sector consultation, and is funder and evidenced-based service provider neutral.

The cost of providing these additional services is challenging noting the current state and federal fiscal and economic environment. However, having a plan establishes an intended end-state that all stakeholders and potential funders can work towards achieving.

How can the public and community sectors better share knowledge and expertise

Sector peak bodies are uniquely placed to provide systemic advocacy, information sharing, networking and policy input into the public sector.

It is important that peak body organisations are recognised as uniquely placed to deliver systemic advocacy, consultation and policy input. This must be complemented by improved government co-design processes and partnership collaborations to ensure that peak bodies are meaningfully involved in policy and program development.

Independent consumer systems advocacy bodies also have an important role in informing the design and delivery of services, and experience-informed policies. At present, there is no systemic advocacy representative body for alcohol and other drug service users. The establishment of such an organisation would result in more tailored solutions that deliver improved service access, improved health and wellbeing outcomes, and cost savings through effective and targeted service delivery.

How can we develop and support a sustainable and quality workforce across WA with a focus on regional areas

Workforce development and planning are important for the development and support of a sustainable and quality workforce across WA. WANADA was recently commissioned to undertake research to determine the workforce development and planning needs for the alcohol and other drug sector. While specific to the alcohol and other drug sector, WANADA would be happy to share the recommendations of the report developed with the Service Priority Review Panel.

What process and system changes could better enable targeted, flexible and innovative services and help us adapt to new economic and social conditions

Aside from all that has been stated above, WANADA strongly believes services need to be resourced to contribute to the evidence-base for their practice, through for example: pilots; research linkages; service monitoring; and evaluation.

What are the key barriers to more effective services, and how can we overcome them

WANADA considers there to be a number of barriers to more effective services. These barriers include:

- administration and contractual reporting imposes on agency resources
- contract lengths that inhibit long term planning, outcome measures and staff retention pressures
- inadequate application of CPI in contract arrangements to support service capacity and sustainability (e.g. Equal Remuneration Order)
- competitive tendering and that undermines service diversity and essential inter-service collaboration
- Increased pressure to generalise service provision for market-driven sustainability
- limited funding to support improved data and outcomes collections, analysis and reporting
- limited linkages between government, services and research bodies, which impact the development of evidence-based practices, and effective service planning
- insufficient support for systemic advocacy and cross sector capacity building
- inappropriate contract micro-management where the delineation between commissioning expertise and service delivery expertise is not valued

How can government contracting and purchasing practices be improved to get better results

WANADA submits that the limitations of the current contracting and purchasing arrangements are well known, and largely common across the entire human services sector.

There is a clear need for government to work with service providers to assess the outcomes and limitations of the current system, which has increased competition and uncertainty, negatively impacted on the formation of practice sharing and collaboration, and resulted in a significant administrative burden for service providers.

How can we use data on service outcomes to drive investment in better services?

WANADA considers data and outcomes to be central to improving service delivery. WANADA is of the position that any data system must be subject to thorough co-design process, to ensure that it meets the needs of both government procurement and non-government service organisations.

WANADA also considers an effective data and outcomes system as necessary to drive the attraction and retention of alternative funding arrangements. A robust data system would enable services to quantify the impact and outcomes of its services, and present a defined value proposition to potential funding bodies.

What new technologies could be used to achieve better service outcomes?

WANADA submits that rather than new or emerging technologies, there are existing technologies and practices that could be better utilised to realise improved service outcomes.

Improved data and outcomes system would deliver several opportunities to improve service design and delivery, agency performance, policy, planning and program development, and community confidence.

Commensurate with an improved data and outcomes system, there are opportunities to streamline and minimise service agencies administrative load for contractual requirements.

How could the public sector be better organised to operate more efficiently?

WANADA supports cross-sectoral solutions to complex health and social issues, to achieve improved outcomes for the community. WANADA strongly considers that cross-sectoral solutions are not dependent upon government agency amalgamations. In 2015 the Mental Health Commission and the Drug and Alcohol Office amalgamated. While the amalgamation has presented opportunities for collaboration, substantial time was required to design and implement the amalgamation equitably. This introduced a period of uncertainty and complexity into the alcohol and other drug services sector.

