



**Council of  
Aboriginal Services**  
Western Australia

# **STRONGER TOGETHER, STRONGER COMMUNITIES.**

**Strategic Plan 2024–27**







## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we walk, work and live; and their continuing connections to land, sea and community; and pay our respect to all Elders, past, present and future.

---

## ACCESSIBILITY

This strategic plan is designed to be accessible and can be read aloud through screen reading programs. Visit our website or contact us for a PDF version.

---

## CONTACT US

Council of Aboriginal Services Western Australia  
Phone: (08) 9227 1631  
Email: [enquiries.caswa@ahcwa.org](mailto:enquiries.caswa@ahcwa.org)  
Address: 450 Beaufort Street, Highgate WA 6003  
Website: [caswa.org.au](http://caswa.org.au)

### About this publication

The word 'Aboriginal' has been used respectfully throughout this document to include all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are respectfully advised that this publication may contain images of people who are deceased.

Cover artwork by Rickesha Burdett. Learn more, page 14.  
© Council of Aboriginal Services Western Australia, 2024.



# MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRPERSON AND CEO

Aboriginal people of Western Australia (WA) are the sovereign subjects of our traditional lands and waterways, a connection that the Australian colonial process could not break. Aboriginal people thrive when we are recognised and empowered through our communities, leaders and structures.

For over 50 years, Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) have been delivering community-led, place-based services for our people and communities across WA.

With Aboriginal culture and knowledge at the centre, and employing Aboriginal people across the sector, ACCOs deliver services which consistently achieve better outcomes for Aboriginal people.

The Council of Aboriginal Services Western Australia (CASWA) was established in 2023 in alignment with commitments under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap to build the ACCO sector.

Working with its members, CASWA will amplify and support the self-determination of Aboriginal people to develop and deliver services that achieve optimal outcomes for their communities.

Building from a legacy of ACCO leadership and service delivery in WA, CASWA's Strategic Plan 2024–27 provides a platform for the development of a broader, stronger and more influential ACCO sector into the future.

We are pleased to present CASWA's inaugural strategic plan and we look forward to working with our members and other strategic partners.

# LOOKING BACK MOVING FORWARD

## HISTORICAL AND SYSTEMIC CONTEXT

For over 65,000 years, and hundreds of generations, Aboriginal communities thrived, cared for Country and supported their people to meet their social, emotional, physical, material, cultural and political needs.

Colonisation displaced families from Country, culture and communities, and a long history of violence and assimilatory policies ensued. As a result of colonisation and continued structural barriers, Aboriginal people experience hardship and lower life outcomes.

Policies aimed at closing this gap in outcomes have historically excluded Aboriginal voices and expertise in their creation, and as a result have failed to address the systemic causes of disadvantage faced by Aboriginal communities.

Investing in Aboriginal-led solutions and building the sector must be a key priority of all governments and essential to closing the gap in outcomes and improving the lives of Aboriginal people.

**ACCOs DELIVER THE  
BEST SERVICES AND  
OUTCOMES FOR  
ABORIGINAL PEOPLE.**







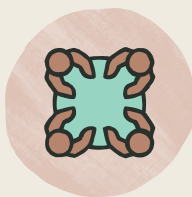
## STRENGTHS OF THE ACCO SECTOR

ACCOs play an integral role in the lives and outcomes of WA Aboriginal communities by providing accessible, comprehensive and culturally safe services to Aboriginal people. Some of their many strengths include:



### Culture at the heart

ACCOs have a deep understanding of culture and embed culture in all work they do.



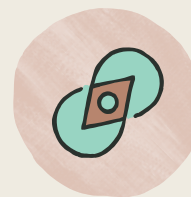
### Community-led and endorsed

ACCOs have the trust and respect of their communities and prioritise their involvement in decision-making processes.



### Place-based

ACCOs have deep knowledge and strong relationships with the communities and land on which they work.



### Holistic and intersectional

ACCOs understand the complexity of community needs and provide holistic care.

## THE CREATION OF CASWA

CASWA was established to represent all ACCOs equally, emerging and established, large and small, through an inclusive, representative, independent and unifying voice.

