



STRATEGIC PLAN

2019/20 – 2020/21



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1. OUR ORGANISATION

Established in 1991, Advocacy WA (AWA) is a regional not-for-profit organisation based in the South West of Western Australia. AWA's advocacy services are free and available to anyone who lives in the region and identifies as having a disability. Clients will have one or more disabilities (physical, intellectual, neurological, psychiatric), often more than one high and complex issue they are dealing with, and are likely to be in vulnerable and/or marginalised situations.

AWA's services are generally provided one-on-one for individual clients. Whenever able, the organisation advocates for social change and service improvement in areas including accommodation, employment, financial security, education and training, transport and access to specialised services. Our overarching aim is to ensure that people with disabilities are treated as equal and valuable citizens within their community.

AWA is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors with significant and long-standing experience in the disability sector. Highly competent professionals manage operations from AWA's main office in Bunbury and via outreach throughout the South West including in Busselton, Collie, Manjimup and Margaret River.

Since its establishment, AWA has been fully funded by WA Government and Commonwealth Government recurrent grants. The organisation is currently publicly funded through the Commonwealth Department of Social Services and the WA Department of Communities (Disability Services).

In the future, AWA is intending to actively pursue funding (grants, sponsorships, donations) from other public and philanthropic sources for discrete projects. While more difficult, securing recurrent funding from such sources is not out of the question and within scope.

Advocacy WA has not actively sought to attain status as an approved service provider under the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and, importantly, this will allow the organisation to remain independent and act solely on behalf of clients without fear or favour.

2. OUR VISION AND MISSION

Vision:

To advocate for justice and human rights for people with disabilities in Western Australia.

Mission:

Advocacy WA assists, supports and advocates in partnership with people with disabilities to achieve social and individual change, empowerment, justice and human rights, including where rights have been compromised.

Our Guiding Principles:

- Justice and Human Rights;
- Accessibility, Fairness, Inclusion, and Equal Opportunity;
- Choice and Self-Determination (the latter being where a person becomes more empowered, confident and independent, especially in controlling their own life and claiming their rights);
- A highly Professional and Person-Centred approach (i.e. empathic, contextually grounded, and where the client is involved as actively as possible) that emphasises Integrity, Accountability, Confidentiality and Innovation; and
- Being Passionate and Tenacious about what we do and Celebrating Success.

3. WHAT WE DO AND WILL KEEP DOING

Advocacy in all its forms means 'standing by' or 'speaking out' for someone's rights after they have been treated unfairly. We ardently believe that people with a disability have the same rights and entitlement as everyone in the community, and that these rights need to be protected. Hence, we operate where this point of failure (e.g. in legislation, societal response, system, bureaucracy, decision process) and its associated impacts lie.

Advocacy seeks to ensure that all people, particularly the most vulnerable, are able to: have their rights safeguarded, their voice heard on issues they consider important, and have their views genuinely considered when decisions are being made about their lives.

AWA's reason for being or 'DNA' is to:

- Ensure access to services and resources for all people with a disability in the South West;

- Assist the most vulnerable to have a voice and to access otherwise hard to reach services;
- Be the backstop or “organisation of last resort” when and where other avenues have been exhausted;
- Assist people “who don’t know what they don’t know” – through positive and purposeful actions including education and empowerment;
- Remain objective and independent (including from other community-based organisations); and
- Where relevant and required, challenge other public and private services to make them fair and accessible for everyone and consistent with human rights.

Advocacy WA’s service offerings generally fall into the following category:

- Individual Advocacy – the bulk of what we are currently funded to do, acting with or for a person with disabilities to ensure their basic human rights.

4. WHAT WE WANT TO DO MORE OF

To generate a deeper and more enduring impact across the South West that is felt by more people than just individual (presenting) clients, Advocacy WA’s is considering ways to increase the following two service offerings:

- Self-Advocacy – helping people, through education, training, communication and information/awareness promotions, to be able to effectively act for themselves; and
- Systemic Advocacy – undertaking to change an existing system and (often bureaucratic) processes to remove or mitigate the structural causes of inequality, including barriers such as discrimination and red tape.

