

SERC

State Emergency Relief Committee – Plan 2025

Background

This document provides information about the State Emergency Relief Committee (SERC), including the purpose of the committee and how members will work towards the shared outcomes.

Emergency Relief

Emergency Relief (ER) services support individuals and families experiencing poverty or financial hardship by providing access to food, material aid, financial relief and referrals to other support services. The type of assistance offered by each organisation varies and help may be provided as a once-off, or to assist with ongoing financial disadvantage.

The sector uses language such as crisis assistance and community relief as additional phrases to describe emergency relief assistance. The term resilience is also assumed by the sector in acknowledgement of the breadth of assistance and referrals provided by ER services.

People accessing ER services have typically included those with no income or recipients of income support. However, the high cost of living coupled with WA's housing crisis has seen a growing cohort of working households relying on ER services for essential support.

Overview of the CRR Program

Lotterywest fund the WA Council of Social Service (WACOSS) to deliver the Community Relief and Resilience Program (CRR Program). The Program is intended to coordinate policy and sector support for the WA's emergency relief sector, which:



Includes more than 300 agencies and their outlets across the state,



Receives funding from State and Federal Government Departments, agency revenue, philanthropic sources, and public donations, and



Is sustained by paid workers and volunteers.

As part of the CRR Program, WACOSS convenes and provides backbone support to the SERC. Funding for this activity is for the grant period 2023 – 2026.

Terms of Reference

The SERC is a network of community service organisations who lead policy, advocacy and strategy on behalf of Western Australia's (WA) emergency relief (ER) sector. The purpose of SERC is to improve ER services and reduce poverty and inequality in WA.

Purpose of SERC

1. Build the profile, reputation and consolidated voice of the SERC
2. Develop and promote collective responses to relevant policy, funding and systems issues
3. Maintain an overview of the sector through mapping and reporting
4. Provide feedback to Government and relevant stakeholders on issues impacting the sector and people living with financial hardship in WA
5. Identify service provision challenges and opportunities for improvement
6. Provide access to information and resources that strengthen sector capacity
7. Respond to sector support needs and workforce development priorities
8. Broker relationships between government, funders and the community service sector
9. Promote collaborations and partnerships between providers
10. Ensure mechanisms for broader dialogue and linkages across the sector

Membership

SERC membership comprises organisations including emergency relief providers, relevant Peaks, Government Departments and funding bodies from across WA. Organisation representatives are from middle to upper management positions who have the appropriate authority and expertise to explore system issues and participate in strategic advocacy. Government and funding representatives are assumed as ex-officio members.

Membership is open to community sector organisations in WA who deliver emergency relief services or are committed to improving outcomes for people living with financial hardship. Requests to join the committee can be submitted to WACOSS via the Community Relief and Resilience Program Coordinator – socialpolicy@wacoss.org.au.

Responsibilities

WACOSS is responsible for the facilitation of regular meetings, collation of meeting documents and records, maintaining membership information, and providing communications to the committee.

Members are required to collaborate and provide information, advice and expertise to contribute towards the committee's purpose.

The SERC meet bi-monthly for 90 minutes and on occasion will also meet out of session or for working group meetings. Regular SERC meetings occur on the second Tuesday of every second month commencing in February.

Review Period

The SERC Terms of Reference will be reviewed at the commencement of each calendar year until the conclusion of the grant.

Member organisations

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|--|---|
| Accordwest | Indigo Junction |
| Anglicare WA | Jacaranda Community Centre |
| Australian Red Cross | Linkwest |
| Broome C.I.R.C.L.E | Lotterywest |
| Carnarvon Family Support Service | Midlas |
| Centacare Kimberley Association | Mission Australia |
| Centacare Geraldton | Northern Suburbs Community Legal Centre |
| Centre for Asylum Seekers Refugees and Detainees | Regional Alliance West |
| Communicare | Share and Care Community Services |
| Community Legal WA | St Patrick's Community Support Centre |
| Consumer Credit Legal Service | St Vincent de Paul Society WA |
| Department of Communities | Salvation Army WA |
| Department of Social Services | The Spiers Centre |
| Esperance Care Services | Uniting WA |
| Ethnic Communities Council of WA | Water Corporation |
| Financial Counsellors Association of WA | Western Australian Council of Social Service |
| Financial Wellbeing Collective | Western Australian Local Government Association |
| GIVIT | |



2024 State Emergency Relief Committee Plan and Terms of Reference

| Strategic Area | Terms of Reference | Activities |
|--|---|---|
| <p>Policy, funding and systems</p> <p>Lead collective policy and advocacy to improve outcomes for the community relief and resilience sector and people accessing services.</p> | <p>1. Build the profile, reputation and consolidated voice of the SERC</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State-wide membership from emergency relief providers and relevant Peak, Government Departments and funding bodies • Represent SERC on relevant forums and groups • Maintain SERC webpage on the WACOSS website |
| | <p>2. Develop and promote collective responses to relevant policy, funding and systems issues</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake sector consultations • Establish working groups as necessary • Develop SERC policy positions • Ensure resourcing of services to meet community need |
| | <p>3. Maintain an overview of the sector through mapping and reporting</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify emerging issues and trends • Identify areas of unmet need • Follow contemporary service provision practices and models • Connect with local and regional networks • Track service details on WA Connect • Report key service data and analytics |
| | <p>4. Provide feedback to Government and relevant stakeholders on issues impacting the sector and people living with financial hardship in WA</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribute to relevant government activities, including submissions, consultations, evaluation and parliamentary processes • Enable SERC to contribute to key WACOSS policy papers and reports • Maintain a collection of data and case studies |
| <p>Service provision and sustainability</p> <p>Strengthen sector capacity to enhance sustainability and improve service access and efficiency.</p> | <p>5. Identify service provision challenges and opportunities for improvement</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop strategies for identifying capacity and capability gaps • Encourage continuous improvement across service provision by promoting sector sustainability |
| | <p>6. Provide access to information and resources that strengthen sector capacity</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain a collaborative space to store and share information - WA Connect, CORE, CRR Sector Hub • Distribute CRR Broadcasts and relevant news and updates • Work together to develop key sector tools and resources |
| | <p>7. Respond to sector support needs and workforce development priorities</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host presentations, workshops and guest speakers • Provide advice and assistance to support local and regional networks |
| <p>Collaboration and partnerships</p> <p>Broker relationships between government, funders and the community service sector.</p> | <p>8. Broker relationships between government, funders and the community service sector.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host presentations, conversations and consultations • Invite relevant Government Departments, funding bodies and stakeholders to participate in SERC activities • Provide mechanisms for Government Departments to update and inform the sector |
| | <p>9. Promote collaborations and partnerships between providers</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support cross communication between relevant Committees and local/regional networks • Host rotating meetings (when appropriate) • Provide introductions to relevant stakeholders |
| | <p>10. Ensure mechanisms for broader dialogue and linkages across the sector</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish systems for the sector to liaise on issues and share ideas • Maintain a collaborative space to store and share information – WA Connect, CORE, CRR Sector Hub • Host regular forums and other events, including networking |