

Annual Report

2024



wa council of
social service

2025

WACOSS respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Western Australia and recognises their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to them, their cultures and to elders both past and present. We acknowledge the land on which we live and work is, and always will be, Aboriginal land. Sovereignty was never ceded.

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Copies of this annual report are available from the address above.

Our work discusses women and women's issues. It does so through an understanding of the historical impact that a patriarchal society has imposed. It is written with an understanding of the marginalisation and disadvantage traditional and binary gender stereotypes have caused.

When we refer to women in this publication, and in all of our policy works, our work represents:

- cisgender women,
- people who identify as women,
- non-binary and gender diverse people who may work, live, or feel most comfortable in women-dominated spaces.

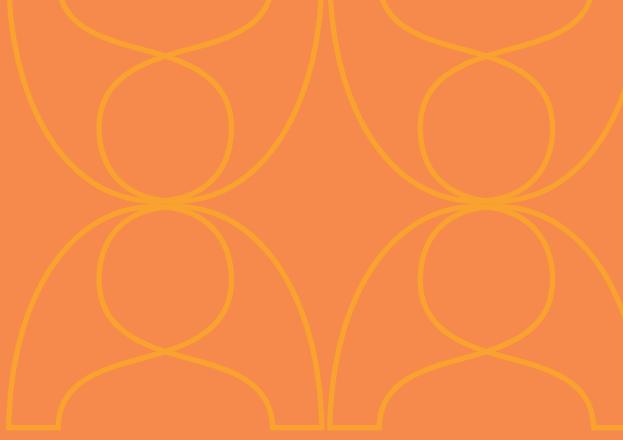
Our intent is to be inclusive and accessible. We acknowledge the disadvantage and marginalisation that comes through any or all intersectionalities.

 **WA Council of Social Service**

 **Western Australian Council of Social Service**

WA Council of Social Service

Table of contents



6	About WACOSS	21	Collaborating with Communities and People with Lived Experience
7	Our Vision, Purpose and Values	24	Influential Research and Policy
9	CEO and President's Report	37	Powerful Movement for Social and Economic Justice
11	Our Board	44	Elevating the Community Sector's Value in Western Australia
13	Our Team	50	Building a Stronger Organisation
15	Media Statements	54	Financial Report
16	Events & Webinars	55	Our Sponsors and Funders
17	Reports and Publications	56	Our members
18	Conference and Community Services Excellence Awards		

About WACOSS

The Western Australian Council of Social Service (WACOSS) is the peak body for the community services sector and works to create an inclusive, just and equitable society. We are committed to genuine engagement, authentic collaboration, and building trusted relationships with members, communities and governments.

We represent more than



240 & 500

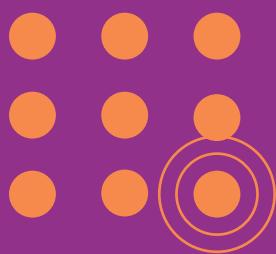
community service organisations

organisations involved in the provision of community services to the people of Western Australia.

As one of nine peak councils of social service across Australia, we collaborate and collectivise on campaigns of national significance.



We tackle difficult issues, systems, behaviours and attitudes that contribute to inequality and exclusion.



Our Vision, Purpose and Values

Our Vision

Inclusive, just and equitable society.

Our Purpose

We drive social change with communities, through collective action and policy formulation, strengthening community services and influencing decision makers to ensure justice and equity.

Our Values



Heart

Our work is grounded in care and compassion for a fairer world



Curiosity

We seek bold and empowering ideas and solutions to issues our communities face



Integrity

Our approaches reflect and respect human rights and our practices are ethical and inclusive



Tenacity

We have the courage to persevere for transformative and positive change

Our 'Why'

We know that communities flourish where people are given the opportunity to contribute and create. We are committed to enabling and leading change that supports healthy, active and inclusive communities.

We need people to care about one another and understand that poverty is a systemic issue that is not the fault of the individual. Fundamentally, we need to foster mutual empathy and work with communities to build their capability and strength.

It is essential that WACOSS remains grounded in community and holds a membership base that aligns with our vision and purpose.

To create equitable and empowered communities, there must be a strong peak body voice that works with its members to advocate with and on behalf of those who are the furthest from levers of power and influence, to amplify their concerns, seek justice and create a society that genuinely works for the benefit of all.

How We Drive Change

Connector

We connect the WA community service sector. We listen deeply, strengthen existing partnerships and facilitate new ones, and link people and organisations to foster collaboration, collective action and social change.

Knowledge Holder

We have deep knowledge of the sector. We build our expertise by leveraging our partnerships across services, sectors and communities. We use our knowledge to advocate for systemic, evidence-based solutions to complex social and economic issues.

Story Teller

We champion the sector. We share stories from across our community to identify and communicate emerging needs, priorities and opportunities. We celebrate the sector's successes and learn from the past.

Influencer

We are the collective voice of our sector. We use this voice to achieve real impact on the lives of people experiencing vulnerability and disadvantage.

We must be bold in our ambition, challenge belief structures and cultural norms, and build community empathy.





CEO and President's Report

It's been an action-packed year – headlined by two election campaigns and our most successful conference ever – and our team has handled challenges with passion and energy. Thank you for everything you do.

Thank you, also, to all of our dedicated board members, who give their valuable time and expertise to steer our organisation. We want to applaud them and everyone of our members, who show up and do the best they can for the people in our community who need us the most.

Being part of WACOSS means that your voice, concerns and expertise are heard on both a state and national level. Together, we have the ability to influence policy decisions, advocate for meaningful change and shape the future of social services in WA.

Over the past year – and especially during the recent WA Election – we have achieved some great wins through our relationships, campaigning and advocacy with the State Government.

These include:

- targeted cost-of-living relief, such as:
 - boosts to the Patient Assisted Travel Scheme (PATS),
 - the expansion of breakfast programs in WA public schools,
 - cheaper public transport, and
 - the extension of eligibility for the Hardship Utility Grants Scheme (HUGS) to include water for social housing tenants.
- important support for quality Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) services, such as:
 - the creation and resourcing of the Office of Early Childhood.
- more sustainable funding for community services, such as:
 - funding uplifts for Child Sexual Abuse Therapeutic Services (CSATS), family and domestic violence services, financial counselling, and homelessness services; and
 - numerous increases in the indexation rate for service agreements (achieved over the past three years with our advocacy partners, Community Employers WA).

We know that commissioning delays and unsustainable funding have been affecting the ability of services to operate. We understand the continued challenge for organisations to live their values and purpose through the services they provide for people doing it tough. That's why sustainable funding and commissioning will continue to be at the forefront of our advocacy.

It was wonderful to bring our community from the sector together at our sell-out 2025 WACOSS Conference in May. From the opening day – where we explored how to create truly trusted relationships with our partners from the Council of Aboriginal Services Western Australia – to the closing minutes; there were important lessons and ideas about the social change we can all make.

We celebrated those people and organisations whose work has had an outstanding impact at the 2025 Community Services Excellence Awards.

It's important to stop and mark these achievements because the work that we do is never quite done. Now, more than ever, we need to come together to help lift the voices and needs of those most disadvantaged so that they are a priority for this State Government.

WACOSS is committed to continuing this journey with you and doing our absolute best to advocate for better. Better for our communities, better for vulnerable people, and better resources for our vital community services.



Louise Giolitto
Chief Executive Officer



Mark Glasson
President

Our Board



Mark Glasson
President
CEO Anglicare WA



Emma Jarvis
Vice President
CEO Palmerston

Ordinary Board Members



Amanda Hunt
Member from September 2024
State Director 54 Reasons



Kianna Barker
CEO Hedland Well
Women's Centre



David Cain
Member until October 2024
Executive Director
Operations Communicare



Kim Brooklyn
CEO Parkerville



Graham Donnelly
Member until October 2024
Chief Corporate Officer Ruah



Leanne Strommen
General Manager Community
Services Centrecare



Jo Sadler
Member until September 2024
CEO Wanslea



Patrick Green
Member from October 2024
Marra Worra Worra
Bunuba Director



Jody Nunn
Member from October 2024
CEO Reconciliation WA



Renna Gayde
Member until August 2024
Cultural Engagement Co-ordinator,
Foundation for Indigenous Health



Justine Colyer
CEO Rise Network



Sue Budalich
Member until August 2024
State Director WA, NT,
SA Mission Australia

Vicki-Tree Stephens
Capacity Builder Youth
Involvement Council

WACOSS Elders

Aunty Millie Penny



Aunty Charmaine Pell



Finance Committee members

Leanne Strommen
Chair
from November 2024

Emma Jarvis
Chair
from October 2024

Jo Sadler
until October 2024

Kim Brooklyn

Sue Budalich
from November 2024

Graham Donnelly
from January 2025

Justin Clarke
Additional Member

David Gilchrist
Additional Member
from May 2024

Governance and Risk Committee members

Justine Colyer
Chair

David Cain
until October 2024

Renna Gayde
until October 2024

Kianna Barker

Vicki-Tree Stephens

Amanda Hunt

Our Team

Louise Giolitto

Chief Executive Officer

Rachel Siewert

Deputy Chief Executive Officer

Alenka Jeram

Corporate Services Executive Manager

Chris Twomey

Research and Policy Development Lead

Jackie Bosen

Executive Assistant and
Office Coordinator

Amelie Johnsen

WACOSS Office &
Administration Support
from April 2025

Ashleigh Gregory

Community Relief and
Resilience Coordinator

Carole Green

Heat Vulnerability Project Manager
until June 2025

Celeste Stephens

Pilbara Senior Manager

Dawn Fenton

Office and Administration Support

Dylan Green

Community Training and Engagement
Officer, WA Digital Inclusion Project

Elien Dauwe

DropIN Project Officer and Designer

Elliot Sawers

Senior Training and Project Officer, WA
Digital Inclusion Project

Emma Hardy Rosa

Project Officer,
WA Digital Inclusion Project
until February 2025

Emily Hull

Manager Policy and Projects
until May 2025

Fernanda Monteiro

Graphic Design Coordinator

Fiona Costello

Child Safe Manager

Fraser Beattie

Media Officer, WACOSS and
Communications and Stakeholder
Engagement, WA Digital Inclusion
Project

Jacob West

Heat Vulnerability Project and
Communications Officer
until June 2025

Jasmin Ely

Child Safe Project Officer
from March 2025

Kim Robinson

Social Policy Program
Support Officer

Kris Harris

Training Specialist,
WA Digital Inclusion Project
until November 2023

Lakshmi Kuppa

Technologies Officer

Laurene Coller

Communications Officer

Lily Newbury-Freeman
Capability and Sustainability Lead,
WA Digital Inclusion Project

Lucy Morrison
Advocacy Lead
until April 2025

Maranata Gebremedhin
EA and Social Policy Program
Support Officer
from September 2024 to May 2025

Maya Markowski
EA and Social Policy Program
Support Officer
from November 2024

Philippa Jahn
Senior Regional Engagement Officer,
WA Digital Inclusion Project
until December 2024

Matt Munro
Disaster Resilience and Emergency
Support Manager
from November 2024

Rebecca Turner
Advocacy Lead
from May 2025

Rose Barton
Senior Policy Officer, Pilbara

Rose Newbury-Freeman
WACOSS Conference and Awards
Events Coordinator
from July 2024
and Senior Policy Officer
from May 2025

Salil Koonja
Finance Coordinator

Sonny Yang
Project Officer WA Digital
Inclusion Project
from May 2025

Sophie Hantz
Senior Policy Officer and Manager
Social Policy and Projects

Victoria Rosales
Program Support Officer and
Executive Assistant
until November 2024

Zeina Jamaleddine
Executive Manager,
WA Digital Inclusion Project



Media Statements

During the 12 months to 30 June, WACOSS was included in 821 media stories across print, online, radio and television.