The aim of CASWA is to strengthen and increase the capacity of WA ACCOs involved in service delivery to Aboriginal people in WA.

It will mobilise the collective strengths of the sector to create change, working in partnership with other peak bodies, governments and others.

**WE ARE THE FIRST AND ONLY PEAK BODY TO REPRESENT ALL ACCOs ACROSS MULTIPLE SECTORS OF SERVICE DELIVERY IN WA.**

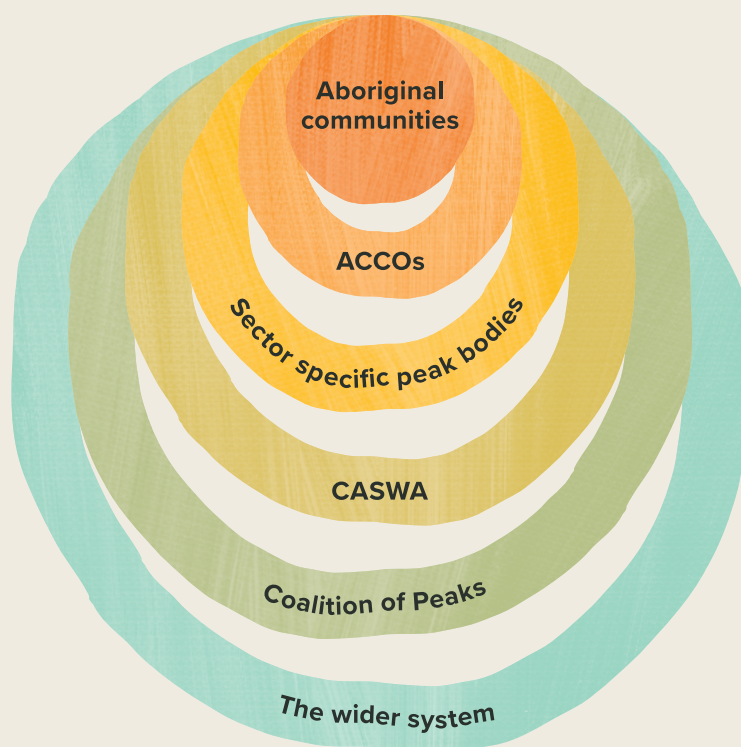
# WORKING TOGETHER WORKING BETTER

CASWA is committed to developing genuine partnerships and relationships between communities and all levels of the policy and service delivery system.

## UNDERSTANDING OUR DIFFERENT ROLES

- Aboriginal communities are the heart of the wider ecosystem in which we operate and define the priorities of ACCOs.
- ACCOs are led by and serve their respective communities, seeking to understand and respond to their needs.
- Sector specific peak bodies, including the Aboriginal Health Council of WA (AHCWA), and other Aboriginal representative and advisory groups support and help give voice to ACCOs and Aboriginal communities.
- CASWA exists to support ACCOs, sector specific peaks and others from across the ecosystem to achieve change.
- Coalition of Peaks is a representative body of more than 80\* Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled peak organisations. CASWA and AHCWA are members.
- The wider system includes governments, funding bodies, philanthropic organisations, the media and other mainstream institutions.

\* As at 1 February 2024.



**WE WILL RELENTLESSLY PURSUE  
THE RECOGNITION OF ACCOs  
AS SUBJECT MATTER EXPERTS  
IN DECISIONS THAT IMPACT  
ABORIGINAL PEOPLE.**

*We are CASWA*

**STRONGER TOGETHER,  
STRONGER COMMUNITIES.**





# STRATEGIC PLAN 2024-27

## OUR VISION

ACCOs in WA are united by a strong and collective voice, that enables them to deliver place-based, community-led and culturally appropriate services to achieve better outcomes for Aboriginal people and their communities.

## OUR MISSION

CASWA leads and supports ACCOs to deliver services that have a positive impact on outcomes and build the strength and empowerment of Aboriginal people and their communities across WA.

