



SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES FORUM

TERMS OF REFERENCE 2024 - 2025

1. INTRODUCTION

The community services sector is a key government partner in the delivery of services to the Western Australian community, and a significant contributor to economic growth, employment and community wellbeing, particularly for vulnerable Western Australians.

The Western Australian Government is committed to working with the community services sector to maximise opportunities to deliver quality services, by building a relationship based on partnership, collaboration, mutual respect and trust between both sectors.

The Forum brings together the expertise and capability of senior leaders from both the WA Government and community services sector to work collaboratively to address complex social policy issues, improve community service delivery and strengthen relationships between the WA Government and community services sector.

2. OBJECTIVE OF THE FORUM

The objective of the Supporting Communities Forum is to increase the effectiveness of services provided to Western Australians in need, by providing advice and recommendations regarding:

1. Ongoing opportunities to break down barriers between Government agencies and community services sector stakeholders to better deliver services and outcomes for all Western Australians;
2. Improvements to support implementation of the *State Commissioning Strategy for Community Services*, and transition to a focus on measuring outcomes;
3. Ongoing opportunities to maximise the delivery of quality services to the community, in particular, implementing recommendations for embedding examples of good practice in service planning, co-design, technical commissioning skills and contract management, identified by the previous Forum activities since January 2018;
4. Requests by the Council of Aboriginal Services WA and the Aboriginal Advisory Council of WA, particularly those that relate to the design, delivery and outcomes of community services for Aboriginal communities, including opportunities to prioritise and increase contracting with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations a priority under the State Commissioning Strategy Implementation Plan and under the [National Agreement on Closing the Gap](#);
5. Specific policy topics will be identified by the Minister for Community Services for the Forum to address during each of its two-year term; and
6. Any other matters impacting on the implementation of the *State Commissioning Strategy for Community Services*, or the delivery of sustainable services and outcomes for Western Australians, as requested by the Minister for Community Services.

3. COMPOSITION OF THE FORUM

The Forum will comprise of two co-Chairpersons, one from the community services sector and one from Government, a Deputy Chairperson from the community services sector, up to 14 community services sector members, and up to ten government members.

3.1. Roles of the Co-Chairpersons and Deputy Chairperson¹

The Co-Chairpersons are jointly responsible for leadership of the Forum including:

- chairing all Forum meetings in accordance with this terms of reference and in accordance with priorities identified for the Forum to address;
- facilitating effective and efficient flow of information to the Forum, from both the community services sector and Government ;
- facilitating good discussions at Forum meetings including effective functioning, managing the conduct, frequency and length of Forum meetings;
- communicating the views, advice and recommendations of the Forum to the community services sector and Government.

In undertaking this role, the Co-Chairpersons' responsibilities also include:

- in consultation with the Secretariat:
 - setting the agenda for the matters to be considered by the Forum;
 - ensuring information provided to the Forum is relevant, accurate, timely and sufficient to keep the Forum appropriately informed of any key developments that may have a material impact on its deliberations;
- ensuring communications with the community services sector and Government are timely, accurate and effective;
- facilitating open and constructive communications amongst Forum members and encouraging their contribution to Forum deliberations; and
- liaising and consulting with Forum members.

The Deputy Chairperson will perform the role and functions of either Chairperson in the absence of a Chairperson for any reason and be available to undertake the responsibilities of a Chairperson in instances where a Chairperson actually or potentially may be compromised due to personal or other conflicts of interest.

3.2. Community sector Co-Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson

The Minister for Community Services will recommend to Cabinet the appointment of the Community sector co-Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson following an expression of interest process and shortlisting by an independent selection panel. The criteria for selection will include:

¹ Adapted from Australian Institute of Company Directors, *Director Tools: Governance Relations – Role of the Chair*, accessed at https://aicd.companydirectors.com.au/~media/cd2/resources/director-resources/director-tools/pdf/05446-3-13-mem-director-gr-role-of-the-chair_a4-web.ashx, accessed on 13 September 2019.

- significant and successful senior leadership experience in human service delivery or research, including relevant board (or similar) experience;
- extensive knowledge and experience of systemic advocacy and community services delivery issues across a broad range of (or multiple) sectors, including services for Aboriginal and culturally and linguistically diverse groups and communities;
- experience in driving reform and/or innovation processes within and across community services organisations;
- demonstrated ability to foster collaboration amongst board (or similar) members and to provide balanced, well-informed advice;
- ability and willingness to draw on sector networks to consult on behalf of the Forum and to engage support for the Forum's work; and
- expertise in and understanding of effective board and corporate governance.

