

SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES



A Government for You.

WA Labor Policy

May 2016

Delivering Community Services

A McGowan Labor Government is committed to working with the community services sector to ensure that we maximise every opportunity to deliver quality services to the community.

Community service delivery in Western Australia is at a crossroads. With the State's economy undergoing a major transition and unemployment on the rise, more and more Western Australians are accessing essential community services to make ends meet.

Central to the role of the delivery of community services is the relationship with government. Given the complex issues facing people accessing services this can often involve a relationship between a community service organisation and several government departments. Significant opportunities exist to break down the barriers between individual government departments to improve the effectiveness of funding to Western Australians in need.

Moving to an outcomes focussed model to fund the sector and by providing better funding security through consistent contract lengths across government departments will also provide valuable opportunities to enhance service delivery to the community.

A McGowan Labor Government will build on the relationships created between government and the community services sector through the Partnership Forum and ensure that these relationships are extended to a much broader range of stakeholders.

A McGowan Labor Government also recognises the importance of job creation to provide the economic security for families. WA Labor has released a Plan for Jobs that will create a more vibrant and diversified economy across a broader range of industries. Further information can be found at markmcgowan.com.au/jobs

The community services sector provides much more to Western Australia than what can be measured in financial terms. Not only does the sector support Western Australians in need, it also builds better communities.



“A McGowan Labor Government is committed to working with the community services sector to support people in need and build better communities.”

Mark

**Mark McGowan
WA Labor Leader**

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Supporting Communities

A McGowan Labor Government will work with the community services sector to ensure that we maximise every opportunity to deliver quality services to the community.

A McGowan Labor Government will:

Break Down Barriers

- Work with the community services sector to break down the barriers between government departments and stakeholders to ensure funding reaches those in need.

Improve Procurement Processes

- Streamline procurement processes across government departments funding community services.
- Ensure government departments procure community services on the basis of outcomes, not outputs.
- Provide improved funding security to the community services sector by aligning the duration of the contracts across government departments in a consistent way.
- Ensure government departments provide the flexibility to accommodate the increased demand for individual models of care.
- Facilitate a trial of a collaborative funding model at an appropriate site that includes government and the community services sector.
- Consider the results of a collaborative funding trial and, if appropriate, extend its application in a staged approach.

Measure Outcomes

- Deliver an agreed-upon framework to measure outcomes across the community services sector.
- Ensure the framework gives government a clear picture of the effectiveness of its funding, leading to improved funding decisions.
- Ensure the framework assists community services organisations in providing more targeted, flexible and innovative services as well as finding new opportunities to cooperate, including providing improved access to non-sensitive data from government for improved service design.

Our Communities Report

- Produce a biennial Our Communities Report to provide a snapshot of the health of the community.

Working Together for All: Breaking Down Barriers

The delivery of community services in Western Australia is principally centred on a relationship between government and the not-for-profit sector.

While this can be as simple as a funding arrangement between one organisation and one government department, often the delivery of services can involve a relationship between an organisation and several government departments. For example, resourcing services dealing with Family and Domestic Violence may involve the Departments of Attorney General, Child Protection and Family Support, Local Government and Communities, Education, Health, Housing, Mental Health and Police.

Complex social issues require government departments to work together much more effectively. For example, because homelessness does not correspond to a single portfolio, a meaningful response must involve coordinated action from several government departments, including Housing, Child Protection and Family Support, Mental Health and Health.

For government to be able to utilise the expertise the community services sector provides, government departments themselves must also communicate effectively across agencies.

The West Australian Partnership Forum, a body that brings together leaders from the State Government and the not-for-profit community services sector, has identified better integration of design across multiple government agencies and service providers as one of its key priorities.

While this approach can be successful when only a single government agency is involved, community service organisations have called for models of service design that involve cross-agency and cross-disciplinary engagement. Better co-design between government agencies and organisations will deliver better services and outcomes for Western Australians in need of support.

