



wa council of  
social service

# Creating a Stronger Future for WA

**STATE BUDGET SUBMISSION 2023-24**  
on behalf of the Community Services  
Sector of WA and the people we support.

S U M M A R Y



## **Western Australians are facing difficult and turbulent times.**

Our community has weathered significant challenges over the last few years. WA came through the COVID-19 health crisis and economic slowdown well, with cautious leadership and a strong sense of community commitment.

The challenges we now face are different in nature, and we will need new strategies to adapt and thrive. We are confronted by an emerging global recession, rising inflation and living costs. We have skills shortages in a time of record low unemployment. Higher interest rates now threaten a new group of households who recently bought into mortgage belt suburbs. Those already doing it tough are falling further behind, as costs rise, rents skyrocket and vacancies are hard to find.

WA's success in recent years has highlighted the qualities and advantages we can build on. Our resource-based economy has enabled the state to prosper, but it is also inherently unequal, creating obstacles to ensuring that those on low and fixed incomes are not left behind.

The 2023-24 State Budget provides the opportunity to make the public investment necessary to make it through the coming storms. We came together to face the pandemic and now we need a way forward that builds on our strengths and creates a sense of common purpose.

Western Australians are facing challenging times. The important thing is how we face them together.

## Ensuring a Growing State Can Thrive

- ✓ Develop workforce participation programs for under-represented groups.

### The Wellbeing Workforce

- ✓ Budget for Fair Work deliberations on gender wage equity across the care industry.
- ✓ Implement WGEA standards across public agencies and commissioned programs in the future.

### Overcoming Workforce Challenges

- ✓ Develop in-place training for both new and existing community service workers.
- ✓ Build housing subsidies into service contracts for regional centres and create more GROH housing.

### Commissioning Sustainable Service Systems for Impact

- ✓ Resource the State Commissioning Strategy and report on agreed priorities.
- ✓ Build a shared data asset within Treasury to report on outcomes for services.

### A Viable Transition

- ✓ Address care workforce retention through long-term service contracts, with top-up funding until services are recommissioned.
- ✓ Develop a new indexation policy that meets sustainability commitments.

## Community Resilience and Wellbeing

- ✓ Review regional social service gaps, demand and unmet need to design a regional service network model.
- ✓ Upgrade underutilised infrastructure to build service hubs in outer-metro and regional centres.

### Measuring What Matters

- ✓ Treasury and experts to create a child and family wellbeing framework for national processes.

### The Critical Role of Early Education and Care

- ✓ Provide per-capita grants and subsidies to community-based long day-care and after-school care.

### Keeping Women and Children Safe

- ✓ Increase investment in emergency and transitional accommodation services for women and children escaping family and domestic violence.
- ✓ Increase investment in services for men to increase perpetrator accountability, including men's behaviour change programs and accommodation services.

### Supporting Families and Addressing Intergenerational Trauma

- ✓ Partner with regional ACCOs to develop early intervention and family support services in regional centres.

- ✓ Establish a WA Stolen Generations Reparations Scheme.

## Towards Gender Equity

- ✓ Create a gender-responsive budget unit to deliver a WA Women's Budget Statement.

## Resilient Communities

- ✓ Increase availability of place-based funds to build community resilience and disaster risk reduction capacity, with a focus on low-income communities.

## Keeping the Essentials

### Affordable for All

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- ✓ Replace the Energy Assistance Payment with a percentage-based primary energy concession.
- ✓ Expand eligibility for water concessions to include Health Care Card holders.

### Household Utility Grant Scheme

- ✓ Make the HUGS 90-day payment arrangement requirement permanent, increase grant limits and expand eligibility.

## Transport

- ✓ Expand car registration concessions to all Health Care Card holders.
- ✓ Expand eligibility for free travel periods on public transport to all concession card holders.

## Transitioning Away from Gas

- ✓ Develop a household gas transition roadmap and institute a moratorium on all new household connections to the existing gas network.

## Affordable and Social Housing

- ✓ Establish a \$1 billion Affordable Housing Future Fund.

## Supporting Private Renters

- ✓ Introduce a vacant residential property charge.
- ✓ Re-introduce a residential rent relief grant scheme.

## Safe Communities

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- ✓ Implement the Social Reinvestment WA Blueprint.

## Whole of Government Vision and Strategy

- ✓ Develop a whole of government strategy to improve youth justice outcomes with the community and sector.

## Place-Based Initiatives

- ✓ Identify 10 communities in most need of action on youth justice and resource place-based initiatives in partnership with local communities.

*WACOSS advocates for social change to improve the wellbeing of Western Australians and to strengthen the community services that support them.*