Where co-occurring issues across multiple sectors is the norm, the choice of amalgamating government agencies is complex and depended upon multiple factors. Experience from other jurisdictions indicate mixed results in amalgamating government alcohol and other drug with mental health portfolios. More recently in New South Wales, for example, these agencies have de-amalgamated, with alcohol and other drugs being seen as more appropriately aligned with population health.

WANADA welcomes the “*intent*” of the recently announced departmental amalgamations. The efficacy of such arrangements, however, depends upon how a department’s structure, processes and culture are redefined. There is a risk of losing knowledge, skills and expertise. Further, amalgamations must not introduce a focus upon generalised and integrated cross-sector services, rather there should remain a commitment to specialist service provision.



Shelter WA.

Submission to the Service Priority Review

About Shelter WA

Our vision

Accessible, affordable, appropriate and secure housing and working towards the elimination of homelessness in Western Australia.

Shelter WA was founded in 1979 as an independent, community based peak body committed to accessible, affordable and secure housing for Western Australians, and to working towards the elimination of homelessness in WA. Shelter WA believes housing is a basic human right. Safe, secure and affordable housing is a fundamental determinant of health and a key requirement for people to engage in work, maintain healthy relationships and fully contribute to society. Shelter WA advocates for policy settings and responses that facilitate appropriate affordable housing options for low to moderate income earners, for those who are otherwise disadvantaged in the housing market or experiencing homelessness. This is done by strong collaboration with the not-for-profit housing and social services sector, government, industry bodies, business, the community and research institutions.

Shelter WA is a member of the National Shelter Council and a member of the Council to Homeless Persons Australia and has a seat on the Board of Homelessness Australia. This national membership strengthens Shelter WA's capacity to represent Western Australia's interests through participation in research, policy advocacy and engagement in national debate.

Shelter WA is predominantly funded by the Western Australian Housing Authority and is appreciative of this support.

How we can assist

Shelter WA is in the position to act as a conduit for consultation with the non-government sector in relation to affordable and social housing and homelessness issues.

Contact

For further information regarding this submission please contact Michelle Mackenzie, Manager Policy on 9325 6660 or email strategy@shelterwa.org.au.

Definitions used in this submission

Social housing includes public housing properties managed by the State Government and community housing properties either owned by the Community Housing Provider, or, by the State and managed by a Provider. 'Housing stress' refers to housing that costs more than 30% of a household's income, specifically for households in the lowest 40% of income distribution. This is known as the 30/40 rule. 'Affordable housing' refers to housing which is affordable for low income households and for which they are paying less than 30% of their income.

Social and Affordable Housing, Tenancy Support and Homelessness

Introduction

Shelter WA submits that:

- housing has the potential and capacity to be a key driver to major cross portfolio reform and potential savings for the Western Australian government;
- the housing portfolio and WA government 'land bank' is a multi-billion-dollar asset that could be better optimised in the whole of government approach to housing and human services;
- the housing system is ready for major reform;
- there is an opportunity to facilitate private and institutional investment into affordable and social housing;
- there is an opportunity for significant savings to government through co-ordination and investment by agencies in implementing up-front solutions, rather than focusing on managing problems; and
- this will require strong leadership to implement reforms across some major systems of government.

Research shows the opportunity for government to maximise investment in social housing and homelessness services driven by:

- An approach that focuses on maintaining and sustaining tenancies, focusing on the individual needs of the person or family first;
- Aligned departmental policies and KPIs to provide housing and end homelessness;
- Planning reform to support affordable and social housing growth;
- Government working in partnership with the development industry;
- Inter-departmental cooperation and alignment of policies and KPIs to end homelessness; and
- Harnessing the expertise of the NGO sector through outsourcing and partnerships.

The benefits of secure, safe and affordable housing chosen by the individual and augmented with suitable health and community supports as required are well documented. They include:

- Improved health status, maintenance of symptom stability and overall functioning reducing demand for treatment and care;
- Improved sense of belonging and self-worth;
- Improved social and economic participation;
- Reduced reliance on welfare support and reduced impact on homelessness services; and
- Cost savings in the areas of crisis, police and ambulance call outs, emergency departments and hospital admission.