Systemic advocacy may strive to effect enduring changes in society itself, through actions such as bringing about permanent improvements to an organisation’s operations, making it easier for consumers to access information and services, and assisting them to actively engage in co-designing service enhancements.

When engaged in systemic advocacy, AWA will work to influence or change:

- Values, beliefs, attitudes, knowledge and behaviours within the general community;
- Government, non-government and private sector policies, practices and services; and
- Government legislation/regulation.

Given our solid background and reputation built over nearly three decades, AWA is in a strong position to support the voice of people with disabilities through an increasing emphasis on systemic advocacy. However, while seeking long-term improvements in the quality of life for people with disabilities, the systemic advocacy product of AWA's core business currently receives little funding.

While systemic advocacy logically occurs to some extent as a by-product of individual advocacy services, it is an area where AWA needs to develop and grow to make lasting systems-level changes that support everyone with a disability in the South West, as well as their families, friends, colleagues and the wider community.

Tied to our ambitions in this area, we are also broadening our generally-held definition of disability, which to date has principally focussed on physical and intellectual disability. In this regard, the WA Department of Communities (Disability Services) considers a disability broadly to be any continuing physical or mental condition that restricts everyday movements, senses or activities. The Disability Services Act (1993) defines 'disability' as something which:

- Is attributable to a physical, intellectual, psychiatric, cognitive, neurological or sensory impairment or a combination of those impairments;
- Is permanent or likely to be permanent;
- May or may not be of a chronic or episodic nature; and
- Results in substantially reduced capacity of the person for communication, social interaction, learning or mobility and a need for continuing support services.

As an example, systemic advocacy presents as a key issue for mental health services, including where a condition (considered a psycho/social disability) is undiagnosed or episodic and where there is a level of unmet need. In this regard, psychiatric disorders resulting in disability may include psychosis, anxiety disorders, phobias or depression often with a resulting impact on an individual's ability to access services.

5. ENSURING CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE SERVICES

Advocacy WA recognises that its services have to be accessible (easy to reach) to people with disabilities of all cultures, beliefs and backgrounds. Regardless of personal history, all customers must be treated justly and fairly, and in a manner that is not harmful, discriminatory or negligent. Such terms call to mind the need to ensure our services are accessible to Noongar and other Aboriginal people as well as other

minority groups including refugees, the LGBTQI community, people who do not speak English, and so on.

At a basic level, a culturally sensitive service requires Individual Advocates to provide clients with an environment of openness and trust to ensure they can raise their issues and concerns freely and without judgment.

There are, of course, more dimensions than this, such as cultural learning and historical understanding (e.g. of inherited trauma and impacts following colonisation) and developing strategies to fully engage and build bridges at the group level; for example, via 'yarn ups', events, open days, culturally appropriate communication materials, media campaigns, and so on.

Fundamental issues for Advocacy WA in this regard include:

- How do we present ourselves to minority groups to create perceptions of accessibility and trust?
- How do these groups want to be engaged?
- How do we support ourselves and our colleagues to be better informed? and
- How do we attain best practice in community relations to 'open doors'?

It may seem self-evident, but a necessary focus will be to actively work to build relationships and trust, so prospective clients and their wider community come to know the organisation as one that is highly professional, and which approaches all issues genuinely and with humility. Conveying that we are fiercely independent is also incredibly important.

It will also be important to take stock of the deep-rooted social challenges and levels of alienation currently present in the South West Aboriginal population. Many Aboriginal people do not trust service providers and do not want to engage – and often for good reason. In this regard, AWA needs to sensitively present its brand as one where “we will deal with you in a way you’d like the service to be provided”, including being open and amenable to engaging with whole families and from a perspective of cultural and historical appreciation.

There are also parallels here to supporting and encouraging people with an intellectual disability to access AWA. At the moment, many such people are also largely isolated and disconnected from advocacy and mainstream services.