The community sector Co-Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson will each be appointed for a two-year term.

3.3. General community services sector membership

The Minister for Community Services will recommend to Cabinet the appointment of general community services sector members.

To identify potential community services sector members:

- An expression of interest process and shortlisting by an independent selection panel will be undertaken.
- Complementing the EOI process and including to address any membership gaps not addressed through the EOI process, the Minister may recommend for appointment persons who did not nominate through the EOI process.

The criteria for selection will include:

- successful leadership experience in human service delivery within the community services sector or in sector-related research;
- extensive knowledge and experience of systemic advocacy and community services delivery issues across a broad range of (or multiple) sectors, including services for Aboriginal and culturally and linguistically diverse groups and communities;
- ability to work constructively with others and provide balanced, well-informed advice; and
- ability and willingness to draw on sector networks to consult on behalf of the Forum and to engage support for the Forum's work.

Taken as a whole, the appointment of the community services sector membership will:

- reflect the diversity of the communities provided with services;
- include those people who have lived experience as a consumer or recipient of community services;
- reflect the diversity of the community services sector; and
- include new and emerging leaders in the community services sector as well as established leaders.

General community services sector members will each be appointed for a two-year term. Community services sector members are appointed as individuals rather than representatives of organisations.

3.4. Government Co-Chairperson

The role of Government Co-Chairperson will be rotated among the general Government membership, with one Government member fulfilling this role for each two-year term of the Forum.

3.5. Government membership

General government membership will consist of the Directors General or Commissioners of the following agencies. In the event the Director General, or Commissioner is unable to attend a senior representative from the Department is expected to attend as a representative of the organisation. Note: Government membership is in an organisational capacity, not as individuals.

- Department of Communities
- Department of Education
- Mental Health Commission
- Department of Health
- Department of Justice
- Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries
- Department of the Premier and Cabinet
- Department of Finance
- Lotterywest
- Public Sector Commission

3.6. Remuneration of members and Sitting Fees

The community sector Co-Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson and non-salaried members will receive remuneration and sitting fees in accordance with Premier's Circular 2022/02 *State Government Boards and Committees*. All accommodation and travel costs for Forum related work will be supported in accordance with the Public Sector Commission [guideline for reimbursement of travel expenses for members of Government boards and committees](#).

Sitting fees may be paid to eligible (non-salaried) members who attend an approved special meeting of the Forum.

4. MEETINGS

4.1. Timing of meetings and working groups

The Supporting Communities Forum will meet quarterly. The Forum, through the Co-Chairpersons, may establish time-limited working groups that meet more frequently. These working groups may include non-Forum members as required, including private sector organisations with a track record of demonstrating their corporate social responsibility and expertise in a specialised sector.

4.2. Agenda items, minutes and communication

Proposed agenda items should be forwarded, via the secretariat, for approval by the Co-Chairpersons. Minutes of each meeting will be drafted and a communique will be issued following each Forum meeting.

4.3. Observers

Observers may attend Forum meetings at the invitation of the Co-Chairpersons.

5. CODE OF CONDUCT AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

5.1. Code of conduct

Members are expected to adhere to the standards of behaviour in accordance with the Supporting Communities Forum Code of Conduct.

Members are expected to familiarise themselves with the contents and sign the acknowledgment provided, to indicate that they will uphold the Code of Conduct.

5.2. Conflicts of interest

During their tenure, members will also be required to declare conflicts of interest. These requirements are set out in more detail in the Supporting Communities Forum's Board Charter, which is available on the [DPC – Forum webpage](#).

6. EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION AND CONFIDENTIALITY

6.1. External communications

All external communications on behalf of the Forum will be through the Co-Chairpersons, following the approval from the Minister for Community Services.

The Forum will operate openly and transparently and commits to distributing information regarding its activities widely.

6.2. Confidentiality

Members may have access to information that relates to confidential Cabinet deliberations.

Members must treat this material as strictly confidential and will be required to sign a declaration to this effect.

7. REPORTING, EVALUATION AND REVIEW

The Forum will provide regular reports to the Minister for Community Services.

An evaluation of the Forum will be conducted at the discretion of the Minister for Community Services to coincide with the renewal of Forum membership. This evaluation will inform a review of the Forum's Terms of Reference.