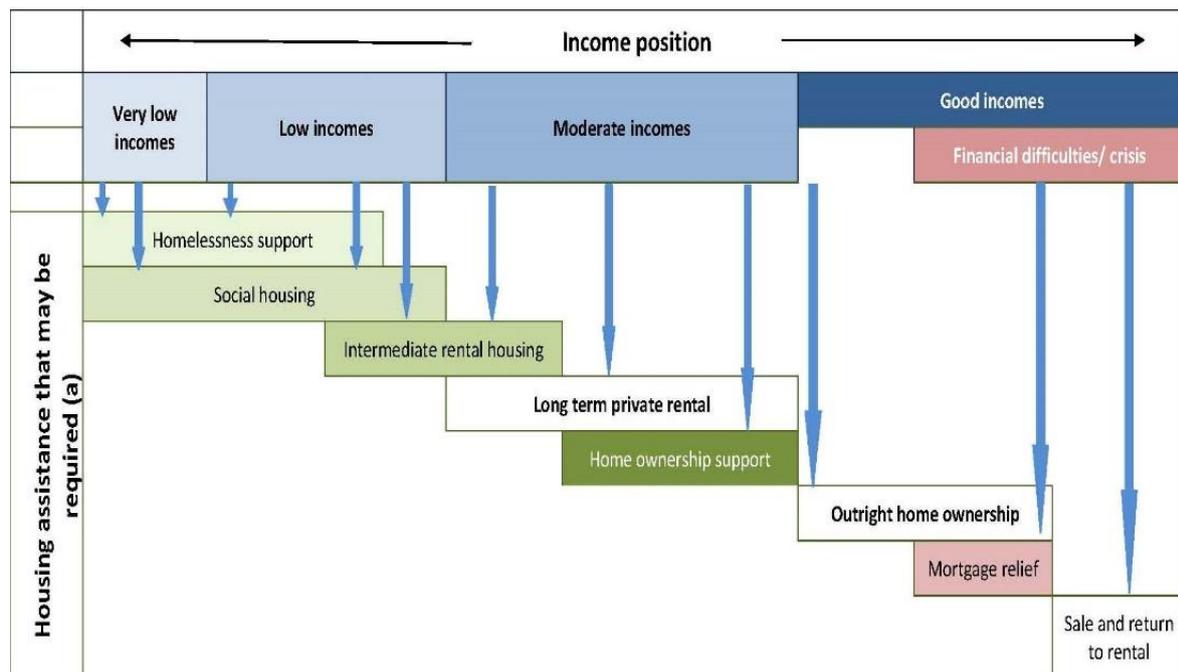
Shelter WA's Response to the Terms of Reference have a specific focus on the following points:

- Point 2. Promoting a culture of collaboration in the achievement of outcomes for the community;
- Point 3. Promoting public service innovation that delivers transformative public policy and service delivery that is different, better and lower cost;
- Point 5. Identifying opportunities to deliver Government services, programs, projects and other initiatives more efficiently or effectively, including through a whole-of-government digital strategy, or to no longer be delivered; and
- Point 6. Developing and implementing whole of sector key performance indicators to ensure more effective delivery of services to the community and support for economic activity and job creation.

The Shelter WA Housing Hub contains examples of best practice partnerships between government, the private and non-government sector to deliver co-ordinated, cost effective affordable and social housing solutions. These are located at <http://wahousinghub.org.au/display/RES/Research+Home>.

Conceptual framework: Housing assistance matched to people’s need

The housing continuum refers to a range of accommodation and housing options which matches housing assistance to people’s needs. This ranges from emergency shelters and supportive housing for vulnerable populations, through to transitional and social housing, private rental housing and home ownership. Matching assistance to people’s housing needs is important to support stable tenancies and ensure everybody has an affordable place to call home.



a) This diagram is intended to show the types of housing assistance that may be required by people depending on their income. Not all people on each income level will require support.

The opportunity cost to the individual, society and government of housing and homelessness

Housing insecurity remains an issue for many Western Australians. With 18,530 people on the public housing wait list, only 3% of private rentals affordable to people on low incomes, and 9,600 people experiencing homelessness every night, housing affordability and homelessness remain a key public policy issue for two key reasons: the effects that housing unaffordability has on the economy, society and individuals; and the failure of the market to correct these issues in a timely and efficient manner.

