

Advocacy toolkit



Message from the CEO

Thank you for joining our vision to create positive social and economic change in Western Australia. This advocacy toolkit is a resource to enable and empower anyone to be an advocate for change. With advocacy at our core, WACOSS has a long history of driving change for those experiencing disadvantage and hardship throughout Western Australia. Our experience is reflected in this toolkit which will help you to create an inclusive, just and equitable society.

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Western Australia and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures, and to Elders both past and present.

Louise Giolitto
CEO WACOSS

Advocacy

Advocacy is a way of helping decision-makers find the best solutions to persistent problems.

This is achieved by expressing concerns and influencing decision-makers and other stakeholders to support and implement actions that contribute to positive change.

This toolkit focuses on the strategies used in systemic advocacy, which includes representing the needs of a particular community or group of people.

What is the advocacy toolkit?

The advocacy toolkit is a resource that can assist community members and groups to understand and plan for advocacy. The toolkit provides a guideline on the advocacy process and includes information and examples on advocacy strategies.

There are several other examples of advocacy strategies which are not included in this toolkit.



Identifying decision-makers

Who is the appropriate decision-maker in relation to the cause you are advocating for? Use the matrix below to identify which level of government is responsible for the area in which you would like to see change. Bearing in mind some issues cross Government jurisdictions including disaster and agriculture.

Local

- ▶ Local roads
- ▶ Street signage and lighting
- ▶ Parks, recreational and cultural facilities
- ▶ Waste management and recycling
- ▶ Parking
- ▶ Local planning and building controls
- ▶ Pet registration and management

State

- ▶ Schools
- ▶ Hospitals
- ▶ Police
- ▶ Public Transport, major roads and railways
- ▶ Community services
- ▶ Electricity and water supply
- ▶ Mining
- ▶ Agriculture
- ▶ Consumer Affairs
- ▶ Prisons
- ▶ Justice
- ▶ Housing
- ▶ Disaster

Federal

- ▶ Defence
- ▶ Foreign Policy
- ▶ Pensions and Income Support Payments
- ▶ Health and Medicare
- ▶ Aged Care
- ▶ Citizenship
- ▶ Postal and telecommunication services
- ▶ Agriculture
- ▶ Disaster

Source: *Induction for prospective candidates* | DLGSC

Contact your Local Member

[Find Your Electorate](#) | [Electoral Boundaries WA](#)
(boundaries.wa.gov.au/electorates/find-your-electorate)

[Find my electorate](#)
(electorate.aec.gov.au)

ADVOCACY ACTIVITY

Meeting with a Member of Parliament



You may like to arrange a meeting by writing with a specific request to meet on a particular issue. Make it clear that you have experience or expertise on this issue that will help the Member, either to understand the issue, develop a solution, or advocate on your behalf.

We have created a template letter to guide you, which can be found on our website.

ADVOCACY ACTIVITY

Letter to a Member of Parliament

When writing to a Member of Parliament make sure to include the following:

What is the problem?

This section should clearly articulate the purpose of your correspondence.

What is your ask?

What are you asking them to do? For example, seek an urgent meeting? Sign a petition? Attend an event?

Evidence of the problem

Why is the problem important? Who is impacted by the problem? Do you have evidence of this? Does it affect a specific gender or age group?

What is the solution?

This section should describe the proposal in detail. Has the problem been raised or identified by Government? If yes, make reference to the relevant documents.

Case for reform

Is there data and evidence of community support? Including from local community groups, organisations, other stakeholders who also want reform?

What is your ask

Reiterate your ask. Is it a meeting, is it a call to action?



ADVOCACY ACTIVITY

Phone call to a Member of Parliament

Calling your local Member of Parliament is a great way to inform them of your concerns.

It is highly unlikely that you will get to speak to the Member of Parliament yourself initially, but you will be able to speak to one of their staff members.

You should advise them you are a voter in their electorate and that you would like your message passed on to the Member of Parliament.

Keep your phone call to one issue, and ask for the Member to respond in writing, with their position on the issue you are raising.

Calling your Member of Parliament's office can be a good option if you are unable to write to or email them.

Media Release

If you identify that your advocacy strategy requires media coverage to achieve the overall objective, a media release is your primary tool to communicate your story to journalists and media.

It is helpful to follow the local and national media landscape, identifying what topical stories relevant to your organisation are being covered by what media outlets, and the specific journalists within those organisations. This will ensure that when the time comes to pitch your story to the media, you know exactly who to target.

The media will be looking for a newsworthy angle or 'hook' that will get their readers, listeners and/or viewers interested, so when you write your media release think about:

Should your media release include a notable personality, celebrity or politician?

Is it being sent at the appropriate time – does it relate to a current issue or, for example, a Bill that is being introduced to Parliament?

Does it have a local angle relevant to the community – small community, state or country?

Can the media 'put a face to the story'? For example, is there someone deeply affected who could personalise the issue?

Is there public interest in the information – will people find it useful to know?

