



# SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES FORUM

## COMMUNIQUE

### 11 September 2023 – Quarterly Meeting Update

At the 11 September meeting, the Co-Chairs reiterated to members Government's decision to extend the term of the current Forum by an additional six-months to 31 December 2023. During this period to the end of the current term, the Forum will continue to focus on:

- implementation of the National Principles in Child Safe Organisations work;
- implementation of the State's Commissioning Strategy for Community Services;
- how NGOs and agencies without statutory reporting obligations under the *Carers Recognition Act 2004* can better identify, and support staff and/or clients who are unpaid carers; and
- Federal policy opportunities.

Members also noted an Expressions of Interest (EOI) was sought for community services and academic membership for the next iteration of the Forum for 2024-2025. The EOI closed on 31 August 2023 and an independent Evaluation Panel has been convened to assess applications and make recommendations for Government's consideration. Applicants will be notified on the outcome of their application in December, with Government's decision on final appointments to be published on the [wa.gov.au](http://wa.gov.au) webpage.

Members noted an update from the Department of the Premier and Cabinet on the [Draft National Strategy for the Care and Support Economy](#). The Draft Strategy was developed by the Care and Support Economy Taskforce and released by the Australian Government in May 2023. The National Strategy for the Care and Support Economy sets a road map of actions to a sustainable and productive care and support economy that delivers quality care with decent jobs. The Draft Strategy applies across the care and support economy and encompasses major government support programs. Members recognised the need for a holistic approach and for WA's unique context to be represented nationally.

Carers are people who provide unpaid care to someone who needs help with their day-to-day living due to disability, impairment, mental illness, chronic health condition, terminal illness, an alcohol or drug issue or who is frail and aged. Carers are defined in WA by the *Carers Recognition Act 2004*, which also outlines how carers are to be treated and how they are to be involved in the delivery of services that affect them and their caring role.

The Department of Communities as the lead agency progressing work to support Carers, presented on activities related to application and administration of the [Carers Recognition Act 2004](#) ensuring compliance to the Western Australian [Carers Charter](#), including compliance reporting and showcasing best practice examples. Additionally, it includes supporting the [Carers Advisory Council of WA](#); implementing the 12 recommendations arising from the review of the Act; implementing improved annual compliance reporting processes and tools; establishing a community of practice with reporting organisations; establishing an internal Carers Network; and collaborating and consulting with stakeholders, including with Carers WA.

Members noted that the National Carers Week will be held from 15 - 21 October with the theme 'Millions of Reasons to Care'. Members are encouraged to contact the Department of Communities if they wish to be more involved.

The WA Country Health Service presented on their initiatives that support unpaid carers, as an example of best practice. Initiatives include promoting visibility of the Western Australian Carers

Charter; sharing information about carers in local industries and orientations; improving collaboration across health service providers and with carers, for example by establishing the Carers Corner and Community Café concepts; introducing carer policies and platforms to gather data; and coordinating activities to support National Carers Week and other events to promote carers.

The Department of Finance provided an update on the implementation of the State Commissioning Strategy. As part of implementing the Agency Commissioning Plan framework, agencies have completed their draft Agency Commissioning Plans. Central agencies have reviewed the Agency Commissioning Plans and feedback will be provided to agencies by October. Agencies will finalise their plans for publishing in December. The development of further commissioning education, training and guidance material is also progressing, which includes developing online modules and tools.

The Department of the Premier and Cabinet provided an update on Closing the Gap activities, including relating to WA's Implementation Plan; the draft report on the first Productivity Commission's three-yearly Review of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap; including a brief overview of key highlights from the [Western Australian Aboriginal Expenditure Review 2022-23](#); and the Coalition of Peaks meeting with the WA Government.

The Child Safe Organisations Working Group provided a further update on the important work progressed by members of the working group to build capacity and capability to implement the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (National Principles).

At the Working Group meeting on 3 August 2023, members were updated on current activities to support organisations implementing the National Principles relating to the:

- Child Safe Organisations Campaign 2023-24 targeting community services sector organisations;
- Child Safe Knowledge Hub, which is a central location for organisations to access and stay up to date with information and resources;
- Child Safe Organisations Forum, to take place on 24 October 2023 as part of National Children's Week, focussing on supporting organisations to build their capacity to implement the National Principles; and
- Child Safe Project, which is being implemented by the Western Australian Council of Social Service (WACOSS), in partnership with the Department of Communities, to provide support to organisations in a targeted and practical way to aid their progress with the implementation of the National Principles.

The Forum recognised and acknowledged the Working Group and the Department of Communities for the excellent work undertaken to date in supporting the implementation of the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.

The final quarterly meeting of the Forum is scheduled for 13 November 2023.

Meeting notes once endorsed by the Forum, and Communiques from each of the Forum meetings are available on the [Forum's webpage](#).

Please feel free to distribute this Communique to your wider network, and if you would like to register to the Forum's mailing list or have general enquiries on the work of the Forum, please email the Forum Secretariat at [SCF@dpc.wa.gov.au](mailto:SCF@dpc.wa.gov.au).