6. RISING TO THE CHALLENGE – CONTINUOUS CHANGE AND IMPROVEMENT

Advocacy WA faces significant challenges in consistently delivering quality services to vulnerable and marginalised members of the community, not the least of which is funding security. Through careful strategic and operational planning however, we believe these can be addressed and overcome.

Today, perhaps more than ever before, the disability sector is being confronted by continual change, diminishing resources and new models of service delivery (e.g. NDIS). In response, being agile, adaptable and forming mutually beneficial alliances with key partners (including our existing consortium) is paramount. While our dedication and expertise are not in question, we do need to broaden our services offering, better anticipate change, and align our practices to exist within a more commercially competitive environment and become more future minded.

Moreover, AWA's staff are our greatest asset and we must work diligently to ensure their wellbeing, safety, professional development and longevity in our organisation.

Over the next two years of this Strategic Plan, our services will expand in scope and continue to extend into a broader footprint. In this regard, it is critical that we maintain our competitive point of difference – enhanced and more lasting outcomes for our clients – via exemplary and evolving services.

The reform agenda referenced in this document is clear: Government now has a preference to engage with organisations that offer a commercial and financially sustainable business model capable of delivering services on a consumer-driven basis. Key to the reform imperative is:

- A culturally responsive organisation with a commitment to genuine and effective service delivery for vulnerable groups and key demographics including Aboriginal people.
- A consumer-driven model where quality is principally determined by consumer choice.
- A shift to assessing outcomes (measurable impacts) over outputs – meaning that simply showing that a program has been delivered within required time, cost and quality parameters will no longer be enough to guarantee continued funding.

To this end, AWA will need to develop further proactive and strategic alliances in order to maximise responsiveness to client needs.

7. A TRAINING FOCUS

Any activities that can support our individual advocacy core business will be intrinsically linked to Advocacy WA's Vision and Mission and add value to our overall impact. As a notable example, providing training in areas including self-advocacy can build community capacity and increase public literacy in the important areas of disability and human rights.

Through this strategic planning process, Advocacy WA has concluded that the development and delivery of training modules and related curriculum can add value in the community. It will also increase our points of difference in the South West, add diversity 'strings to our bow' and, importantly, allow for service improvement to occur given that more advocacy effort will be able to be directed to addressing critical need (rather than just base/uninformed base level need).

Such an approach could also bring in increased revenue, with a two-prong strategy to firstly secure funding, and then build organisation and community capacity.

As examples:

- Develop "101" training modules, e.g.: 'How to advocate for yourself; your family member; your client';
- Run community information programs – e.g. provide Disability Support Pension information (eligibility criteria, submitting applications, assessments, payments);
- Consult with health professionals and medical practitioners to get advocacy information into the wider community so that providers make appropriate referrals to AWA
- Develop a cultural competency unit in partnership with an organisation such as the Noongar Language Centre.

Ideas put forward during the strategic planning process on how to instigate a 'training focus' in AWA included: seeking a seed grant to get started, engage a project officer and set up as a project (e.g. to develop curriculum) with the aim of becoming self-sustaining. Related actions include initially liaising with organisations that provide advocacy training and developing resources that provide clarity and impact (e.g. FAQs, Mini videos).

8. OUR PRIORITIES

In addition to securing future revenue via actions including expanding advocacy service offerings, ensuring culturally appropriate services, supporting professional development and pursuing training development and delivery, the health and safety of our staff is an equally important priority. AWA's overall objective is to create a positive safety culture

that enables team members to act without hesitation, with high professionalism and realise both their and their client's full potential.



Staff safety is essential, particularly as not all risk can be removed from the Advocacy environment, including dealing with challenging customers or the general public who at times may be aggressive, abusive or threatening (possibly prompted by various deprivations, substance abuse or mental health issues). In response, a simple and helpful action is to place safety/risk management as a standing item on all agendas for AWA Board and staff meetings.

Workplace safety assessment and risk management planning are key outcomes to complete in the near future and certainly within the timeframe of the Strategic Plan.