WACOSS released the following media statements during the period:

Community sector proposes free public transport for tertiary students

One in three Western Australians unable to cover \$500 emergency bill

WACOSS campaigns for a fair WA in 2025

State Budget Submission: It's Time to Build Community

More Western Australians deeper in the red as cost of living bites harder

100,000 families face mortgage cliff

EXCLUSIVE JOE SPAGNOLO

More than 100,000 WA households are set to come off low-interest fixed-rate home loans in the next year, with a major welfare agency warning of an "impending interest rate cliff".

more this year, the 14th increase since May 2022, leading to fears many households are headed for severe financial hardship. "The party's almost over for those borrowers who were very fortunate to get their

new hitting WA households."

Another rate rise would be a big blow for Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, who heads to the federal election in late May next year. Mr Albanese and WA Premier Roger Cook combined to axe West Australia's



Targeted cost of living relief missing in mid-year budget review

Community Services Excellence Awards to recognise community sector

WACOSS celebrates expansion of School Breakfast Program

Children, families prioritised in election commitments

Stand-outs recognised at Community Services Excellence Awards

WACOSS welcomes national minimum wage increase

WACOSS welcomes state minimum wage decision

A strong state budget but the growing pains are also clear

Events and Webinars

During the year, WACOSS hosted the following events and webinars:



WACOSS 2025 Conference

Community Services Excellence Awards

New Year Sector Breakfast

Make WA Fair Campaign Launch

State Budget Submission Consultations

State Budget Submission Launch

State Budget Briefing

Child Safe Workshops

Feeling the Heat

WA Digital Inclusion Project Expo

PFDVN Member and Networking Lunches

Digital Skills Introduction Webinars

Politics in the Pub

Heat Preparedness & Resilience Event

Policy Roundtable with Dr. Cressida Gaukroger

Strengthening Impact & Evaluation for Community Services Webinar

Reports and Publications

During the year, WACOSS wrote four large scale reports and 18 submissions (see page 42 for details):

Cost of Living Survey Report

State Budget Submission 2025-26

2024 Cost of Living Report

Living Realities – Understanding Life on Low Income in WA (Part One)



Conference and Community Services Excellence Awards

In May 2025, we hosted our biennial conference *Innovating Together, Leaving No One Behind* and the Community Services Excellence Awards (CSEA). The events took place at the beautiful Optus Stadium on the banks of Derbal Yerrigan. More than 450 delegates were welcomed by Elders Robyn Collard and Sandra Harben and attended across the three days.

The conference was made possible thanks to our major supporters including Lotterywest, the Department of Communities, the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, and our generous community sector and industry sponsors.

We administered subsidies to ensure wide attendance from delegates with lived experience and expertise, people on low income and students, and people who live and work regionally.

We were very proud to host day one of the conference, *Innovation in Closing the Gap*, in partnership with the Council of Aboriginal Services WA (CASWA). We brought Aboriginal Controlled Community Organisations (ACCOs) and Community Service Organisations (CSOs) together to explore how to build partnerships through capacity, capabilities and trust, in order to support achieving Closing the Gap and self-determination.

WA Premier, the Honourable Roger Cook MLA, opened the conference and we heard from thought-provoking speakers such as Professor Muriel Bamblett AO, Sisonke Msingang, Sophie Howe and Stefan Prandl amongst others.



A wonderful graphic recorder captured some of the key learnings of a very exciting and diverse program that included over 80 speakers and presenters that spoke on a large range of issues. Topics ranged from the importance of story-telling, to challenges and opportunities presented by AI, to a discussion of the thought-provoking film *Genocide in the Wildflower State*, and much more.

We received overwhelmingly positive responses from the event, and we are excited to hold the conference again in 2027.



The Community Services Excellence Awards, held on the first night of the conference, are a partnership between the Department of Communities and WACOSS and supported by Lotterywest and event sponsors.

This year, we were pleased to present two award categories in partnership with CASWA, including the introduction of a brand-new award: *Inspiring Partnership between an Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisation and a Community Services Organisation*.

CSEA was a fantastic opportunity for the sector to reflect on its achievements and honour the finalists and winners, selected by panels out of over 200 nominations.



Congratulations once again to the
2025 Community Services Excellence Awards Winners:

Healing Smiles

Trailblazing Small Organisation:
Catalysts of Community Innovation

Reconciliation WA

RESPECT RISING GREAT SOUTHERN
Standout Medium Organisation: Engines
of Progress and Creativity

RUAH Community Services

Impactful Large Organisation:
Powerhouses of Positive Change

Marra Worra Worra Aboriginal Corporation

YOUTH CONNECTION NIGHT SPACE
Remarkable Regional Organisation:
Champions of Rural and Remote
Innovation

WA Rent Relief Program

ANGLICARE WA, VINYNES WA, RUAH, CENTRECARE
Visionary Community-Led Collaboration:
Crafting Better Futures Together

Kullarri Regional Communities Indigenous Corporation

Exceptional Aboriginal
Community-Controlled Organisation:
Champions of Cultural Empowerment

Karla Kuliny Aboriginal Corporation and Australian Childhood Foundation

Inspiring Partnership between an
Aboriginal Community-Controlled
Organisation and a Community Services
Organisation

Craig Hollywood

SHORT, BACK AND SIDEWALKS and
Oscar Colbung

SOUTHERN ABORIGINAL CORPORATION
Outstanding Contribution: Going Above
and Beyond

Vicki-Tree Stephens

YOUTH INVOLVEMENT COUNCIL
Leadership Excellence: Inspiring Change
and Innovation

All individual finalists have
been nominated for the 2026
Australian of the Year Awards
(WA) in partnership with Auspire
- Australia Day Council (WA).

We wish all the nominees the
very best of luck.



Collaborating with Communities and People with Lived Experience

Strategic Catalyst 1

Children's Policy Advisory Council

Children and families remain a top priority for WACOSS, and the Children's Policy Advisory Council (CPAC) continues to play a vital role in shaping effective, sector-wide policy and advocacy.

Chaired by Kim Brooklyn (CEO, Parkerville); CPAC brings together frontline organisations to drive shared action. Meeting bi-monthly, the Council provides expert advice, tracks emerging issues, and ensures that WACOSS' advocacy is grounded in lived experience.

CPAC played an active role in the WACOSS State Election campaign, focussing our advocacy (successfully) on calls to establish a central Office of Early Childhood to oversee cross-government policy and programs on early child development.

With this outcome committed in the election campaign and resourced in the recent State Budget, we are actively engaging with the team in Department of Premier and Cabinet who are establishing the office, with ongoing monthly catch-ups and a commitment to regular CPAC updates in the future.

We continue to advocate for the establishment of an advisory committee with senior leadership from relevant public and community sector agencies, and the creation of a WA Early Childhood Strategy to help drive impact, with clear targets and regular public and parliamentary reporting.

Our strong working relationships with Minister Jessica Stojkovski and Minister Sabine Winton have opened new opportunities for system reform – especially around early childhood access, safety, and workforce challenges.

CPAC had a strong presence at the 2025 WACOSS Conference, leading to plans for a dedicated CPAC Forum to showcase innovations in child and family services.

Over the last year, the biggest developments for our sector have been both Federal and State commitments to extend access to quality early

childhood education and care services – with the Albanese Government committing to have in place a universal ECEC service model by 2026 and the WA Government commencing trials of full-time, four-year-old kindy in 10 school sites.

WACOSS has been actively engaging with key players in State and Federal governments, early childhood services, parents' advocacy groups, and philanthropic funders to help progress this agenda and ensure our concerns about access, equity, and workforce are front and centre.

We've worked closely with the Department of Communities to co-design and recommission Child Sexual Abuse Therapeutic Services (CSATS) and Indigenous Healing Services (IHS). Thanks to our sustained advocacy, existing CSATS providers have received \$2 million in funding uplifts over the past two years – ensuring vital services remain stable during the recommissioning process.

WACOSS has supported the CSATS network secretariat, provided by Phoenix, to deliver a series of successful and informative sector roundtables, and is advocating for ongoing network funding to support codesign and skills development.

Harmful sexual behaviours (HSB) and increasing rates of peer-on-peer abuse among young people is an emerging issue of concern, linked to access to harmful pornographic material online. CPAC supports the current HSB trial program and the development of best practice standards and guides for services, and continues to advocate for more resources for both prevention and early intervention (including ensuring respectful relationships programs in schools reach more students at an earlier age).

The last two years have seen a significant lift in participation and engagement from our members in CPAC's activities, with positive feedback that our policy development and advocacy efforts are greatly appreciated during these critical times.

CPAC's influence has never been stronger – driving smarter policy, safer systems, and a better future for WA's children.

Collaboration with Peaks

WACOSS has continued to drive and support the Peaks Forum. The Forum met monthly during the year to share information and updates, discuss emerging issues, and collaborate on shared projects.

The Peaks Forum receives regular updates and briefings from the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, the Department of Finance, the Department of Communities, Lotterywest, and the Department of Training and Workforce Development.