Inefficient housing markets have widespread and lasting impact on economic productivity and the broader community. Access to appropriate, affordable housing is fundamental to economic growth and productivity and is a critical foundation for individual and community prosperity and wellbeing. Adequate housing is a fundamental determinant of health. Without shelter it becomes impossible for individuals and families to overcome broader social disadvantage by engaging in appropriate services. Investment in social and affordable housing leads to increased productivity, unlocks opportunity, and establishes a platform for efficient government service delivery. Whilst housing provides shelter, it influences a raft of non-shelter

outcomes for individual households, such as workforce participation, access to jobs and services, family stability and educational attainment. The costs of poor housing choices are not just borne by the individual, but by societyⁱ. AHURI research indicates that access to housing can affect health and education, and therefore labour market productivityⁱⁱ.

Research points to preventable generational homelessness in that children who first experience homelessness at a young age are significantly more likely to experience persistent homelessness in adulthoodⁱⁱⁱ. Early intervention can prevent the cost of an ongoing cycle of homelessness. This is true of other vulnerable groups for whom investment in housing and service supports makes economic and social sense. For example, research indicates that access to appropriate, stable and affordable accommodation with appropriate levels of support geared to individual needs is of critical importance to assist people with mental illness to maintain successful housing outcomes^{iv}.

Adequate and crisis and transitional accommodation for young people, adults and families and domestic violence accommodation is critical.

Planning reform: Whole of government approach to facilitate affordable housing

Proposed changes to the Strata Titles Act (1985) to facilitate a wider range of tenure options are positive, and should support the development of more diverse and affordable housing stock. Priority needs to be given to planning reform which optimises land allocation for social and affordable housing through the implementation of inclusionary zoning for all significant developments.

Initiatives should include but not be confined to:

- Ensure that State and local government planning policies, frameworks and strategies support appropriate and sufficient social and affordable housing in all regions;
- All government land and housing developments that meet relevant criteria, include a minimum of 15% affordable housing targeted at low-to-moderate income households;
- Inclusionary zoning to apply to all significant scale private developments. The level of social and affordable housing to be provided through this mechanism must only be set after a thorough market feasibility is conducted;
- Undertake a comprehensive audit of State and local government land assets with the view to unlocking under-utilised land for social and affordable housing, potentially on peppercorn rents and long-term leases; and
- Embed innovative housing design practices, products and building materials based on suitability and energy efficient principles to reduce ongoing housing operational costs.

No expenditure is required to put this measure in place; however, there may be a minimal impact on the budget in terms of foregone revenue due to caveats on the sale of State assets to include the requirement for 15% affordable housing over extended time periods. The benefits to the State far outweigh the minimal loss in returns from asset sales, by increasing the amount of affordable housing.

In addition, the State should continue the availability of targeted affordable home ownership products such as shared equity, home loan products and mortgage relief to assist with affordable home ownership. Also, continue initiatives such as rental brokerage to assist people in social housing transition to the private rental market. The transitional housing program is a positive example of this.

In Western Australia, most fixed-term agreements are for six or 12 months, although they can be for anytime. Further consideration could be given to longer (ie five and 10-year) rental lease options to provide for greater stability and security of renters. For example, In Britain, a “build to rent” concept has

emerged, where buildings constructed solely for rental accommodation are owned by a single institution. The British government established a private rented sector taskforce overseeing a £1 billion (\$1.7bn) build to rent fund, which allowed for what was essentially a bridging loan repayable after the homes were built and rented out.

Government, non-government and industry coordination of Housing and Homelessness Data

The Housing Industry Forecasting Group is a positive example of a joint industry and government body providing independent commentary on the housing sector in WA with collaboration between the Department of Planning and Housing.

A sound evidence base is needed for housing and homelessness policy. The service priority review should consider what data needs to be captured by agencies to inform a stronger evidence base, and develop strong data linkages between State Government agencies, the non-government sector and industry to inform policy and program development.

Focussing on solutions not problems – maximising government investment

Strategic whole of government response to Homelessness

Research indicates that millions of government dollars would be saved annually in health and mental health services, police, justice and prison services by providing social housing and supporting people to maintain and sustain tenancies. Policy settings that deliver affordable housing and government investment in well-designed social housing, with appropriate wrap around services, significantly reduces the costs to government of health and justice services, as well as community support services^v. AHURI research on the costs incurred by government in health and justice services shows that these are substantially greater than the costs of providing housing and support programs for people experiencing homelessness^{vi}. A comprehensive Homelessness Strategy which enables the development of integrated, seamless service models that improve long-term outcomes for people experiencing homelessness and ensures service providers have contract periods that support service and workforce sustainability will address this.