As outlined further in the next Section, the Board and staff have provided the framework for this challenging body of work with the development of the following four Strategic Priorities.

SP 1. Ensure Employee Health and Safety

SP 2. Financial Sustainability: Identify and Secure Future Operating Revenue

SP 3. Employee Retention, Engagement and Enhancement

SP 4. Scope of Service: Define, Consolidate and Expand Advocacy Service Offerings

These Strategic Priorities are each underpinned by actions and/or deliverables required to ensure the organisation achieves its Mission, as well as key performance outcomes to measure these achievements.

Accordingly, this document will shape our practice for the next two years



9. STRATEGIC PRIORITIES, ACTIONS & PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Strategic Priorities	Priority Actions	Key Performance Outcomes
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<p>SP 1. Ensure Employee Health and Safety</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conduct a full safety assessment across all business functions. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Review key work areas and meeting spaces including the interview room (e.g. only one door). 2. Develop a Risk Management Plan through Board and staff consultation; <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Specifically, review and update risk management procedures and technologies regarding interactions with clients. b) Develop risk mitigation responses for all unacceptable risks. 3. Ensure standard WHS procedures are documented and managed more stringently. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Formulate a Work Health and Safety Management System if subsequently considered necessary. 4. Explore relevant training offerings in health, safety and wellbeing. Set up a continuous improvement system for WHS. 5. Ensure WHS gain status as a standing agenda item on all fortnightly operational meetings. 6. Investigate other accommodation options for AWA. 7. Review travel/driving risks and related time commitment (available technology may increase productive time spent with clients). 8. Ongoing Agenda Item for Board Meetings about WHS incidents or potential risks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety assessment, including all office and workplace inspections, completed. • Practical Risk Management Plan produced and reviewed (annually). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Costing and endorsement of funding in budget to enable roll out of Risk Management Plan. ○ Includes annual audit of safety and security procedures. ○ Risks are mitigated as far as practicable at the current premises and all outreach locations. ○ Safety procedures and technologies fully scoped and implemented. ○ Risk management tool for assessing psychosocial risk factors developed. ○ KPIs relating to safe performance (a) developed (b) endorsed by the Board. • WHS gains status as a standing agenda item on fortnightly operational meetings. • Investigate other accommodation options. • Technology improvements – make available rather than mandatory, test and pilot with clients, e.g. Skype, face time on a case-by-case basis in the client’s home or at a local resource centre.
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Strategic Priorities	Priority Actions	Key Performance Outcomes
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<p>SP 2. Financial Sustainability: Identify and Secure Future Operating Revenue</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Restructure AWA to apply a more commercial business model. 2. Expand and diversify core business and income base. 3. Improve efficiencies and cost-effectiveness (reduce debt, lower costs and increase revenue) without compromising AWA's vision and mission. 4. Position the organisation to identify and secure other (both discrete and, ideally, recurrent) funding offerings. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Carefully scrutinise other funding sources including philanthropic and corporate social responsibility. b) Strategic Alliances: Conduct environmental scan; e.g. locate one-off grants; find research partners akin to Deakin Uni. 5. Explore partnerships and amalgamations/mergers/integration (while keeping our identity). <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Partnership development: Approach another South West organisation or consortium arrangement. 6. Explore other advocacy offerings including: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Systemic Advocacy. b) Create a Self-Advocacy program with resources that customers can purchase. 7. Review AWA Board Constitution in terms of permissible income. 8. Place key successes as a standing item on staff meeting agenda. 9. Set up 'rainy day' contingency account (not just bottom line). 10. Scope feasibility of developing a 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AWA restructured. • Income base begins to branch out and expand. • Environmental scan of funding opportunities completed and regularly reviewed. • Funding (grants, sponsorship and donations) secured from other public and philanthropic sources for discrete projects. • Additional partnerships and amalgamations/mergers/integration explored and secured. • A further South West consortium arrangement established. • New business model established including at least one new business direction to increase revenue, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Systemic Advocacy accepted as 'Business as Usual' Practice. ○ New Self-Advocacy program developed and implemented. ○ '101 - How to advocate for your client'. Seek a seed grant to commence, and move towards becoming self-sustaining. • AWA Board Constitution amended if required. • Key successes routinely celebrated in staff meetings. • Contingency account established. • Fund-raising program and related key initiatives commenced (if considered viable and appropriate).