The Forum has once again been active on the State Commissioning Strategy Implementation Plan, Agency Commissioning Plans, indexation, and sustainable funding; including the Sector Support Development and Advocacy (SSDA) program, holding webinars, out of session meetings, and attending workshops.

This year, the Peaks Forum has established working groups on problem gambling, and emerging technology and AI to further joint work in these areas and these groups report regularly to the forum.

Other issues addressed this year include ATO tax changes relevant to the sector, workforce issues, NDIS foundational supports, the State Election, lived experience, the WA Student Assistance Payment, advocacy training, and regional issues. Peaks held a successful workshop on advocating for change in a conflicting funding relationship.

WACOSS continues to administer the Peaks Capacity Building Grants and this financial year the following projects were funded:

- Lived Experience Framework and Implementation Plan
- True Cost to Deliver State Funded Projects and case studies
- Tenants Rights and Voices project
- Cost of Living Impact on Communities
- Preventing Violence Together – Men and Masculinities

We would like to thank the Peaks Grants Assessment Sub-Committee for their work in assessing the project applications.



Influential Research and Policy

Strategic Catalyst **2**



Living Realities: Understanding Life on Low Income in WA

In collaboration with Murdoch University, WACOSS conducted powerful new research capturing the voices of eight Western Australians living on low incomes. Through in-depth case studies, this project reveals the raw, real-life impact of financial stress across diverse circumstances.

As the cost of essentials continues to soar, those on the lowest incomes are being pushed to the brink – yet their stories remain largely unheard in public debate and policymaking. *Living Realities: Understanding Life on Low Income in WA* aims to change that.

This project uses a narrative inquiry approach, allowing participants to share their lived experiences through personal interviews.

Approved by the Murdoch University Human Research Ethics Committee in December 2024, the research ensures participants were fairly recognised for their time and insights through an honorarium.

To ensure each person's experience can be considered in depth, project findings will be published in three parts.

The first two reports (Parts One and Two) focus wholly on sharing the experiences of the lived experience advocates who participated in the project, while the final report (Part Three) will analyse common themes and possible solutions identified throughout this work. Parts Two and Three of this project will be published in late 2025.

Part One was published in May 2025, and provides a window into the lives of four people living on low income in WA – Anita, Heather, Andy, and Clara.

It's time decision-makers listened. Real stories. Real people. Real change.

Sustainable Health Review

WACOSS continues to play a pivotal role in supporting the WA Department of Health's Sustainable Health Review (SHR) – a bold initiative to reshape WA's healthcare system into one that is patient-centred, high-quality, and financially sustainable.

Contracted by the Department of Health, WACOSS is championing community-led approaches that bring real voices and lived experiences into the heart of health reform. We're connecting key individuals and organisations, facilitating meaningful feedback, and crafting integrated policy advice that reaches beyond the boundaries of the health system.

The SHR Program is tackling some of the biggest challenges in healthcare, including:

- reducing inequities in health and mental health outcomes,
- expanding access to outpatient services,
- delivering community-based care for people with complex needs,
- innovating funding models,
- digitising WA Health,
- fostering a culture of innovation and accountability, and
- building a capable, future-ready workforce.

Over the past year, WACOSS has been prominently involved – from strategic advisory roles and governance participation to co-chairing the SHR Partnership Group (SHR PG) and keeping the community services sector informed and engaged.

We've strengthened collaboration between the SHR and the community sector through key initiatives like the Outcomes Measures Project and Recommendation 8: First 1000 Days Project. These projects embraced strong partnership models, with WACOSS embedded from the outset, ensuring early and impactful input.

We've also helped evolve the SHR Partnership Group into a dynamic advisory body, bringing together consumers, community service leaders, health professionals, and government representatives to co-design better ways of working and engaging.

This work is far from over – and we're committed to continuing the journey toward a more equitable, responsive, and community-driven health system in WA.





WA Digital Inclusion Project

The WA Digital Inclusion Project (WADIP) was originally scheduled to conclude at the end of June 2025. However, in a significant milestone for the initiative, the project successfully secured an additional \$1.5 million in funding from Lotterywest, enabling the launch of Phase 2, which will run for 18 months from 1 July 2025.

This funding extension is a powerful endorsement of the project's impact, and a clear recognition of the growing importance of digital inclusion. As technology continues to evolve and essential services increasingly shift online, it is more critical than ever to ensure that no one is left behind. Bridging the digital divide is not just a matter of access; it's about equity, opportunity, and participation in modern life.

Phase 2 will build on the strong foundations laid in Phase 1, which delivered a range of successful initiatives. Among these was the Community Champions Program, launched in April 2024, which reached over 1,000 community members in more than 10 languages, through a dedicated network of around 50 champions.

The success of this program led to supplementary funding from the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, allowing WADIP to adapt the model for Community Resource Centre (CRC) staff. This new CRC Champions Program has already engaged 11 CRCs across priority regions including the Kimberley, Goldfields-Esperance, and the Pilbara – with three CRCs located in Aboriginal communities, and one operated by an ACCO.

Another key achievement was the Scholarship Program, which supported 84 recipients to complete one or two credentialled skillsets at North Metro TAFE, enhancing their digital literacy and employability. The project also reached over 300 frontline community service workers, equipping them with the knowledge and tools to better support digital inclusion in their roles.

In addition, the Access and Affordability Pilot, delivered in partnership with WorkVentures, provided 497 refurbished laptops and more than 300 one-year NBN internet plans to participants. This complex, large-scale pilot offered valuable insights that have informed the project's ongoing strategy and approach.

Partnerships flourished during Phase 1, with 50 organisations actively engaged in the Project Partner Network, contributing to a collaborative and community-driven effort to tackle digital exclusion.

As we look ahead to Phase 2, our commitment to bridging the digital divide in Western Australia remains unwavering. We understand that the barriers to digital inclusion – ability, access, and affordability – are deeply interconnected, and that a person-centred, holistic approach is essential to meeting the diverse needs of those experiencing digital exclusion.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to all our partners and participants for their continued collaboration, and to Lotterywest for their renewed support. Together, we are making meaningful strides toward a digitally inclusive future for all Western Australians.

Emergency Relief and Food Policy

Community Relief and Resilience Program

The Community Relief and Resilience (CRR) Program plays a vital role in supporting emergency relief and food security policy across Western Australia. Funded by Lotterywest, the program provides essential coordination and leadership for the emergency relief sector, which delivers food relief, material aid, and financial assistance to individuals and families experiencing poverty and inequality.

Through the CRR Program, WACOSS brings together key initiatives and networks that strengthen the sector's capacity and reach. This includes convening the Community Relief and Resilience Network, the State Emergency Relief Committee, and Fair Food WA – each contributing to a more connected and responsive support system for communities in need.

The program also oversees the WA Connect community services directory, a critical resource that helps people access local support services quickly and easily.

By fostering collaboration and providing strategic leadership, the CRR Program continues to enhance the resilience of communities across WA, ensuring that those facing hardship are met with compassion, dignity, and practical support.

Community Relief and Resilience Network

Through the CRR network, we create meaningful opportunities for organisations, staff, and volunteers across the sector to connect, share knowledge, and strengthen their capacity to deliver positive outcomes for the communities they serve.

A key part of this work is the monthly CRR Forum, which brings together participants from across Western Australia to exchange information, build relationships, and foster collaboration.

Participants have consistently shared how the forum has helped them to build valuable connections and leverage the collective experience and opportunities within the CRR sector to improve outcomes for people accessing services. This sense of shared purpose and mutual support has become a cornerstone of the program's success.

Complementing the forum is a digital broadcast, which keeps the CRR network informed about relevant news, resources, and upcoming events. This ongoing communication ensures that those working in the sector remain connected and equipped with the tools they need to respond effectively to the evolving needs of their communities.

State Emergency Relief Committee

The State Emergency Relief Committee (SERC) plays a key role in shaping policy and advocacy efforts aimed at improving outcomes for people experiencing poverty and financial hardship in WA.

Throughout the reporting period, SERC members have actively contributed their expertise to research and policy development across a range of important social issues, including food security, energy equity, intersectionality in practice, and reducing financial inequality.

One notable area of work involved collaboration with the Economic Abuse Reference Group of WA to address concerns around the use of the ServiceWA application in processing payments such as the WA Student Assistance Payment (WASAP). This work brought together sector feedback and raised critical issues including economic abuse, safety by design, and digital literacy in the delivery of digital payments.

By engaging with relevant government departments, the group helped influence

improvements that have enhanced safety, community support, and accessibility for ServiceWA users and families claiming the WASAP. This collaborative effort reflects the committee's commitment to ensuring that digital systems are designed with the needs and vulnerabilities of all users in mind, and that policy decisions are informed by lived experience and sector insight.

Fair Food WA

Fair Food WA (FFWA) is a collaborative network of not-for-profit organisations, research institutes, advocacy groups, government agencies, and peak bodies working together to address food insecurity across WA.

United by a shared vision, FFWA advocates for a food system that ensures everyone has access to healthy, affordable food, while also tackling the underlying drivers of food insecurity.

Over the past year, FFWA has focused on raising awareness about the growing impact of food insecurity and the urgent need for greater coordination and leadership across the food system. By bringing diverse voices to the table, the network has helped shape conversations that centre the lived experiences of those most affected.

FFWA also plays a key role in providing policy advice to decision-makers, ensuring that the needs of people experiencing food insecurity are prioritised in policymaking across sectors. This work continues to strengthen the foundations for a more equitable and resilient food system in WA – one that leaves no one behind.