- ***A McGowan Labor Government will work with the community services sector to break down the barriers between government departments and stakeholders to ensure funding reaches those in need.***

Improving Procurement to Support the Sector

Community service organisations spend much of their time navigating the procurement processes set by individual government departments. While there is in theory a standardised procurement process, in reality, departments often have their own principles and requirements to determine which organisations they will partner with to deliver a particular service.

A more standardised form of procurement across government departments will improve the delivery of community services by making it easier for organisations to tender for contracts, saving time and money that can instead be used to help support Western Australians in need.

Community service programs are too often assessed on the outputs they provide. For example, the number of people a program engages does not give an accurate picture of whether positive outcomes have been achieved for those people. Outcomes should be the focus of government departments when procuring services.

A McGowan Labor Government will:

- ***Streamline procurement processes across government departments funding community services.***
- ***Ensure government departments procure community services on the basis of outcomes, not outputs.***

With many funding contracts expiring on 30 June 2017, a unique opportunity exists to make important changes in the way government funds services. While there have been moves to standardise the length of contracts for community services, a lack of consistency has been a burden on organisations providing vital services.

Ensuring that the length of contracts are applied in a consistent way across government departments would improve the funding security of community service sector organisations.

- ***A McGowan Labor Government will provide improved funding security to the community services sector by aligning the duration of contracts across government departments in a consistent way.***

There is an obvious trend to individual models of care, and this will have an increasing impact on the community services sector. Government departments must ensure its procurement practises are sufficiently flexible to accommodate individual models of care in the community.

- ***A McGowan Labor Government will ensure government departments provide the flexibility to accommodate the increased demand for individual models of care.***

State government funding to the community services sector is currently based on a competitive tender process.

The problem with a competitive process is that it pits organisations against each other. There is increasing recognition that a collective approach can effect comprehensive change for complex social issues. Collaborative funding is an alternative model, which uses the expertise of stakeholders working close to the ground and across a range of disciplines to recommend funding allocations.

Government should take this opportunity to facilitate a collaborative approach to funding services as part of a trial. Such a trial could pave the way for a more widespread use of collaborative funding models.

A McGowan Labor Government will:

- *Facilitate a trial of a collaborative funding model at an appropriate site that includes government and the community services sector.*
- *Consider the results of a collaborative funding trial and, if appropriate, extend its application in a staged approach.*

Outcomes for Change

In an environment with increasing budget constraints, measuring outcomes in the community services sector provides government with clear indications of whether the programs it has funded are having the desired impact. In turn, measuring outcomes allows community service organisations to measure their effectiveness in delivering services.

While outcomes are currently being measured in the WA community services sector and a desire exists for better outcomes measurement, the lack of a uniform approach has created a number of challenges to community service organisations and government alike, such as a lack of standardised language, lack of data sharing or lack of meaningful participation.

A McGowan Labor Government will:

- *Deliver an agreed-upon framework to measure outcomes across the community services sector.*
- *Ensure the framework gives government a clear picture of the effectiveness of its funding, leading to improved funding decisions.*
- *Ensure the framework assists community service organisations in providing more targeted, flexible and innovative services as well as finding new opportunities to cooperate, including providing improved access to non-sensitive data from government for improved service design.*

A Community for You

A successful community services sector is vital to a successful Western Australia. Good outcomes will not only make a difference to the lives of people accessing those services, they will also have flow-on effects to the wider community.

Just as the State Budget delivers a snapshot of the economy, Western Australians should have the opportunity to know the state of the community. The implementation of an outcomes framework provides the opportunity to better assess the health of the community against recognised international benchmarks on the issues facing the over half a million Western Australians who regularly access community services each year.

The publication of a regular comprehensive update of the state of the community will help focus the priorities of the government and the community services sector. It will be a simple and understandable resource that will provide a snapshot of the health of the community as well as the sector which services it.

- *A McGowan Labor Government will produce a biennial Our Communities Report to provide a snapshot of the health of the community.*



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