Mental Health and Criminal Justice

- The cost of accommodating people with a mental illness in Graylands is approximately \$265,000 per annum (or 3 people per million dollars). It is understood a Mental Health Commission (MHC) paper identified the cost for 112 inpatients over 4 years is approximately \$120 million.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with mental and cognitive disabilities are significantly over-represented in Australian criminal justice systems^{vii}.
- Lifecourse institutional costs of homelessness for vulnerable groups are massive. A 2012 Study from a cohort of 2,731 people who have been in prison in NSW and whose MHDCD diagnoses are known. The Lifecourse institutional costs for 11 case studies, aged between 23 and 55, range from around \$900,000 to \$5.5 million each.^{viii}

Savings to Prisons:

\$60,400 saving per person per year through social housing and support services:

- *\$128,400 per year to house a person in prison compared to;*
 - *\$65,000 per year to provide social housing and support services.*
-

- There are significant savings to be made by a carefully developing housing and accommodation strategy that is linked to the implementation of the Better Choices. Better Lives. Western Australian Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drug Services Plan 2015–2025.^{ix}

Maximise government investment in social housing

Growth of the Community Housing Sector

In 2015/16, there were 18,530 applicants on the public housing wait list, including 2,283 with a priority need, and an average wait-turn allocation time of 153 weeks^x. The extent of demand is likely to exceed these published figures as Western Australia maintains the lowest income eligibility of any jurisdiction^{xi}.

In Western Australia, 80 per cent of social and public housing is owned and managed by the Housing Authority; with 20 per cent owned or managed by approximately 200 Community Housing Providers (CHPs)^{xii}.

The Productivity Commission's *Report on Government Services 2014*, identified that Western Australia has the highest cost per public housing dwelling of all the mainland States^{xiii}. Despite ongoing State Government investment, supply does not meet demand.

Stock transfer of social housing to community housing providers, whether titled or management only, with leveraging commitments, has been identified as a key State Government lever to stimulate investment in social and affordable housing^{xiv}. AHURI research indicates that asset or title transfers will maximise the scope for community housing innovation and entrepreneurialism^{xv}.

Research indicates that growth of the community housing sector will facilitate greater economies of scale, enabling providers to attract private finance, and deliver efficiencies in stock provision, management and tenant support. Also, evidence indicates there are better outcomes for tenants as community housing tenants are generally more satisfied in relation to their housing arrangements than public housing tenants^{xvi}. This was reinforced by the Productivity Commission which highlights that community housing providers often outperform public providers on some indicators including tenant satisfaction and property maintenance.^{xvii} There is a critical need for a community housing growth strategy, with targets for long-term management and/or title transfers, developed in partnership with the sector.

Using the Community Housing sector to maximise Commonwealth funding opportunities

The 2017/18 Commonwealth budget outlined initiatives to deliver more affordable and social housing. New Federal funding commitments such as:

- A National Housing Finance and Investment Corporation^{xviii} will:

Savings to Health:

\$16M annual saving to the Western Australian health system by providing stable public housing for people experiencing, or at risk of homelessness:

- *\$13,273 saving per person per year for those supported on NPAH;*
 - *\$84,135 saving per person per year saving for NPAH mental health program recipients;*
 - *19.5% decrease in the proportion of people accessing hospital emergency department;*
 - *24.7% decrease in overnight hospital stays;*
 - *6-day reduction in length of hospital stays;*
 - *57.8% decrease in proportion of people accessing psychiatric care; and*
 - *8.4-day reduction in average length of psychiatric care stay.*
-

- explore and develop a ‘bond aggregator’ to de-risk access to capital by community housing organisations; and
- Invest \$1 billion over 5 years to support local governments to finance critical infrastructure such as transport links, power and water infrastructure and site remediation works.
- \$10.2 million to trial the use of Social Impact Investments aimed at improving housing and welfare outcomes for young people at risk of homelessness.
- An additional 10 per cent CGT discount to resident individuals investing in qualifying affordable housing managed through a registered Community Housing Provider.
- New rules that enable Managed Investment Trusts (MITs) to acquire, construct or redevelop property to hold for affordable housing.