WA Connect

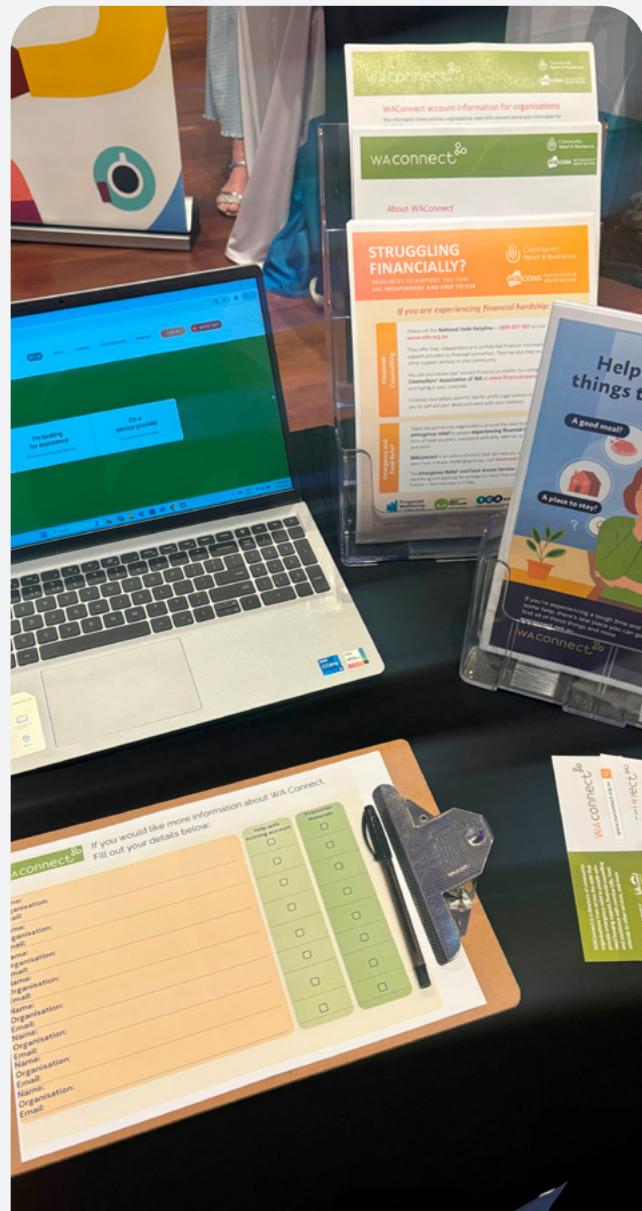
WA Connect is an online directory of community services in WA. The platform assists community members to search for services in their location and access important information in a single place; making it easier for people to get help and for services to work together.

WA Connect uses data analytics to understand the profiles of WA residents seeking assistance, their location, what services they seek and what

costs they are struggling with. WA Connect data is referenced in WACOSS submissions and is an important tool in our advocacy.

In FY25, the directory registered 121,200 visits from 72,680 users, generating 433,250 searches for services. The services with the most searches during this period fell within the following categories:

1. Help with food (27 per cent of all searches) – approx. 116,890 searches
2. Financial services (5.7 per cent of all searches) – approx. 24,820 searches (financial assistance, bills)
3. Help with accommodation (5 per cent of all searches) – approx. 21,840 (rent assistance, accommodation)



Premier's Natural Disaster Recovery Fund

In November 2024, the State Government launched the Premier's Natural Disaster Recovery Fund (PNDRF), supported by Lotterywest, to provide swift financial relief to communities impacted by natural disasters. Designed to complement existing relief payments and longer-term support arrangements, the fund offers a responsive mechanism to help those affected recover quickly and effectively.

WACOSS, in partnership with the Australian Red Cross, is responsible for overseeing the assessment and disbursement of funds when the program is activated in response to significant emergency events. The fund is designed to bridge the gap between immediate emergency relief and any insurance payouts, offering up to \$20,000 to households with severely damaged or uninhabitable homes, and \$5,000 to community groups and local businesses.

WACOSS administers the support provided to local businesses and community groups, and although the fund has not yet been activated, extensive preparatory work has been undertaken to ensure readiness. In collaboration with Lotterywest, WACOSS has co-developed robust eligibility and application criteria, created clear and user-friendly forms, and implemented a secure, cloud-based grant management platform that streamlines the entire process – from application to review, disbursement, and reporting.

To ensure transparency and accountability, strong governance and compliance measures have been embedded into the fund's operations. WACOSS has also led proactive engagement with key stakeholders, including the Department of Fire and Emergency Services, the Department of Communities, Australian Red Cross, Western Australian Local Government Association (WALGA), and Lotterywest, fostering alignment and situational awareness across sectors.



Looking ahead, WACOSS is committed to consolidating its role in disaster recovery by effectively managing PNDRF activations and continuing to strengthen its policy and advocacy efforts. These steps will further reinforce WACOSS's leadership in advancing community resilience across WA.

Child Safe Project

The past year has marked a significant step forward in our collective journey toward making Western Australia's community service sector safer for children.

In July 2024, the Department of Communities renewed its commitment to child safety by continuing to fund the Child Safe Project, supporting small to medium-sized organisations across WA to implement the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations. With a clear vision and a growing network of committed partners, the project has achieved considerable momentum.

A key milestone came in late 2024 with the formation of a formal partnership between WACOSS and the Council of Aboriginal Services WA (CASWA). Thanks to a successful Lotterywest proposal, this collaboration officially launched in February 2025 and has brought a much-needed cultural lens to the project's work – ensuring Aboriginal-led organisations are supported in ways that are meaningful and respectful of cultural context.

From June 2024 to January 2025, the Child Safe Project delivered targeted, high-impact activities across the state. These included full-day workshops in Kalgoorlie and Esperance, reaching 34 regional participants, and relationship-building visits to Derby, engaging ACCOs and one mainstream provider.

Our major online TAC workshop attracted over 100 participants, while a governance-focused webinar drew 110 registrants – demonstrating strong sector-wide interest in building safer systems for children.

Since February 2025, the project's influence has continued to grow. A highlight was the Child Safe panel event at the Fairground Conference, featuring sector leaders including Anglicare WA CEO and WACOSS President Mark Glasson, WA Commissioner for Children and Young People Jacqueline McGowan-Jones, and Ultimate Youth



Worker's Aaron Garth. This powerful discussion brought national principles to life through real-world leadership perspectives.

Further reinforcing this momentum, a leadership webinar co-facilitated by Mark Glasson and Kim Brooklyn attracted over 125 attendees, strengthening executive-level engagement with child safe practices. The launch of a monthly Child Safe newsletter and tailored resources for boards and executive teams has ensured ongoing learning and practical tools for implementation.

Importantly, we continue to work hand-in-hand with CASWA and the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC) to ensure our resources are accessible, culturally appropriate, and effective.

Our growing collaboration with partners – including the Department of Communities, the Department of Health, DLGSC, WALGA, WA Ombudsman (Reportable Conduct Scheme), the Valuing Children Initiative, and WA Child Safety Services – has strengthened the Child Safe Connect Community of Practice. This platform now plays a central role in promoting a unified, sector-wide approach to embedding child safety across all levels of community service delivery.

In summary, 2024–25 has been a year of real progress. Through partnership, leadership, and a strong focus on cultural safety, we are helping shape a sector where child safety is not just a principle – but a lived, everyday practice.

Heat Vulnerability Project

The Heat Vulnerability Project, funded by the National Disaster Risk Reduction (NDRR) program, has made significant strides in strengthening Western Australia's preparedness and resilience to extreme heat events. In collaboration with the Department of Communities and the Department of Health, this ground-breaking project focused on identifying communities most at risk from high heat and developing practical, community-led solutions.

A key achievement of the project was the development of a Heat Vulnerability Map, created in partnership with AusEnHealth and leading experts in climate health. This sophisticated tool, geospatially mapped by the Department of Communities, enables cross-departmental coordination and provides a valuable resource for local governments, service providers, and community stakeholders to better target their heat response strategies.

Three pilot communities were selected in consultation with local governments and residents. In each location, the project co-designed and trialled a range of innovative heat interventions, ensuring they were grounded in local context and informed by those with lived experience. These place-based trials laid the foundation for a suite of practical tools and resources that support a coordinated, community-driven response to heatwaves.



By bringing together the strengths of community organisations, local governments, and State Government agencies, the project successfully harnessed inter-sectoral knowledge to create tailored, effective interventions. This collaborative approach not only enhanced preparedness in the pilot sites, but also delivered insights that have state-wide relevance.

Crucially, the project did more than map risk – it uncovered what communities need to become more resilient in the face of rising temperatures. Through this process, the project identified clear strategies to protect vulnerable populations, particularly those most at risk from heat-related health impacts.

The outputs of the Heat Vulnerability Project mark a significant step forward in climate adaptation planning. They provide both a blueprint for future action and a proven model of community engagement in addressing environmental challenges. The project has strengthened local capacity, improved inter-agency collaboration, and positioned WA to lead in climate resilience efforts.



Pilbara Project

WACOSS Pilbara Project provides place-based support to the Pilbara community and its social services sector, working to strengthen local capability and coordination in addressing complex systemic challenges. Whether through strategic coordination, advocacy, or capacity building, the focus remains on enhancing the effectiveness and alignment of services to better meet community needs.

A key part of this work is the facilitation of the Pilbara Family and Domestic Violence Network (PFDVN), which is driven by a vision to eradicate violent and abusive behaviour, and ensure families are safe in their homes and communities. The network meets regularly to share information, design localised advocacy campaigns, and develop innovative, preventative solutions that reduce stigma and encourage early recognition of abuse and help-seeking.

In response to the region's complex and interrelated challenges, WACOSS Pilbara also developed the Thriving Pilbara Communities Outcomes Framework (TPCOF). This strategic tool aims to move beyond siloed approaches

by promoting coordinated action and shared outcomes. It focuses on creating safe and nurturing environments for young children, recognising the critical role early childhood plays in shaping lifelong health and wellbeing.

The framework helps social services align their program design with key outcome domains, identify service gaps, and uncover opportunities for collaboration and improvement. It also supports regional-level coordination, and can inform funding decisions, offering universal applicability while remaining grounded in local relevance.

WACOSS Pilbara Project continues to elevate regional voices in State-wide policy advocacy, ensuring that the unique challenges faced by Pilbara communities are heard and addressed. The project also supports the sector through centralised information sharing and a range of capability-building initiatives, helping to foster a more connected, resilient, and responsive service system across the region.





Cost of Living Report

In December, WACOSS released its annual [Cost of Living Report](#). The report demonstrated continued deterioration of the financial position of most model households. Living costs have continued to increase in most categories, particularly housing, while wage growth has not kept up.

Weekly expenditure of the model single parent family surpassed their income by \$94.12. The unemployed single saw a moderate improvement in their circumstances due to increases to JobSeeker and Rent Assistance. However, they remain teetering on the edge with their basic living costs totalling 15 cents more than their weekly income.

For the first time, the model two parent family's income was insufficient to cover their basic living costs, with weekly expenses exceeding their income by \$60.77. This modelling was backed up by data from the Financial Wellbeing Collective, which showed a substantial increase in the number of waged families seeking emergency relief and financial support between 2022 and 2024. Many households have exhausted their savings and are running out of options.

