

# Recommendations to the WA State Government in relation to COVID-19

WACOSS wrote to the State Government on Friday 20 March on behalf of the community services sector, making recommendations that will assist the continuity of service delivery, while also increasing service delivery to vulnerable cohorts where necessary.

These recommendations included:

- Immediately identify essential services delivered by the community sector, for example, home and community care, homelessness, mental health or drug and alcohol support, FDV, counselling.
- Access to 20% loading pandemic funding as announced the public sector workers to ensure community support workers can assist the most vulnerable in the community.
- Consider one-off supplementary funding processes that give essential services confidence to do what the need to respond to the crisis, as the costs of operations inevitably increase during a crisis.
- Creation of a specialist service pandemic group combining sector and government to meet (daily if required) to address priority issues for ensuring appropriate planning and preparedness is in place across the essential services delivered by the CCS, with the ability to make decisions and respond accordingly.
- Consider deferring non-essential service reform or tender processes until after the current crisis, in consultation with the sector.
- Identification of and access to properties for essential service providers for containment (for example homelessness and FDV services).
- Placement of people who are homeless or could become homeless if they need to be isolated, in line with the recommendations from Shelter WA.
- Creation of specialist support teams (i.e. 'swat' teams) to work with providers to solve emerging service delivery problems and ensure service continuity.
- Access to personal protective equipment (PPE) for direct front line essential services (i.e. face masks, protective clothing, sanitizer);
- The resources to provide for safe transport of individuals to isolation facilities that are setup or a guaranteed commitment State Government will transport these clients.

WACOSS thanked the Government for the measures announced in the first stimulus package to freeze household fees and charges, and to double the Energy Assistance Payment. However in addition, we would like to see direct assistance for vulnerable households at this time, such as:

- The WA Government follow the Victorian Government's example by providing care packages to vulnerable people in their homes, with our assistance. (WACOSS are working closely with the food relief network and major food chains to bring forward future recommendations).
- Ensure tailored domestic violence services during extended periods of home quarantine.
- Ensure adequate mental health supports for people experiencing trauma over an extended difficult period.

- The WA Government instruct GTEs and urges private companies providing essential services such as energy, water, finance, rental housing and telecommunications, to:
  - Stop disconnections. Companies should continue to offer their services without interruption, including energy, telecommunications, banking and insurance.
  - Waive penalty and late fees, including additional interest charges. No one should need to pay extra if they're struggling to pay bills on time.
  - Quick and easy access to alternative payment arrangements and payment plans.
  - Pause debt collection and legal/bankruptcy proceedings practices. People shouldn't be evicted or be hassled by debt collectors during this time. Lenders should consider moratoriums on loan repayments. Advocate to the Federal Government to support these initiatives.

We will continue to keep the sector updated as news and information develops.

For Community Service COVID-19 Resources, visit our dedicated webpage [here](#).