Continue to harness National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS) opportunities. NRAS, a Federal Government initiative that, through partnerships, significantly increases supply of new affordable rental housing. NRAS allows eligible people on low to moderate incomes the opportunity to rent homes at a rate that is at least 20% less than market value rent. NRAS homes are not social housing - they are affordable rental homes owned by private investors or NFP companies^{xix}.

A strategy for ongoing collaboration between the State Government and the non-government housing sector will provide greater clarity to enable the sector to plan, invest, partner and innovate. This strategy needs to consider the benefits of large-scale stock transfers (with or without title), with clearly stated, measurable objectives, to ensure the additional social housing required to meet demand is developed and available to those in greatest need.

Transfer of management to community housing providers is a key lever to stimulate social and affordable housing investment.

To maximise this strategy, it should be underpinned by the right planning frameworks, maximise underutilised government land and ensure that the mix of dwellings provided are diverse to meet the needs of the whole community.

Strategic approach to tenancy management

The lack of co-ordination between government agencies due to competing policy imperatives, different discourses and staff disciplines and professional approaches means that different departments are managing issues with inadequate coordination/collaboration which results in sub optimal outcomes and higher costs. For example, the intersection of the Housing, Department of Child Protection and Family Services and the Health and Mental Health disciplines when it comes to how they approach people experiencing homelessness.

The Housing Authority’s Tenancy Management practices is an example:

- Some families face eviction from public housing due to ‘disruptive behaviour’ or damage and ‘property standards’ arising from circumstances of domestic violence or serious mental illness;
- due to the lack of appropriate practices in response to domestic violence and mental illness, children are at high risk of being evicted from public housing;
- the Housing Authority could improve policy or practices to identify cases involving domestic violence or mental illness;
- where the Housing Authority does identify domestic violence or serious mental illness, in many cases the Authority still proceeds to Court to seek eviction, rather than engaging effectively with the community or government services to provide appropriate supports to sustain a tenancy;

Systemic solutions include an approach that focuses on maintaining and sustaining tenancies, focusing on the individual needs of the person or family and aligned departmental policies and KPIs to provide housing and end homelessness. Skilled staff, along with the legal and systems capacity, are required to enable this to occur. Immediate and longer-term solutions are outlined as follows. That the Housing Authority enhances existing or implements new actions to:

Targeted intervention for people requiring tenancy support improves outcomes for the individual and reduces cost to Government.

- identify and intervene before a situation deteriorates to the point where an eviction may have to be progressed;
- work in partnership with other areas of government such as the Mental Health and Disability Services Commissions and the Department for Child Protection and Family Support, (to ensure the needs of specific cohorts are considered) and the community housing and the social services sector, to co-design a shared assessment framework and joint waitlist. This could determine the tenants for whom the public housing system and its current level of support is appropriate and which individuals require more targeted support. This targeted, integrated housing support system will identify and facilitate the provision of specialist support to transition into and stabilise tenancies. It will provide a more coordinated and integrated model that supports long term stable housing outcomes;
- reinstate Regional Managers' discretion to work with tenant advocates to seek practical resolutions for the underlying issues in a tenancy;
- not proceed with a termination application or eviction where the DCPFS advises that they are working with the family and that the current housing is important for the children's protection and care, and similarly where the DCPFS advises that they have not previously engaged with the family and have not identified child protection concerns, but would be concerned that eviction would put the children at risk;
- adopt policies and train staff to be able to identify domestic violence cases and mental health, and to then screen these matters into a 'support track' rather than an 'evictions track' working in partnership with the NGO sector;
- reduce the high rate and cost of litigation by introduction of practical approaches and collaboration with DCPFS and the non-government sector to sustain tenancies;
- utilize termination applications as a last resort, after referral to support services:
 - attempts at collaborative work with community services;
 - if an eviction must progress, it must not be evicting into homelessness; and
 - an analysis of 'whole of government cost' demonstrates that the eviction is in the public interest. This analysis requires consideration of the likely impact on the community of the tenant and family being evicted from public housing.
- Stop the use of without grounds terminations, demonstrating that the termination is justified in accordance with the tests under s75A or s71 of the *Residential Tenancies Act 1987 (WA)*
- Pilot new approach by diverting funding of the Disruptive Behaviour Management Unit.