The report explored the differential impact of cost-of-living increases on low- and higher-income households. Where higher income households may be able to buffer periods of high costs by changing their spending patterns, low-income families do not have the flexibility in their weekly budget to absorb increases – they must go without or go into debt.

This year's report also considered 11 cost-of-living announcements from the State Government and the extent to which they impact the model households' weekly budgets. Analysis demonstrated that while some announcements appropriately targeted low-income households and reduced pressure on the weekly budget, many announcements missed the mark.

The report recommended more effectively targeted, long-term solutions that would support universal access to a standard of living in line with community expectations.

State Budget Analysis

The 2025-26 State Budget was handed down on 19 June, a mere 100 days after the 2025 State election saw a returned Cook Government.

While it was the second budget Treasurer Rita Saffioti and Premier Roger Cook have delivered together, their first post-election budget marked a political turning point.

It is clear they saw the result as the endorsement of the policies and promises they took to the election, supporting shifts in priorities from the McGowan era.

This budget was delivered in a time of rising global uncertainty. This was reflected in a strong narrative around responsible financial management, backed in by the seventh budget surplus in a row, with \$2.5 billion reserved. WA's economy remains the nation's economic powerhouse, adding 340,000 jobs and retaining the most affordable debt levels of any State.

As a post-election budget there were few surprises, with the majority of new spending delivered against election commitments.

WACOSS was pleased to see investment in a number of initiatives we have been advocating for, including expanding School Breakfast Programs, extending the Rent Relief Scheme, and expanding HUGS to include public housing tenants' water bills.

The establishment of an Office of Early Childhood within the Department of the Premier and Cabinet to coordinate whole-of-government policy and programs in early child development, was a key long-term WACOSS ask we were happy to see delivered.

It is also timely, given the week before the budget saw the release of the Australian Early Development Census results, which were a wake-up call for WA. They showed a significant turnaround in school readiness outcomes, which was the worst drop in performance of any State.

For a budget that was framed as delivering new economic infrastructure to support a growing State, WACOSS was disappointed to see WA's investment in our social infrastructure continuing to fall behind population growth.

A growing State needs investment in both physical and social infrastructure to keep up with the needs of a growing and thriving community. While we clearly needed the \$13.7 billion invested in "poles and wires, ports and pipes..." (as the Treasurer put it), we also need support services, early education and care services, child health nurses, and a raft of other services to support a new and growing population.

This is why WACOSS continues to call for a long-term plan to ensure our social infrastructure keeps pace with growing and changing community needs, to deliver the social services and supports that young migrant working families and an ageing population need to thrive.

Treasury budget figures show our population has grown by an additional 300,000 over the last five years. This is a key driver of our ongoing crisis in housing affordability, particularly for those on lower incomes and those living in our regions.

While inflation has eased, costs remain high. Wages have not caught up, and the standard of living for many Western Australians, particularly those on low income, has declined.

With the re-commissioning of many social services facing ongoing delays, community support funding has stagnated in recent years, falling well behind the rising cost of service delivery and leaving it unable to respond to growing demands from a growing and changing population.

WACOSS was again joined by our colleagues from WA Treasury in delivering a sector budget briefing following the release of the State Budget, which was well received by our members.

Our State Budget response concluded with these heart-felt words:

“Western Australia has so much going for it just now – the strength of our economy, the value of our resources, the quality of our natural environment and the opportunity to build a meaningful and rewarding life.

“We need to invest in all our people – to ensure the next generation are healthy, happy and creative and ready to build our state’s future.”



Powerful Movement for Social and Economic Justice

Strategic Catalyst **3**

Make WA Fair

Our message ahead of the 2025 State Election was made loud and strong through billboards around Perth, advertisements in the paper, across social media, and from our leaders: we need to make WA fair for every Western Australian and ensure no one is left behind.

The Make WA Fair campaign was launched amid both a cost of living and housing crisis, with unsustainably high costs and low wage growth hurting Western Australians on lower incomes.

We focused our campaign on calling for targeted, genuinely long-term solutions which would help to create a State where everyone has the opportunity to thrive. This meant prioritising policies that address inequality, supporting those doing it tough, and creating pathways where everyone has the chance to succeed.

Our Make WA Fair campaign had four key asks:

Cost-of-living relief for the people who need it most.

Rent reform.

Improving access to quality ECEC.

Sustainable funding for community services.



This targeted approach paid off. We were proud to achieve the following election promises as part of this campaign:

- Expansion of the breakfast program to more WA schools.
- Creation and resourcing of an Office of Early Childhood.
- Increased funding for financial counselling services.
- Expansion and uplift of the Patient Assisted Travel Scheme (PATS).
- Expansion of HUGS eligibility to social housing tenants for water.
- Cheaper public transport for university and TAFE students, with the introduction of one-zone fares.





Campaigns We Support

Campaigning for social justice issues that align with our vision and purpose is core to what WACOSS does. We are active members of some significant campaigns, giving our time and expertise.

They include:



**NO PLACE FOR
POVERTY**



We also support many other important campaigns, adding our voice to their cause:

Alcohol
fuels many
harms
campaign



**Home
Time.**



No Place for Poverty

No Place for Poverty is a social movement which aims to unite people in challenging growing levels of inequality, inspire local action, demand fairer systems and advocate for better government policies.

Originally established as the Equity Project in 2022, it was relaunched as No Place for Poverty in January 2025, ahead of the State and Federal elections.

No Place for Poverty amplifies the voices of people with lived experience of poverty and is

connecting with the broader community via a civic participation plan, which aims to mobilise and equip people with the tools to advocate for a WA without poverty. This includes a social media campaign as well as community workshops.

WACOSS is a founding partner organisation, alongside Anglicare WA, Mission Australia (WA Branch), Centrecare, Communicare, Wungening Aboriginal Corporation, and Ruah Community Services.



Submissions

- [Access Arrangement for the Mid-West and South-West Gas Distribution System](#)
- [Gas Marketing Code of Conduct 2024 Draft Review Report](#)
- A Roadmap for First Nations Digital Inclusion
- All Paths Lead to Home – Action Plan 2025-30
- [National Strategy for Food Security in Remote First Nations Communities](#)
- State Public Health Plan Priorities
- [Tax Laws Amendments \(Incentivising Food Donations to Charitable Organisations\) Bill 2024](#)
- Electricity Code Consultative Committee Draft Review Report
- State Response to the Federal Review of the Coastal Trading Act 2012
- WA Community Health Services Strategy
- Free TV Code
- Public Health Amendment (On-Product Health Messages and Other Measures) Regulations 2024
- Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drugs Strategy 2025-2030
- [Inquiry into Energy, Food and Water Security in Northern Australia](#)
- Economic Regulation Authority Draft Decision on Amendments to the Gas Marketing Code
- Family & Domestic Violence Workforce Capability Framework
- Centrepay Reforms
- [State Wage Case](#)



It's Time to Build Community, Leaving No One Behind: WA State Budget Submission 2025-26

The 2025-26 WA State Budget Submission focused on making WA fair by prioritising people, calling on the WA Government to change their investment priorities, laying out a plan for investment to rebalance the service system and shift the focus to meet the needs of people, and creating a community where everybody can flourish.

The submission outlined the priority areas of investment in our social infrastructure: investing in the building blocks for a good life; investing in safe and secure homes; investing in communities; and investing in equity and good process. It made 59 recommendations.

In developing the submission, WACOSS consulted with 112 organisations around the State including in Broome, the Pilbara, Geraldton, Kalgoorlie, Esperance, the metropolitan area, Albany, Bunbury and Busselton.



The State Government made election and budget commitments on a number of these recommendations including:

- Establishing a Stolen Generations Reparations Scheme
- Increasing funding for financial counselling services
- Expansion of HUGS eligibility to social housing tenants for water
- Expansion and uplift of the PATS
- Expansion of the breakfast program to more WA schools
- Cheaper public transport for University and TAFE students with the introduction of one-zone fares
- Creating and resourcing an Office of Early Childhood
- Reducing 'fragmented care' for children in their preschool years

While these investments are welcome, many others were not funded, such as car registration concessions, resources to implement the Digital Inclusion Blueprint, an overhaul and reform of the youth justice system, increase in the Grandcarers Support Scheme payment, and more respite care. All these initiatives are essential elements of our social infrastructure and as we are committed to leaving no one behind, WACOSS will continue to advocate for their adoption.



Elevating the Community Sector's Value in Western Australia

Strategic Catalyst **4**

Advocacy Wins

School Breakfast Program

We campaigned strongly for the expansion of the School Breakfast Program, a targeted cost-of-living measure which reduces food costs for struggling families, as well as preparing kids to learn and encouraging school engagement. It was a key element of our Make WA Fair election campaign, where we focused on initiatives which would help to create a society where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

This work was rewarded when the State Government allocated \$37.2 million over four years to the program in the 2025-26 budget. This funding will help the program grow from two to five days per week at schools currently participating, as well as to extra schools. Eventually, the program will be available at more than 670 locations throughout WA.

Office of Early Childhood

WACOSS believes universal access to quality early education and care is crucial to ensuring all children have the best possible start in life. This means all children – aged from zero to five – are entitled to and can access ECEC services.

After advocating for a dedicated Office of Early Childhood for several years, we welcomed the State Government's decision to fund the establishment of this office within the Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

We are engaging closely with the team establishing the office, which will have a broad, whole-of-government remit to better oversee integrated responses to early child development.

Our advocacy will also focus on the need for an advisory committee, with senior representatives of public agencies and the sector to oversee a 10-year strategy with clear outcomes and reporting.

After also campaigning for the reduction of fragmented care for children in their preschool years, we were pleased with the announcement of funding to expand four-year-old kindergarten and boost before-and-after-care at schools.

Increased Funding for Financial Counselling Services

Our successful advocacy resulted in several injections of funding for financial counselling services: the first, \$1.4 million allocation in the 2024-25 Mid-Year Review; and the second, a \$3 million allocation over two years in the 2025-26 State Budget.



This investment will help to address existing underfunding for financial counselling services, who are also struggling to meet the growing demand for crisis services. The Financial Wellbeing Collective has reported that for clients seeking financial counselling, the number of homeowners with mortgages has overtaken the number of private renters.

But there are many other community services which have not had a funding uplift, which has seen their ability to support people in need erode over a long period of time. We continue to advocate for sustainable future funding for the entire community services sector.

