



MEDIA RELEASE

Friday 28th October 2016

WA's future is in all of our hands

“To build a future for WA in these tight economic times, we need to be driving more collaborative and coordinated efforts that provide holistic solutions for families and communities,” said Irina Cattalini, CEO of WACOSS today.

The Council's 2017-18 WA Pre-Budget Submission, *The Future In Our Hands*, highlights three themes that are critical to delivering improved outcomes for the most disadvantaged in our community: smarter services, stronger families and resilient communities.

“Our submission comes at a time when there is significant community concern about poverty and inequality in Western Australia, in the lead-up to a state election.

“WA has the highest rate of inequality in the country. Inequality not only harms us economically, it ultimately harms the social wellbeing of our community.”

“Poverty and inequality are not inevitable. They depend on the choices we make, our political will and willingness to work together so that we leave no-one behind,” said Ms Cattalini.

“The set of strategic policy recommendations and budget priorities we have developed through extensive consultation with frontline community services provide a blueprint for targeted investment for the coming year and beyond.”

“Whoever forms government in March next year must make it a priority to reverse this trend through investment in growing diversified employment opportunities, underpinned by well-designed and accessible social services to support those most excluded from our economy and community.”

Data released by ACOSS indicates that there are nearly 3 million Australians in poverty, with 731,000 of them being children. In WA there are 240,000 people living below the poverty line, with a further 150,000 at risk of financial hardship.

“By enabling smarter services, supporting families to become stronger and building more resilient communities, we can create a society in which we all have a share.”

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BUDGET PRIORITIES

Children Young People & Families

1. Improve access to secondary support services for families at risk and invest in the state-wide roll-out of **Family Support Networks** to provide one secondary service hub in each child protection district by 2020
2. Fund the **Earlier Intervention and Intensive Family Support** strategy to reduce Aboriginal child removal rates
3. Build the capacity of **Aboriginal community controlled services** to deliver therapeutic healing, intensive family support and child protection services
4. Trial an intensive transitional support model for **young people leaving state care**

Housing & Homelessness

5. Ensure that 27% of the dwellings delivered as part of the State Affordable Housing Strategy's 2020 target are **public and community housing**
6. Secure **long-term funding certainty for homeless services** to enable the development of integrated service models that improve long-term outcomes for homeless people
7. Co-design a **shared assessment framework** and **tenancy support system** in partnership with the community housing and service sector

Sustainable Services State-wide

8. Invest in **regional community sector networks** to provide the backbone support to collective impact projects in early childhood development, family support and youth at risk
9. Fund the coordination of **Early Years Networks** to improve early childhood outcomes, and support an integrated early childhood services trial in the Pilbara
10. Create an accessible, self-sustaining and up-to-date **online directory of social services** in Western Australia
11. Develop an **Aboriginal workforce development strategy** that provides incentives and support to increase Aboriginal employment in human services contracts
12. **Sustain existing service delivery levels** of community services by ensuring the cost of Equal Remuneration Order wage obligations is met

Complex Needs & Entrenched Disadvantage

13. Invest in expanded outreach and wrap-around service support as part of a more integrated response **to family and domestic violence**
14. Commit funding for the operation of an **Aboriginal residential rehabilitation** service in the Southwest
15. Increase availability and effectiveness of **therapeutic services in the justice system**, including needs assessment, data sharing and through-care
16. Commit funding to *Better Choices Better Lives* the **10 Year Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drug Services Plan**

Financial Resilience

17. Increase funding for metropolitan **financial counselling services** and co-design an integrated financial counselling model for regional areas
18. Trial a more **flexible model of financial assistance** for those in hardship that enables the prioritisation of where hardship grants are spent
19. Fund Energy Consumers Australia to provide **consumer representation and research** in WA energy markets in transition to national market membership
20. Introduce a **15% consumption tax on net wagering revenue** of betting companies offering services in Western Australia and use proceeds to support financial counselling and addiction service for those harmed by online gambling