Tenancy advocates have called on staff from the Department of Child Protection and Family Services and school principals to give evidence to oppose termination applications by the Housing Authority in the Magistrates Court and won.

Unlike other Australian states, Western Australia does not have a specialist Tribunal to deal with

tenancy disputes under the RTA^{xx}. The Magistrates Court of Western Australia has exclusive jurisdiction to deal with any matter under the RTA for a claim less than \$10 000 (a 'prescribed dispute')^{xxi}. Regardless of the professed informality of the Magistrates Court, research indicates that there are essentially no advantages to not having a tribunal, whilst there are several disadvantages including:

- Magistrates have no specialized knowledge of residential tenancies law;
- The physical spectre of the 'court' detracts from the informality of proceedings; and
- The court has a large workload and high turnover of cases^{xxii}.

Both owners and tenants in the Department of Commerce Review contended that a Tribunal would enable experts in residential tenancy matters to effectively adjudicate disputes and promote a more conciliatory approach to dispute resolution, and both groups suggested that tenants would be more likely to attend a tribunal than a formal court^{xxiii}. Tenant advocates and community housing providers continue to raise concerns with tenancy matters being heard at the Magistrates Courts. Concerns include the delays for final hearings and the quality of conciliation at pre-trial hearings which impacts on the quality of the outcomes achieved.

Since the 2008 Review of the *Residential Tenancies Act 1987 (WA)*, the State Administrative Tribunal has been established. The feasibility of moving tenancy disputes to an independent residential tenancies tribunal or the State Administrative Tribunal should be investigated to determine if this remains a better and more cost-effective alternative to the current dispute resolution system.

Conclusion

Shelter WA has provided evidence that:

- housing has the potential and capacity to be a key driver to major cross portfolio reform and potential savings for the Western Australian government;
- the housing portfolio and WA government 'land bank' is a multi-billion-dollar asset that could be better optimised in the whole of government approach to housing and human services;
- the housing system is ready for major reform;
- there is an opportunity to facilitate private and institutional investment into affordable and social housing;
- there is an opportunity for significant savings to government through co-ordination and investment by agencies in implementing up-front solutions, rather than focusing on managing problems; and

Policy Implications:

- *The atomised and singular manner in which people with complex compounded needs are addressed by most agencies is extremely costly and counterproductive.*
 - *Early holistic support is crucial for disadvantaged children with cognitive disabilities and/or mental health disorders who are homeless or in unstable housing.*
 - *Provision of skilled disability supported accommodation and education early in life would save significant spending on homelessness and criminal justice interventions later in life.*
 - *System incentives to cost-shift should be eliminated.*
 - *A significant change in the way government human service agencies approach a small but extremely costly group of persons is required. Evidence suggests that robust, holistic, cross portfolio support and intervention responses fit for purpose (e.g. appropriate and adequate disability support with housing) are needed.*
-
-

- this will require strong leadership to implement reforms across some major systems of government.

The benefits of secure, safe and affordable housing chosen by the individual and augmented with suitable health and community supports as required are well documented. They include:

- improved health status, maintenance of symptom stability and overall functioning reducing demand for treatment and care;
- improved sense of belonging and self-worth;
- improved social and economic participation;
- reduced reliance on welfare support and reduced impact on homelessness services; and
- a significant reduction in hospitalisation. Housing is a better predictor of reduced hospital admission than clinical interventions. This delivers cost savings in the areas of crisis, police and ambulance call outs, emergency departments and hospital admission.