Expansion of the Patient Assisted Travel Scheme

PATS is a cost-of-living initiative which helps Western Australians living in regional and remote areas access specialist health care in Perth or regional hubs.

We were pleased to see the additional \$28.5 million funding for PATS in the State Budget to increase the fuel subsidy from \$0.26 to \$0.40 per kilometre, but are awaiting further detail and funding for expanding the eligibility of the scheme, as per WA Labor's election promise.

Expansion of the Hardship Utility Grant Scheme

This was another important win from our Make WA Fair campaign for fairer and better targeted cost-of-living reform.

The expansion of the eligibility criteria for HUGS to include water utility customers living in social housing closed an inequitable loophole in the scheme.

It offers meaningful debt relief for social housing tenants with water debt, with eligible households expected to receive an average \$529 of financial assistance a year.

Extension of the Rent Relief Scheme

WACOSS and Shelter WA, along with their members, have been strong advocates of the WA Rent Relief Program. We were pleased to see the WA Government announce in May 2025 that it would extend the program to the end of the year - but will continue to argue for its continuation.

This targeted cost-of-living initiative, in partnership with Anglicare WA and Vinnies WA, helps Western Australians at risk of homelessness in a time of soaring rents, providing one-off payments to help tenants to maintain their tenancy.

Financial counsellors and emergency relief providers have told WACOSS they were experiencing an increase in demand for assistance, with people forgoing food and entering arrears with their utility bills to avoid going into rental arrears and being evicted.

Eligible tenants must be WA residents who are in rental stress and whose rental arrears put them at risk of eviction.

Cheaper Public Transport for University and TAFE Students

We campaigned for measures to reduce the cost of public transport on those who need it most, so the State Government's decision to introduce a suburban flat fare, capped at the cost of a one-zone ticket on the Transperth network, is a welcome cost-of-living initiative.

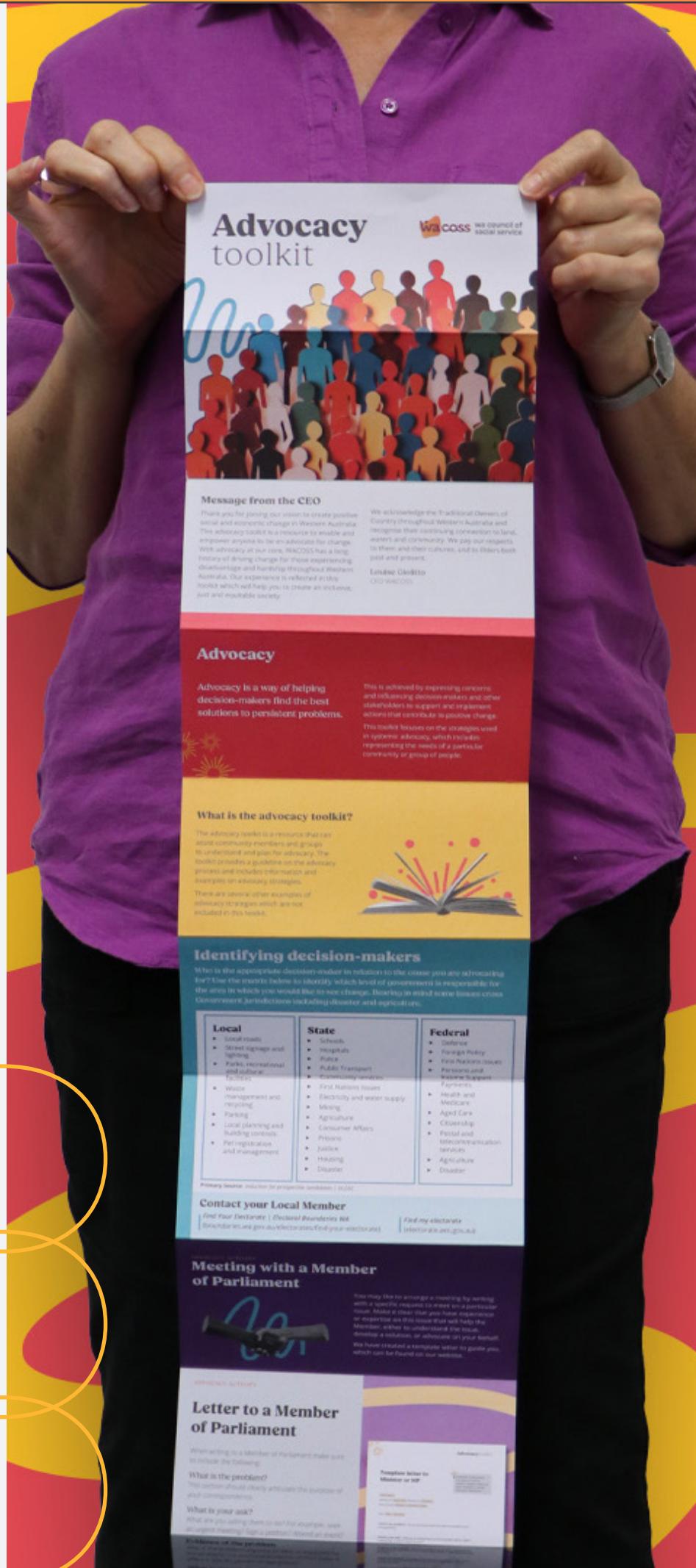
This flat fare, which will make travel across the expanded Perth public transport network more affordable and accessible, will not come into force until January 2026.

Advocacy Toolkit Workshops

Our Advocacy Toolkit continues to be a popular resource for organisations or people wanting to be an effective advocate for change. Over the past year, we have delivered 17 workshops and reached more than 150 people. We also delivered our first paid advocacy training.

Many participants reported feeling empowered by their new advocacy skills:

“Thank you for helping to bring our passion to life! It is the first time I have felt that I can make a change, and I can make it NOW!”



Sustainable Funding and Commissioning

We are making important strides in our advocacy to ensure the community sector will be able to efficiently deliver the services Western Australians need, when and where they need them. The State Government has been listening to us and we finally feel like we are making headway.

Our wins over the past year include uplifts in funding for CSATS, family and domestic violence services, and financial counselling services. This has been a combined effort with Community Employers WA and other peak bodies.

WACOSS played a leading peak role in advocating for increased funding for CSATS and a commissioning process which recognises the need for State-wide coverage, as well as meeting the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

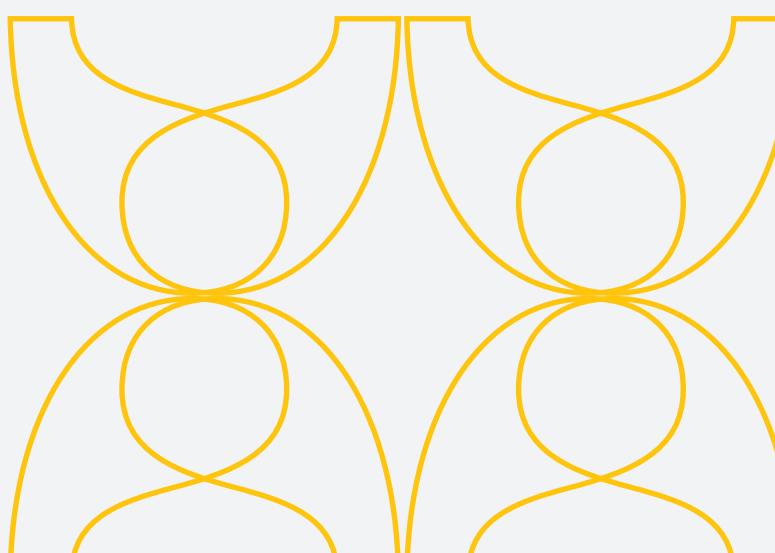
Over the past three years, we have also secured a commitment by the State Government to include an additional 0.4 per cent to the indexation rate for service agreements to cover the cost of the superannuation guarantee.

Delays in commissioning and the sustainability of funding have been front and centre of our discussions with the State Government. We understand the impact of these factors on the sector's ability to continue to deliver services and the ongoing difficulties in maintaining this. We are particularly aware of the challenges in regional WA, where many organisations have been forced to reduce services, in a time of increased demand.

A core part of our advocacy is gathering evidence to support our growing concerns that services will continue to be cut. Along with our sector survey, WACOSS produced eight case studies which demonstrated the real cost of delivering different services across our vast State. We have also developed a detailed income and expenditure spreadsheet which will show the extra costs organisations are facing, including meeting regulatory obligations like child safety compliance and protecting against threats like cybersecurity.

These tools will present a rich picture of the cost pressures on the sector, from the growing complexity of delivering services to the impact of the rising costs of living.

All these tools, and the data we are collecting, is being used in our direct advocacy with Treasury and Finance officials. We thank everyone who has given their valuable time to share information with us.



State Wage Case

This year, WACOSS argued for a 4.5 per cent increase to the State Minimum Wage before the Western Australian Industrial Relations Commission. Our [written](#) and oral submissions urged the Commission to consider the experiences of real people, in addition to the qualitative data and trends presented each year.

To this end, we included and explored three participant case studies from the Living Realities Project – Anita, Heather and Andy. While their experiences and circumstances are varied, each participant described the inadequacy of their wage to meet basic living costs, even with supplementation by Centrelink income support payments. They also detailed how this financial insecurity is causing harm to their health, happiness, and long-term wellbeing.

Our approach was well received by the Commission, which determined to increase the State Minimum Wage by 3.75 per cent, resulting in an additional \$34.40 per week for minimum wage workers. On the case studies included in our submission, the Commission, in their reasons for decision, said:



“WACOSS emphasised some of these consequences, especially for women and younger people, of employment in low paid occupations.

“We have considered carefully the content of these case studies. They have been impactful and are of assistance in gaining an insight into the challenges facing low-income employees, and the consequences for individuals in different living circumstances.

“This includes financial insecurity, negative health impacts of being deprived of basic needs essential for good health, and social exclusion.”

Building a Stronger Organisation

Strategic Catalyst **5**



WACOSS Member and Stakeholder Feedback

Each year, WACOSS surveys its members and stakeholders to gather insights into our performance and impact. The 2024–25 feedback reaffirmed the value of our advocacy, sector-wide networking, and timely information sharing—while highlighting opportunities to strengthen engagement, accessibility, and support.