Is it an achievement – has an individual or organisation done something outstanding?

Timing your Story



Thinking about the timing is important when pitching a story to the media. Is there a significant event or day coming up that you could tie your media release to?

For example, if you're releasing a media release about domestic violence statistics or calling on the Government to change legislation, you may want to time your media release to fit with existing advocacy such as the 16 Days Campaign.

Think about the likelihood of when you receive coverage – the week, day, time – and schedule the release of your story around this. Journalists are often on a deadline, so it's wise to find this out in advance so that you're not pitching minutes before their program goes to air or publication to print.

Media Release Example

Stronger Communities Across a Vast State

Many Western Australian households are facing hard times, unsure how they will see their way through the next year or two. They are worried about being able to provide for their loved-ones' most basic needs and scared that no matter how hard they work and how carefully they scrimp and save, they may fall behind their financial commitments and risk losing everything.

The Western Australian Council of Social Service has today released its 2024-25 State Budget Submission and is calling for a community accord; a coming together to develop a shared vision across the WA Government, our public agencies, community-based services and Aboriginal organisations that commits to a shared set of goals and outcomes that builds a stronger future for all Western Australians.

The financial data is telling us that the worst is yet to come, with around a million Australian mortgagees coming off their fixed-term periods and facing a massive jump in their interest payments. For many households this is their first encounter with financial hardship – they have probably never engaged with social services before and may live in new suburbs where few support services are readily available.

We saw during the global financial crisis that households will try to hang on too long before seeking help and dig themselves so deep into debt that the only outcome is bankruptcy and mortgage default.

The 2024-25 WA State Budget Submission provides the opportunity to make the public investment necessary to assist those struggling to get by and to ensure we can collectively make it through the coming storms.

WACOSS Chief Executive Officer Louise Giolitto said:

"For years now, our news has been filled with stories of the strength of the WA economy. Now many are looking around at rising rates of poverty, homelessness, poor mental health and family violence, and wondering how we got here.

"It feels like we have passed a tipping point, where average working households are struggling to get by. Too many people can't find somewhere they can afford to rent or imagine ever owning their own home, while others now face the prospect of retiring into poverty.

"Community services play a crucial role in supporting our society, helping people out when they are struggling and acting as a safety net that keeps our community functioning through difficult times.

"We write this submission to improve support for the most disadvantaged members of our community, and to support the work of the compassionate people who assist them."

For further information, or to arrange an interview, please contact Joe Smith, Media Advisor at WACOSS, on 0400 000 000.

Writing submissions to government

Governments regularly conduct reviews and provide opportunities for public consultations into their policies and programs.

Submissions can be powerful tools for advocacy because the format allows for more detailed information to be provided than what can be shared through a letter or phone call. Formal submissions that are persuasive and evidence-based will generally be read by public servants or external reviewers.

If your submission is not included in the review recommendations you are likely to receive commentary as to why not, so you know what you need to work on for the next time. Even if your submission is included in the review recommendations, there is no guarantee it will be acted upon, but getting to that stage is essential if you want to influence government action.

Guidelines for Submissions

- ▶ Put your specific recommendations up front in a very brief executive summary or covering letter.
- ▶ Demonstrate your understanding of the issue.
- ▶ Outline what elements of the issue provide opportunities for strategic action.
- ▶ Demonstrate the 'program logic' underpinning your recommendation, for example the nature of the problem is X, so applying Y resources in this way, will allow these actions, which will make this happen, and as a result these things will change and the overall outcome will be...
- ▶ Provide evidence about the problem, especially those aspects you want to change.
- ▶ Provide evidence about why the actions you propose are the right ones.
- ▶ Make your argument logical, clear and concise.

WACOSS has made in the 'Policy Library' on the WACOSS website: www.wacoss.org.au

Social Media

Social media is a tool that can be used to amplify the issue you are advocating on, and to share any wins you have with your campaign to others who are invested in your progress. Depending on the type of advocacy your issue requires, you may wish to use social media to build grassroots support. Social media can also be used as a tool to engage with the media, especially X, formerly known as Twitter and Facebook.

Social media is not only a way to share successes of your campaign, but is also a way to connect with networks, key policymakers, politicians,

organisations, and individuals that are aligned with, or in opposition to the issues you are advocating for, and a way to understand the social discourse on the issue.

Different social media platforms have different strengths. For example, LinkedIn is a great platform to use if you wish to engage with professionals and businesses, and to share thought leadership, whereas Instagram is a visual platform which lends itself to video and photos that tell the story. It's always best to research the best platform to use for the outcome you wish to achieve.

WACOSS would like to thank all those who have contributed, prepared and assisted in the development of the advocacy toolkit.

Any feedback from your advocacy experience and using this toolkit can be directed to info@wacoss.org.au.

If you are interested in learning more or have any questions regarding advocacy you can contact info@wacoss.org.au or (08) 6381 5300.

Regular updates, information and new resources are available on the WACOSS website, and social media platforms.

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www.wacoss.org.au

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