References

-
- ⁱ Yates, K., Milligan, V. (2007) *Housing Affordability: A 21st Century Problem*, AHUR Final Report no. 105, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne, <http://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/105>. page 6
- ⁱⁱ Maclennan, D., Ong, R. and Wood, G. (2016) *Housing, productivity and economic development*, AHURI Research and Policy Bulletin No. 212, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne, <http://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/research-and-policy-bulletins/212.>, page 1
- ⁱⁱⁱ McKenzie, D, Flatau, P, Steen, A., Thielking, M. (2016) *The Cost of Youth Homelessness in Australia – Final Report* Swinburne University Institute for Social Research, the University of Western Australia and Charles Sturt University, in partnership with The Salvation Army, Mission Australia and Anglicare Canberra & Goulburn.
- ^{iv} Western Australia. Mental Health Commission, *Mental Health 2020: Making it personal and everybody's business*, p 20. Surveys estimate that in Western Australia, 43 percent of people in specialised mental health hospital beds could be discharged if housing and/or other appropriate supported accommodation services were available. Mental healthcare service costs for people experiencing homelessness dropped from \$US40,451 to \$US24,170 per housing unit per year when those experiencing mental illness were given permanent shelter, offsetting 94% of the costs of providing them with the housing in the first place. page 20
- ^v Wood, L., Flatau, P., Zaretsky, K., Foster, S., Vallesi, S. and Miscenko, D. (2016) *What are the health, social and economic benefits of providing public housing and support to formerly homeless people?*, AHURI Final Report No. 265, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/265>, doi:10.18408/ahuri-8202801. page 2
- ^{vi} Flatau, P., Zaretsky, K., Brady, M., Haigh, Y., Martin, R. (2008) *The cost-effectiveness of homelessness programs: a first assessment*, AHURI Final Report No. 119, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/119>. page 143
- ^{vii} Baldry, E., McCausland, R., Dowse, L. and McEntyre, E. 2015 *A predictable and preventable path: Aboriginal people with mental and cognitive disabilities in the criminal justice system*. UNSW, Sydney. <https://www.mhdc.unsw.edu.au/>
- ^{viii} Baldry, E., McCausland, R., Dowse, L. and Clarence, M. 2012 *Lifecourse institutional costs of homelessness for vulnerable groups*. UNSW, Sydney.
- ^{ix} Western Australian Mental Health Commission (2015). *Better Choices. Better Lives*. Western Australian Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drug Services Plan 2015–2025. Perth, Western Australian Mental Health Commission.
- ^x Western Australia. Housing Authority. (2016) *Annual Report 2015-16*, page 22
- ^{xi} Income limit: \$430 per week for a single with no children and \$540 for people with a disability. Productivity Commission (2016) Table 17A.62. Single Aged Pension: \$434 including pension supplement and energy supplement. Department of Human Services (2016) *Age Pension*

-
- xii Community Housing Coalition, (2015) Doing more with what we already have. page 3; This includes social housing for low income earners, affordable housing for people whose incomes do not fall within public housing income and asset eligibility limits along with crises/short term and transitional accommodation for people who are homeless or at risk of being homeless
- xiii Op Cit, page 6
- xiv Op Cit, page 4
- xv Pawson, H., Milligan, V., Wiesel, I. and Hulse, K. (2015) *Public stock transfers to community housing the best option for a sustainable and financially supportable housing system*, AHURI Research and Policy Bulletin No. 184, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/research-and-policy-bulletins/184>. Public stock transfers to community housing the best option for a sustainable and financial supportable housing system, AHURI, February 2015, page 1.
- xvi Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, National Social Housing Survey: State and Territory Results 2010, AIHW, Canberra 2012, page 15
- xvii Australian Government. Productivity Commission (2016) Human Services: Identifying sectors for reform, Preliminary Findings Report, page 75
- xviii https://www.ahuri.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0014/3047/AHURI_RAP_Issue_174_Enhancing-affordable-rental-housing-investment-via-an-intermediary-and-guarantee.pdf
- xix NRAS homes are located where affordable rental accommodation is most needed, especially in areas where employment, schools and other services are available nearby. NRAS properties can remain in the National Rental Affordability Scheme for up to 10 years (provided they continue to meet eligibility requirements). NRAS rental homes are available to eligible low to moderate income earners.
- xx Queensland, Northern Territory and Western Australia are the three jurisdictions which do not have a specialized Tribunal to deal with disputes under their Residential Tenancies Acts.
- xxi Residential Tenancies Act, 1987 (WA) Section 12
- xxii Bradbrook, A J, Poverty and the Residential Landlord and Tenant Relationship (1975) AGPS, Canberra, Ch 1, Sackville, R, Law and Poverty in Australia (1975) AGPS, Canberra, ch3.
- xxiii Western Australia, Department of Commerce, Policy Report, *Review of the Residential Tenancies Act 1987 (WA)*, January 2008, page 168