What Members Value Most About Their Membership

Members identified three primary benefits of being part of WACOSS:

- 1. Advocacy and Representation:** The ability to be part of a strong collective voice that advocates and represents members to key decision-makers in government.
- 2. Networking and Collaboration:** Opportunities for sector-wide connections, networking, collaboration and engagement through events, forums and partnerships with other organisations in the sector.
- 3. Access to Information:** Timely updates on issues, opportunities, and sector developments.

Areas for Improvement

Feedback pointed to four key areas for improvement

- 4. Training and Professional Development:** Expand online and on-demand training, leadership workshops, and sector-specific forums (e.g. ACCOs, youth services).
- 5. Member Support and Engagement:** Increase personalised outreach, support smaller organisations, and explore peer mentoring models.
- 6. Membership Value:** Offer more member-only benefits, celebrate member achievements, and review fee structures for affordability.
- 7. Regional Considerations:** Boost regional advocacy, deliver more local events, and improve digital access to training and resources.

We thank all members and stakeholders who contributed their insights. Your feedback continues to shape a stronger, more inclusive WACOSS.

Governance, Internal Improvements, and Professional Development

Guided by the WACOSS Governance and Risk Committee, WACOSS made significant strides in enhancing its cybersecurity framework throughout the year. We implemented robust security measures alongside updated policies and procedures to safeguard our digital infrastructure.

In December 2024, we transitioned to the Employment Hero HR platform, streamlining payroll and leave management processes. This move has improved operational efficiency and provided a more user-friendly experience for staff.

Professional development remained a key focus, with initiatives aimed at fostering a more inclusive, confident and articulate workplace culture. Staff participated in vocal and public speaking training facilitated by professional communicators. This training was designed to:

- Build confidence in facilitating workshops and webinars,
- Enhance clarity, engagement and delivery in presentations, and
- Strengthen vocal presence and address common speaking challenges.

These skills directly support the WACOSS vision by empowering staff to communicate more effectively across diverse audiences and platforms. The training combined foundational vocal techniques with structured approaches to speech preparation and delivery, enhancing our capacity in meetings, webinars, and public forums.

In alignment with our commitment to equity and inclusion, all staff took part in an LGBTIQA+ inclusive practice workshop. This was complemented by the development of a comprehensive Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

We also engaged in anti-racism and bystander intervention training delivered by Democracy in Colour. This program equipped staff with:

- A foundational understanding of racial justice, power dynamics and intersectionality,
- Practical strategies for addressing racism in the workplace,
- Tools for creating safety using the '5Ds of bystander intervention', and
- Approaches to embedding a racial justice lens into our work.

These initiatives reflect our ongoing commitment to creating a safe, inclusive and empowered workplace that supports our broader advocacy goals.





DropIN Solutions

The 2024-25 financial year was another strong year for DropIN Solutions, with a steady increase in demand for our design and digital services. We supported a range of internal WACOSS initiatives and delivered high-quality, tailored solutions for organisations across the State and beyond.

This year, we supported a number of key WACOSS projects, including the 2025 WACOSS Conference, the Make WA Fair campaign, and the Heat Vulnerability Mapping Project. Our team provided branding, graphic and web design, and digital support to ensure these initiatives were delivered with a cohesive and accessible visual identity.

We also delivered a wide variety of external projects, including:

- **The Kids Hub Digital Library (Parkerville Children and Youth Care)**
a custom-designed resource hub for children and families.
- **Alike**
a fresh, modern website for the peak body organisation for Peer Support Groups across WA.
- **Kimberley Community Legal Services**
a new website supporting the organisation's work in the Kimberley region, tailored to the needs of remote and regional communities.
- **Department of Communities: Seniors Directory Portal**
a custom-built online platform to support older Western Australians in accessing community services.
- **WOSSCA 16 Days of Activism Campaign**
a series of powerful social media tiles to raise awareness and promote action across Australia.

As always, we continued to strengthen our website hosting and security services. We're committed to offering our clients affordable, reliable and secure hosting, and we've continued to improve our internal systems and processes to deliver on that promise. This includes regular updates, site monitoring, malware scanning, performance checks, and backups for over 40 hosted websites.

The DropIN Solutions team remains committed to innovation, accessibility, and sector capacity-building. As we move into the new financial year, we are excited to continue delivering high-quality, contemporary, purpose-driven design, and digital solutions that empower the organisations we serve.

Financial Report

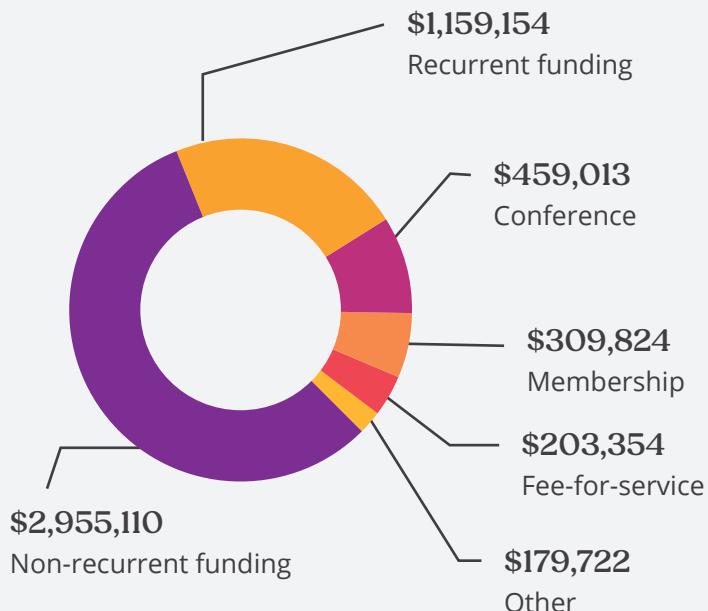
The financial position of WACOSS remains stable with net assets of \$2,350,181, an increase of \$208,927 on the previous financial year.

Income

Total income for the financial year was **\$5,266,177**.

Government and other funding remains the primary source of revenue (78%), together with membership fees (6%) and fee-for-service (4%). As it was a conference year, 9% of income was attributed to it.

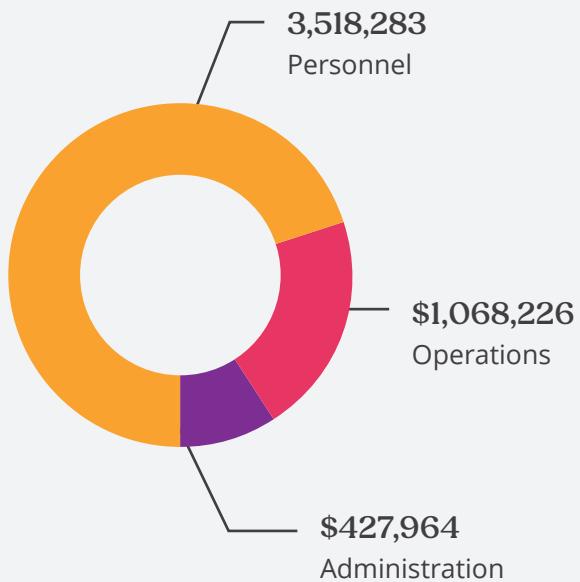
Graphic 1: Income by type



Expenditure

Total expenditure for the financial year was **\$5,014,473**. Personnel remained the largest expense (70%), followed by Operations (21%) and Administration (9%).

Graphic 2: Expenditure by type



Sub note: It should be recognised that the nature of our activities are such that individual projects and major events have the capacity to materially alter specific areas of income and expenditure year-on-year.

Our Sponsors and Funders

Anglicare WA

Australian Government National Recovery and Resilience Agency

Beyond Bank

BHP

Carers WA

Centrecare

Council of Aboriginal Services Western Australia

Department of Communities

Department of Health

Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development

Department of the Premier and Cabinet

Hope Community Services

Lotterywest

Marnin Bowa Dumbara Family Healing Centre

MercyCare

Mission Australia

Outcare

Palmerston

Parkerville Children and Youth Care

Rio Tinto

Ruah Community Services

St Patrick's Community Support Centre

St Vincent de Paul

State Library of Western Australia

WA Primary Health Alliance

WA Return, Recycle, Renew

Wanslea

Water Corporation

Yorgum Healing Services

Our members

Honorary Life Members

- Anne Sinclair
- Brenda Harper-Nelson
- Moira Rainer
- Peter Sirr
- Sue Ash

Associate Individuals

- Alexander Macaulay
- Alia Abdi
- Allan Connolly
- Amit Kolkur
- Angela Lemon
- Carina Becker
- Carol Wakely
- Coby Greer
- Dave Kelly
- David Gilchrist

- Dennis Dicioco
- Fabiola Pinheiro
- Janine Freeman
- Janine Gerard
- Jonathan Seth
- Kuruvilla Mathew
- Linda Savage
- Lisa Baker
- Lorraine Ragus
- Maria Tsoveleas
- Mariska Button
- Nandita R Naroth

- Rebecca Fitzpatrick
- Stephen Dawson
- Stuart Reid
- Sue Lines
- Suzana Kowalska
- Tony Keane
- Trish Owen
- Yvonne Kallane