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Strategic Priorities	Priority Actions	Key Performance Outcomes
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<p>SP 3. Employee Retention, Engagement & Enhancement</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Foster and promote staff health and wellbeing. 2. Review baseload resourcing model and mix. 3. Develop and implement AWA Workforce Strategy including: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Agile Workforce: Recruit and retain qualified and experienced team members with wide-ranging expertise. b) Succession planning (e.g. acting opportunities). c) Ensuring key knowledge is shared among more staff. d) Expand and diversify workforce - including deliberately achieving and allocating specialisations (each IA has portfolio of responsibility and becomes the 'go to' for that area e.g. Centrelink legislation and loopholes). e) Explore having more experienced casual/part-time people who can be called upon at short notice. 4. Consider again engaging volunteers 5. Invest in Professional Development (PD): <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Develop a targeted PD program, including team building (e.g. one day forums), and supporting staff to complete training in complex issues such as drug abuse and suicide prevention. b) Develop and offer relevant traineeships and scholarships. c) Build PD into annual work plans, supported by a strong staff development culture and policies. d) Ensure PD is balanced against existing workload. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AWA actively fosters positive and inclusive corporate culture, employee satisfaction and morale. • Employee surveys conducted annually; feedback acted on. • Comprehensive Workforce Strategy developed and implemented. • Professional Development program developed, implemented and evaluated as effective. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Traineeships and scholarships available to staff. • Staff performance appraisal policies and tools restructured and rated as effective. • Managerial vs operational supervision requirements clarified and established. • Entire team meets fortnightly – Tuesdays 8.30am 30 minutes max. • Staff retention trending positively year-on-year with an attributed cost saving in recruitment and other (e.g. Fair Work) costs.
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Strategic Priorities	Priority Actions	Key Performance Outcomes
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<p>SP 4. Scope of Service: Define, Consoli date and Expand</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Diversify and/or expand core business to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) complement or improve existing services. b) directly enhance the customer experience. c) fill needs gaps in the community. d) increase organisational income. 2. (As above in SP 2.) Explore other advocacy offerings including: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Systemic Advocacy (consider undertaking Systemic Advocacy research projects and partnerships e.g. with other complementary organisations and academic institutions). b) Create a Self-Advocacy program with resources that customers can purchase (review relationship to NDIS). c) Review service offerings in terms of e.g. training, mental health, other vulnerable minorities, cultural competency, new technology. d) Engage project officer to do some or all of the above. 3. Cultural competency: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Ensure culturally appropriate services can be delivered. b) Ensure AWA appropriately responds to the unique cultural needs of Aboriginal people. c) Create training programs/ unit of competency in collaboration with other organisations such as the Noongar Language Centre. d) Create modules for Aboriginal organisations on self-advocacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Expansion achieved. New business model established including at least one new business direction, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Systemic Advocacy accepted as 'Business as Usual' Practice. ○ New Self-Advocacy program developed and implemented. ○ '101 - How to advocate for your client'. • KPIS for the Board are set and capture more real-time outcomes data rather than output and trends-based data. • Board decision recorded regarding mental health and whether to engage clients with mental health diagnoses (in or out of scope). • Board decision recorded regarding whether to engage other cohorts suffering discrimination (e.g. LGBTI people, refugees). • AWA services are assessed as culturally competent. • Individual advocacy services take up available offerings in NDIS. • Tolerance levels for acceptable and unacceptable customer behaviours are determined and communicated. • Perth-based organisations engaged and resultant work opportunities being implemented. • Customer satisfaction (clients, partner organisations and funding bodies) with services regularly measured. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Minimum 85% client satisfaction achieved.
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