Strategic Plan 2026—2030

wacoss wa council of social service

WACOSS gratefully acknowledges the work of VCOSS in the development of this Strategic Plan. VCOSS' 2025-28 Strategy offered clarity of purpose, inspiration and strategic priorities that we have adopted in our own plan. We are proud to be strategically aligned with our COSS colleagues and to work alongside them as part of the national COSS network.

Who We Are

The Western Australian Council of Social Service (WACOSS) is the voice of the community services sector in WA. We stand for fairness, dignity and justice.

Our purpose is simple: to achieve, equity, social and economic justice for current and future generations

We do this by:

- Supporting our member organisations and the vital work they do
- Using research and evidence to shape better policies
- Building strong connections and partnerships
- Advocating for systemic change that lasts
- Working alongside people and communities with lived experience

Our strength

Our greatest strength is our deep connection to the community services sector. These relationships keep us grounded in reality and give us the insight, legitimacy and momentum we need to push for meaningful change.

Together with our members, people with lived experience and partners, we weave stronger communities and use our collective influence to shape the policies and practices that matter.

Who we represent

Our members are diverse and powerful: frontline services, peak bodies, researchers, advocates and groups led by people with lived experience. They work across every issue that touches people's lives — poverty, housing, health, education, family violence, digital inclusion, food security, justice, disability, aged care and disaster resilience.

At the heart of this work are the people and communities drawing on significant strengths while bearing the greatest weight of policy and funding failures — those who face injustice, exclusion and disadvantage every day. Whether it's families struggling to afford housing, women and children escaping violence, people living with disability or communities left behind by economic and social systems, our sector stands with them.

By amplifying their voices and experiences, we ensure that those most affected by inequity are not only heard but are also central to shaping the solutions.

Positive change is never linear. Sometimes, we must act as catalysts, sparking new conversations and coalitions for positive change. At other times, we are steadfast contributors, supporting long-term movements for justice. Whether engaging with government or business interests, or enabling our own community sector, we remain unwavering in our pursuit of social justice, equity and inclusion.

Collectively, the WA community services sector generates about $16 billion a year, employs over 72,000 people and engages more than 111,000 volunteers.

Across all the diversity of our sector, WACOSS members are united by one goal: to eliminate poverty, inequity and disadvantage in WA.

This strategic plan sets our priorities for the next four years. It is our roadmap to harness collective power, influence change and achieve social and economic justice for current and future generations.

Key Principles Which Underpin Our Work

Enabler.

As the collective voice of the WA community services sector, we connect, strengthen and champion the organisations and workforces across WA that share the goal of working towards an inclusive, just and equitable society.

Knowledge Generator.

We generate compelling, evidence-based expertise and insights, leveraging our partnerships across services, sectors and communities to advocate for systemic solutions to complex social and economic problems.

Storyteller.

We leverage and share stories from across our networks to identify and communicate emerging needs, priorities and opportunities. We celebrate the community sector's successes and learn from the past. We create identity by fostering collectivism, innovation and impact.

Influencer.

We influence change in policies, systems and narratives that cause poverty and disadvantage, working across parliament, government, the community sector, business, communities and media.

Our vision

An inclusive, just and equitable society

Our purpose

To achieve equity, and social and economic justice for current and future generations

Strategic Pillars of Change and Renewal

Change the Systems:
WA's social and economic policies and systems work for people facing disadvantage.

Communities in Control:
People and communities excluded from equity and inclusion shape decisions that affect their lives, backed by an innovative and well-resourced sector.

An Impactful WACOSS:
We enable the resources, capabilities and foundations to succeed with our vision and strategies.

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.