Social Service Individuals

Angie Paskevicius

Ann White

Anna Presser

Belinda James

Brodie Lewis

Carissa Gautam

Clare Mullen

Donna Quinn

Francis Lynch

Ghylene Palmer

Hayley Priestley

Helen Creed

Helen Liedel

James Paxman

Jennie Gray

Jennifer Monaghan

Joe Calleja

Kylie Hansen

Lorraine Keane

Louise Lamont

Maria Harries

Maria Miceli

Marleen Roch

Michael Berry

Michelle MacKenzie

Noel Harding

Renee Solomon

Renna Gayde

Rochelle Brown

Rosemaree Magro

Samantha Phipps

Stephanie Boyd

Stephen Morrison

Tricia Murray

Vida Corbett

Wendy Simpson

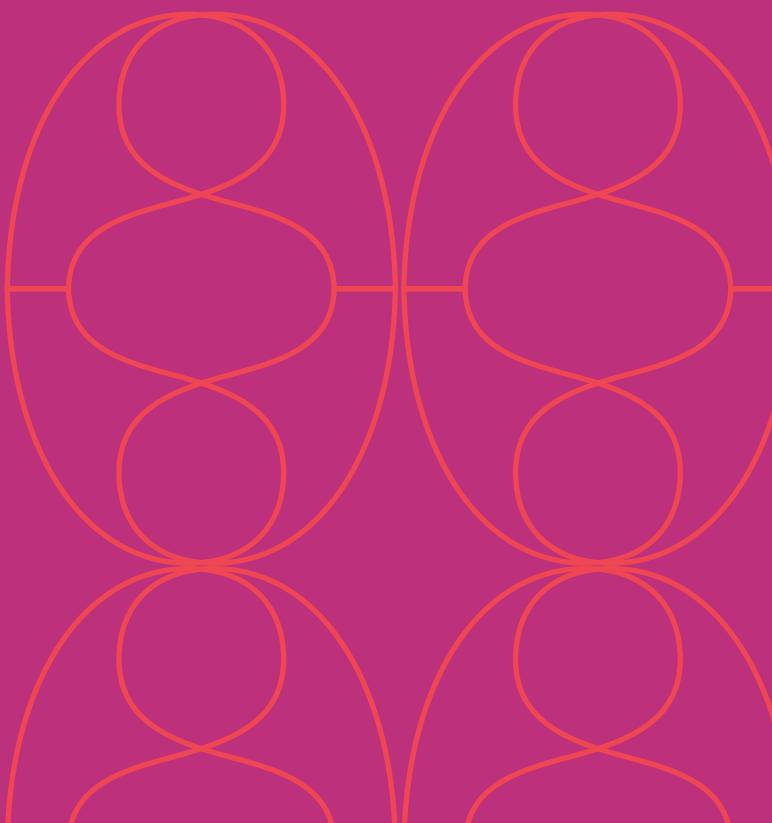
Associate Organisations

City of Nedland

DART Group

Hakka Association of WA Inc (THAWA)

UWA – Division of Social Work & Policy



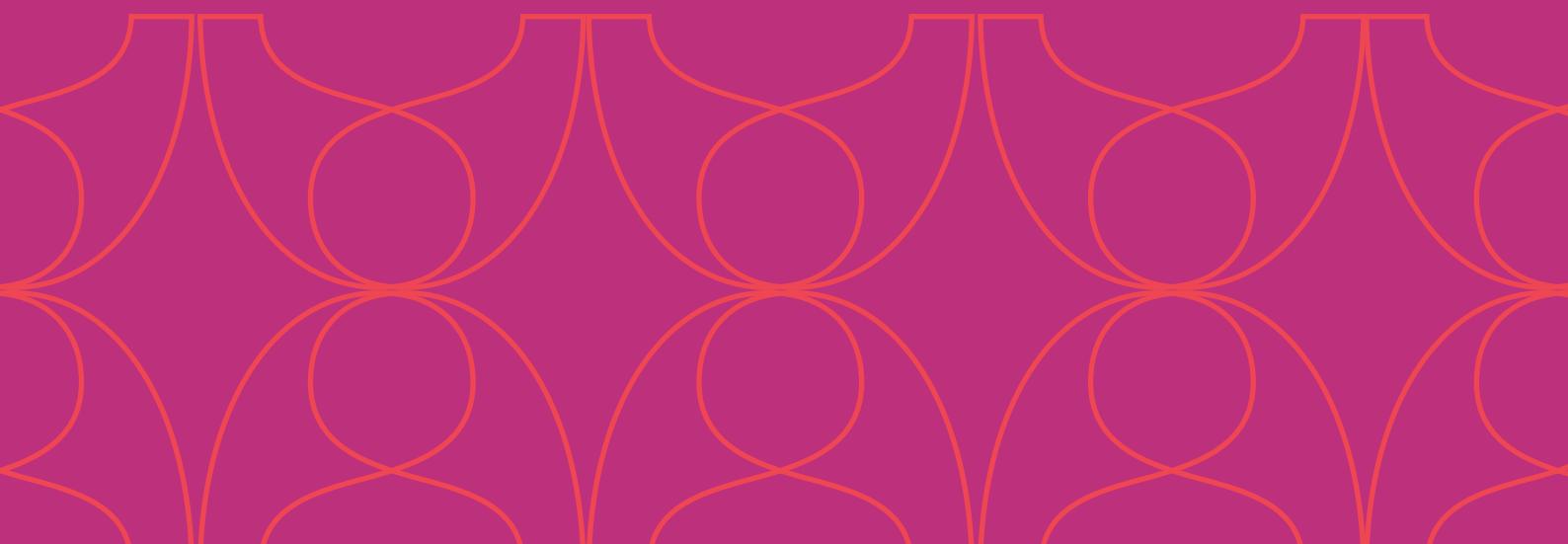
Social Service Organisation Members

- 54 Reasons
- 55 Central Inc
- Aboriginal Health Council of WA
- AccordWest
- Adoption Research & Counselling Service Inc
- Advocare Inc
- Alike WA
- Allambee Counselling
- Amity Health
- Anglicare WA
- Auspire
- Australian Association of Social Workers WA Branch
- Australian Red Cross
- Breast Cancer Care WA
- Bloodwood Tree Association
- Blue Dot Army
- Brave Foundation
- Broome C.I.R.C.L.E. Inc
- Cancer Council Western Australia
- Carnarvon Family Support Service WA Ltd.
- Catholic Outreach
- Centacare Family Services Geraldton
- Centacare Kimberley Association Inc
- Central Agcare Inc
- Centre for Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Detainees
- Centre for Women's Safety and Wellbeing
- Centrecare Inc
- CEOs for Gender Equity
- Child Australia
- Choyces (Peel Youth Services Inc)
- Circle Green Community Legal
- Citizens Advice Bureau of WA Inc
- CoMHWA
- Communicare Inc
- Community Employers WA
- Community Legal WA
- Consumer Credit Legal Service WA
- Coolabaroo (t/a Moorditch Gurlongga Assoc Inc)
- DeafBlind WA (DBWA)
- Desert Blue Connect
- Doubleview House
- Dress for Success Western Australia
- EsCare Inc
- Esperance Care Services
- Facilitatrix
- Family Inclusion Network of Western Australia Inc
- Financial Counsellors Association WA Inc
- Foodbank WA

- Frank Konecny Community Centre
- Fremantle Women's Health Centre
- Goldfields Women Health Care Centre
- Goodstart Early Learning
- GRAI
- Great Southern Community Legal Services
- Haemophilia Foundation WA Inc
- Harvey Community Resource Centre Inc
- Hedland Well Women Centre Inc
- Hedland Women's Refuge
- HelpingMinds
- Hope Community Services Inc
- Housing Choices – previously Access Housing Limited
- In Town Centre Inc
- Indigo Junction
- Injury Matters
- Investing in Our Youth
- Invisible Illnesses Inc (Fibro & Us)
- Joondalup Family Centre
- Just Home Margaret River Inc
- Justice, Ecology and Development Office, Catholic Archdiocese
- Katanning Regional Emergency Accommodation Centre Inc
- Key Assets
- KEYS
- Kidsafe WA Inc
- KIIND
- Kilfinan Australia
- Koya Aboriginal Corporation
- Lamp Incorporated
- Langford Aboriginal Association
- Life Without Barriers
- Linkwest Inc
- Living Proud Inc
- MacKillop Family Services
- Margaret River Community Pantry Inc.
- Margaret River Community Resource Centre Inc
- Marra Worra Worra Aboriginal Corporation
- Men's Health and Wellbeing WA Inc
- Mens Outreach Service Aboriginal Corporation
- Men's Shed of WA
- Mercy Community Services Ltd
- Milligan Community Learning and Resource Centre Inc
- Mission Australia
- Multicultural Futures
- Neami National
- Newman Women's Shelter
- Ngala Community Services
- Ngarliyarndu Bindirri Aboriginal Corporation
- NOFASD Australia
- One Tree Community Services

- Orana House Inc
- OVIS Community Service (Pat Thomas House Inc)
- Palmerston Association Inc
- Parkerville Children and Youth Care Inc
- Pathways Southwest
- Peel Community Development Group
- People with Disabilities WA Inc
- PeopleKind Group
- Perth Asian Community Centre
- Perth Inner City Youth Service
- Pivot Support Services
- Playgroup WA Inc
- Police & Community Youth Centres Inc.
- Reconciliation WA
- Regional Alliance West Inc
- Relationships Australia Western Australia Inc
- Rise Network Inc
- Roman Catholic Archbishop of Perth - Catholic Social Services WA
- Ruah Community Services
- SafeCare
- Sandalwood Family Centre
- Sexual Health Quarters – The Family Planning Association of WA Inc
- Shelter WA
- Social Ventures Australia Ltd
- South Coastal Health & Community Services
- South Lake Ottey Family & Neighbourhood Centre Inc
- South Perth Senior Citizens Centre
- South West Counselling Inc
- South West Refuge Inc
- St Bartholomew's House Inc
- St John of God Outreach Services
- St Patrick's Community Support Centre
- St. Vincent de Paul Society WA Inc
- Starick
- Sussex Street Community Law Service Inc
- Swan City Youth Service Inc.
- Technology for Ageing and Disability WA
- Tender Funerals Perth
- The People Place Busselton Inc
- The Salvation Army WA
- The Shopfront
- The Spiers Centre Inc
- ThirdStory
- Tom Price Youth Support Association Inc
- Tuart Place
- Umbrellas & Footprints
- Uniting Church
- Uniting WA
- Valued Lives
- Volunteering WA

- WA Network of Alcohol and Other Drug Agencies
- WA Return Recyle Renew (Containers for Change WA)
- Wanslea Family Services
- Waratah Support Centre SW Inc
- Waroona Community Resource Centre Inc
- Western Urban Associates (WA) Inc (Street Chaplains)
- Wheatbelt Agcare Community Support Services Inc
- Womens Health and Family Services (also known as LUMA)
- Women's Legal Service WA
- World Vision Australia
- Wunan Foundation
- Wungening Aboriginal Corporation
- Yaandina Family Centre Limited
- YMCA WA
- Yorganop Association Incorporated
- Yorgum Healing Services Aboriginal Corporation
- Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia
- Youth Focus
- Youth Futures WA Inc
- Youth Involvement Council Inc
- Zonta House Refuge Association Inc



DropIN solutions

WACOSS Social Enterprise

WACOSS
members
get **10%**
discount

Branding

**Graphic
Design**

Websites

**Secure Web
Hosting**



WACOSS strives for an inclusive, just and equitable society.

We advocate for social change to improve the wellbeing of Western Australians and to strengthen the community services sector that supports them.

 **WACouncilofSocialService**

 **Western Australian Council of Social Service**
WACouncilofSocialService

Western Australian Council of Social Service
Whadjuk Boodja
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Western Australia

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