

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## **WACOSS welcomes youth services policy reforms**

The Western Australian Council of Social Service (WACOSS) welcomed the announcement today by the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Peter Collier of significant reforms to the funding, longevity and evaluation of services for Aboriginal youth.

“The commitment to ensure that all Western Australian Government programs delivering services to Aboriginal youth are effectively and sustainably funded, with clear and measurable outcomes to ensure they are making a real difference to those in greatest need is very welcome,” said Irina Cattalini, CEO of WACOSS today.

“The Council has been concerned for some time that youth services within Western Australia have been typified by short-term funding and one-off pilot projects. What has been sorely needed is a strategic approach to ensuring we provide effective services that provide effective support and build the aspirations and engagement of youth most at risk of achieving poor life outcomes,” she said.

“We welcome the commitment to longer-term and more substantive funding of programs for at-risk Aboriginal youth linked to meaningful and measurable outcomes - but we think these reforms should be extended to ALL youth services in WA.”

“Better coordination and integration of youth services has the potential to enable us to intervene earlier and provide the kind of assistance that is needed in a more timely and effective manner. Having greater continuity of funding will allow youth workers to commit to providing longer-term support and to develop and refine services to deliver better outcomes,” said Ms Cattalini.

“Providing support and incentives for cross-agency initiatives to encourage linkages across portfolios should help not only to reduce duplication but to enable more holistic wrap-around service provision.”

“We urge the Minister to ensure these reforms are implemented through a responsible transition strategy, developed in partnership with youth sector service providers and peak bodies,” said Ms Cattalini.

“Our one concern is to make sure that we are providing support to build the capacity of youth service providers so that existing services that may be actually delivering engaging and transformative programs but do not have the skills to measure and report on outcomes or the scale to take on three year contracts at \$300,000 p.a. are not lost in the transition.”

“We welcome this important initiative in reforming the funding and reporting of services for Aboriginal youth and call on all State Government agencies to embrace these reforms and extend them over time to all of their youth programs and initiatives,” concluded Ms Cattalini.

### **Media Contact**

**Irina Cattalini, CEO**

**0422 422 438 or 9420 7222**