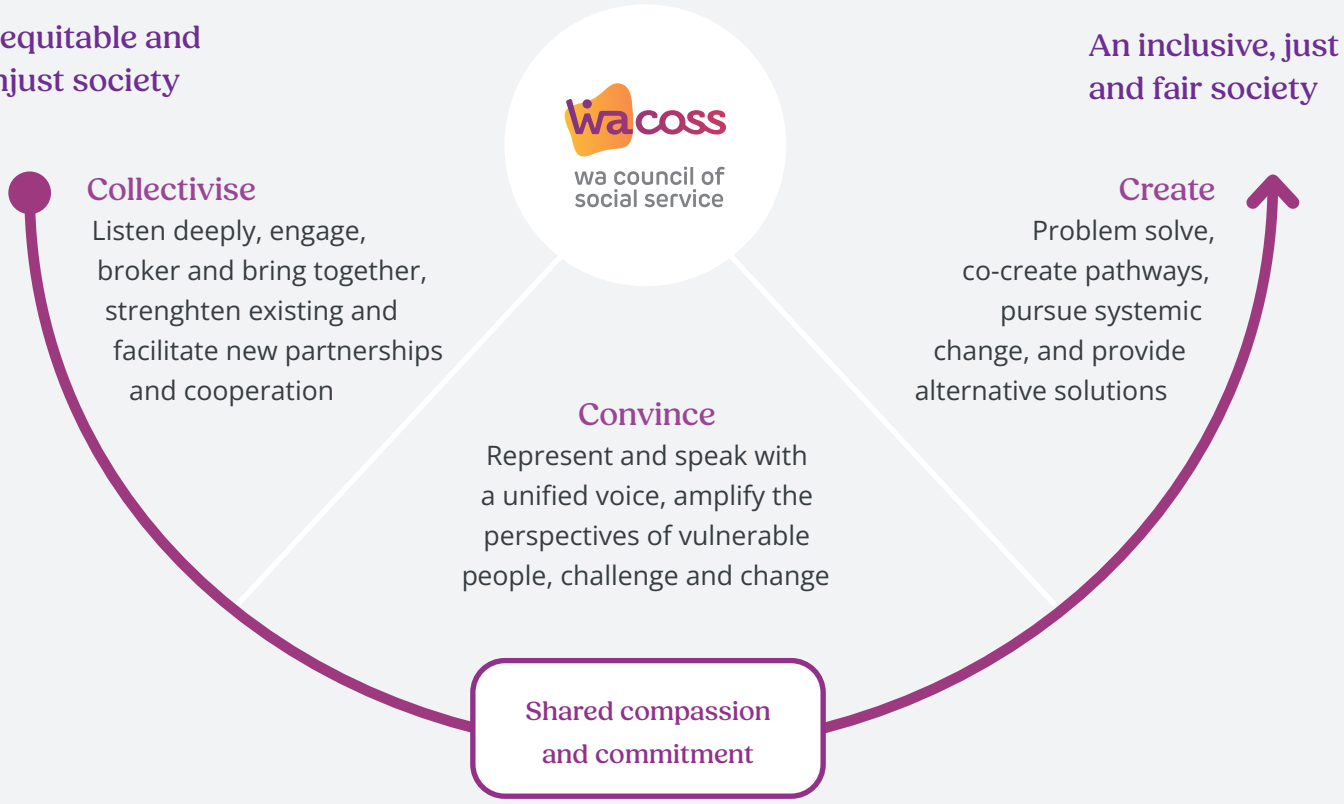
WACOSS Theory of Change

At WACOSS, our strategic actions are the building blocks of social change. By bringing people together, influencing decisions and driving innovation, we create the conditions for stronger communities and fairer outcomes.

Every step we take contributes directly to shifting the systems and policies that cause inequity. We strive to build a future where every person and family experiences equity and social and economic justice, and has the chance to live with dignity, security, and opportunity.

We believe that when we share a clear vision and speak a common language, we can better align our efforts across the sector. This makes it possible to show how our collective actions add up to real, systemic change — and to demonstrate the tangible impact of our work.

Through this approach, WACOSS is at the forefront of shaping an inclusive, just, and equitable society. By influencing, innovating, and creating change, we elevate community voices and drive transformation that will define the future of WA.



Stakeholders

- People and communities who live with vulnerability and disadvantage
- Broader Western Australian communities
- WACOSS members
- WACOSS peers and allies
- State, Federal and local governments

Outcomes for Western Australian people, families and communities

- Safe and free from harm
- Financially secure and have suitable, stable and culturally appropriate housing
- Are healthy and well
- Have the skills, resources and experiences to contribute to the economy/community
- Are connected to communities/culture

Strategic Pillars of Change and Renewal

CHANGE THE SYSTEMS

WA's social and economic policies and systems work for people facing disadvantage.

