

SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES FORUM 2024 - 2025

COMMUNIQUE – Quarterly Meeting #4 – 27 November 2024

At the 27 November meeting of the Supporting Communities Forum (Forum), members discussed ongoing efforts to establish collaborative links with the Ministerial Multicultural Advisory Council (MMAC) and Aboriginal Advisory Council of WA (AACWA). Early in November 2024, the Forum Co-Chairs presented to the MMAC on the Forum's purpose, composition, and current working groups, including an overview of achievements of previous Forum terms. Following appointment of the new iteration of the AACWA, the Forum Co-Chairs have formally reached out to the AACWA Co-Chairs Mary Sibosado and Jenny Bedford to discuss strategic priorities of both groups.

The Department of Communities provided a brief presentation on the 16 Days in WA campaign held between 25 November to 10 December, with this year's theme being **'Stopping Family and Domestic Violence: Play your Part'**. The critical role of member organisations, as well as advisory bodies such as the Forum, play in driving positive change was acknowledged. Forum members wore orange and gathered for a photo to support the 16 Days in WA Campaign.

The Child Safe Organisations Working Group (CSO WG) provided an update on activities to finalise the CSO WG's Project Plan to deliver on the priority. The CSO WG met on 8 October 2024 and received an update on the Children's Week Child Safe Organisations Symposium, as well as a presentation from the Australian Childhood Foundation on their work regarding the [National Principles for Child Safe Organisations](#). Forum members noted the CSO WG's Terms of Reference and an updated list of CSO WG members, with the finalised CSO WG Project Plan to be provided to the Forum once endorsed by the CSO WG. Core deliverables include supporting WA organisations to build capacity and capability to implement the National Principles. These deliverables will be informed by key stakeholders to identify challenges, achievements, and intended outcomes.

The Carers Working Group (Carers WG) presented an overview of recent efforts to implement the *Carer's Recognition Act 2004* (Act) in WA, and work to finalise the Carers WG Terms of Reference and detailed Project Plan. Acknowledging the work of the [Carers Advisory Council](#) and [Carers WA](#), the work of the Carers WG will complement and strengthen the efforts of these existing groups and mechanisms. The identification of work government and non-government agencies can implement to promote and support carers has also been identified as a key priority. Core deliverables of the Carers WG, as outlined in their Project Plan, include supporting WA organisations to build capacity and capability to apply the Act and supporting the Carers Charter; developing an appropriate mechanism to inform the Minister for Community Services of the Carers WG's efforts; and developing resources to educate, inform and influence agencies to better support Western Australian carers.

The Department of Finance (Finance) provided an update on the Delivering Community Services in Partnership Working Group (DCSP WG), the designated working group to progress implementation of the State Commissioning Strategy for Community Services, with a focus on 'Priority 2: Improving and Increasing Contracting with ACCOs'. The DCSP WG Co-Chairs advised that the group was working to shape its initial focus, which would likely include mapping the current landscape of ACCOs delivering services for government agencies. Forum members noted there were opportunities to support the 'supply side' by developing options for a coordinated approach to build the capacity and capability of ACCOs.

Mark Glasson, CEO, Anglicare WA presented to the Forum on the Hopscotch project, a successful community sector partnership which aims to provide families living with challenges with an accessible pathway into paid work. By providing a place-based and integrated approach including access to childcare, transport, school-friendly hours and further referrals, Hopscotch has resulted in improved workforce engagement, participant confidence and planning, especially for new mothers. Forum members discussed how community sector partnerships offer the potential to work outside and across Departmental and statutory boundaries, and explored the challenges faced by such partnerships when positive outcomes are effectively demonstrated, but ongoing funding and scaling pathways are not evident.

Forum members also received a presentation from Kelda Opperman, CEO, Zonta House on current challenges and opportunities relating to effective workforce management, with a focus on the specific needs of the community sector workforce, the impact of emerging wellness initiatives, and the responsibility of leaders to create supportive, inclusive, and high-performing workplaces. Members acknowledged the critical work of Zonta House and the lives it has positively influenced as a result.

The next quarterly Forum meeting is on 9th April 2025. Meeting notes (once endorsed by the Forum), Communiques from each Forum meeting, and more information on the Forum is available on the [Supporting Communities Forum's webpage](#). Please feel free to distribute this Communique to your wider network. If you have any questions or would like to register to the Forum's mailing list, please email the Forum Secretariat at SCF@dpc.wa.gov.au.