1. Amplify voices through policy and advocacy

How we will drive change

- Strengthen collaborations with members, peak bodies, people with lived experience and like-minded organisations
- Build and maintain strong connections and engagement with government and key central agencies
- Partner with universities and researchers to push for system change
- Reframe the community services as an investment in community wellbeing and resilience, not a cost

2. Craft powerful connected policy narratives that compel leaders to act

How we will drive change

- Generate influential policy and research that links the evidence and clearly outlines the benefits of systemic change
- Work with members and partners to turn research into action and public engagement
- Centre lived and living experience in advocacy and decision-making.
- Back Aboriginal-led solutions and challenge systems that keep injustice in place

3. Mobilise public support for and participation in positive social change

How we will drive change

- Be a strong, trusted voice for a WA free from poverty and inequity
- Help the public challenge misinformation by promoting critical thinking and media literacy
- Lead and collaborate on campaigns that build broad support for key priorities
- Strengthen and protect public trust in the community services sector by partnering widely to drive systemic change

COMMUNITIES IN CONTROL

People and communities excluded from equity and inclusion shape decisions that affect their lives, backed by an innovative and well-resourced sector.

4. Unite voices across communities, the community service sector, researchers and government to create change

How we will drive change

- Convene vibrant spaces for community services sector leaders, workers and lived experience to share knowledge and shape solutions together
- Lead and support community projects that make a real difference in people's lives and communities we serve
- Harness collective data and evidence to drive stronger outcomes across the sector

5. Champion fair funding and structural change so services can deliver lasting impact

How we will drive change

- Undertake research and advocacy to improve the systemic conditions required for community services to be effective, impactful and sustainably delivered
- Seek funding for collaborative projects that support WACOSS' vision and purpose
- Enhance frameworks for engagement with the expertise and advocacy of people with lived and living experience
- Tell the stories that surface community needs, amplify opportunities and honour sector achievements

6. Respect and elevate Aboriginal-led solutions throughout WA and support placed-based solutions in the regions

How we will drive change

- Stand with Aboriginal communities to advance self-determination and truth-telling by deepening partnerships with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations
- Champion the voices of regional and remote communities, building shared identity and momentum for collective action
- Support metropolitan, regional and remote communities to strengthen cultural identity, place-based solutions and collective action

AN IMPACTFUL WACOSS

We enable the resources, capabilities and foundations to succeed with our vision and strategies.

7. Elevate WACOSS' digital impact through stronger public engagement and modern, efficient internal systems

How we will drive change

- Expand public reach: improve and create engaging social media campaigns, interactive webinars and digital storytelling that amplify community voices
- Upgrade internal systems: modernise member portals, streamline document management and improve collaboration tools for staff and partners
- Enhance digital literacy: provide internal training and resources to help staff and board use digital tools confidently and effectively

8. Resilient leadership and thriving people and culture

How we will drive change

- Grow and strengthen WACOSS' leadership capability, supporting both current and emerging leaders
- Strengthen WACOSS' people and culture capability and offer thoughtful, enriching development opportunities
- Encourage innovation and creativity in staff and board to adapt to changing sector needs

9. Driving outcomes and demonstrating impact

How we will drive change

- Enhance how we measure, evaluate and learn from our work and report learnings to staff, members and partners

10. Financial sustainability with purpose and influence

How we will drive change

- Maintain financial strength and resilience through diverse revenue streams, sound governance and strategic partnerships
- Grow resources and partnerships that amplify WACOSS' vision and purpose
- Align financial decisions with WACOSS' vision, ensuring resources are used to maximise community benefit

11. Embedding cultural respect and security for current and future generations

How we will drive change

- Embed cultural awareness and respect across WACOSS' governance, leadership and workforce practices
- Protect and promote cultural knowledge as a resource for current and future generations
- Champion truth-telling and self-determination as foundations for cultural safety and generational strength