## OUR VALUES

- ◉ Culture
- ◉ Self-determination
- ◉ Genuine partnerships
- ◉ Commitment
- ◉ Integrity
- ◉ Knowledge and innovation

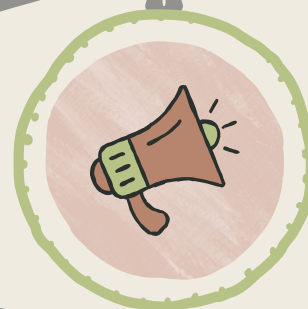
**THIS STRATEGIC PLAN  
HAS BEEN DEVELOPED  
BY OUR COMMUNITY  
FOR OUR COMMUNITY.**

## OUR PRIORITIES



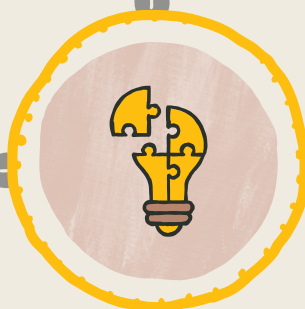
### Priority 1

We will support a strong, financially viable and operationally sustainable ACCO sector across WA.



### Priority 2

We will amplify and represent the interests and expertise of the ACCO sector across WA.



### Priority 3

We will shape policy and aspire to transform the systems which impact ACCOs and the communities they serve.

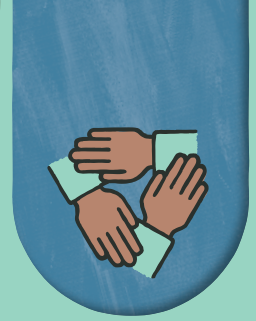


### Priority 4

We will help define and measure sector and system outcomes, holding ACCOs, governments and community services to account.



# PRIORITY 1



## **We will support a strong, financially viable and operationally sustainable ACCO sector across WA.**

The WA ACCO sector is diverse with some organisations being large and operating across multiple sectors, while others are new and small. Building the capacity and capability of the sector and growing the number and range of ACCOs in a strategic and coordinated way is essential for ensuring the delivery of culturally secure services that meet community needs and contribute to closing the gap in outcomes between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.



### **WHAT WE WILL DO**

- ◉ We will actively understand the strengths, needs and priorities of our members, the WA ACCO sector and Aboriginal communities.
- ◉ We will aspire to deliver and facilitate ACCO sector capability building to strengthen their financial sustainability, governance and impact.
- ◉ We will share information, resources and opportunities across the WA ACCO sector to promote empowerment and self-determination.
- ◉ We will support the coordination, partnership and collaboration of WA ACCOs.
- ◉ We will support the emergence and growth of new and established WA ACCOs.



### **HOW WE WILL MEASURE SUCCESS**

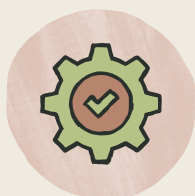
- ◉ There will be more ACCOs working across all service delivery sectors and WA regions.
- ◉ ACCOs will deliver better outcomes for their communities and realise greater operational sustainability.
- ◉ ACCOs will recognise and respect their diversity and differences, yet be undivided.

# PRIORITY 2



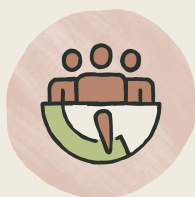
## We will amplify and represent the interests and expertise of the WA ACCO sector.

Respectful recognition of the cultural knowledge and expertise of ACCOs, and genuine engagement of Aboriginal people in equal partnerships and decision-making processes are essential for systemic growth and change. A unified voice for the ACCO sector will ensure ACCOs have input into decisions that affect them, and that community interests are represented at state and national levels.



### WHAT WE WILL DO

- We will create opportunities for the ACCO sector to come together to share and learn.
- We will represent the ACCO sector, and the communities they serve in local, state and national forums.
- We will identify other opportunities for ACCO sector representation, including advisory groups, and support ACCO participation.
- We will actively support the rights of ACCOs to be self-determining in their advocacy to influence state and national policy and investment.
- We will partner with and support peak bodies across Australia to achieve shared interests.



### HOW WE WILL MEASURE SUCCESS

- There will be a high level of trust within and between the ACCO sector and others.
- The sector will be equal partners and have an equal voice in forums that impact Aboriginal lives.
- Other mechanisms for sector influence, including peaks, will be stronger.



# PRIORITY 3



## We will shape policy and aspire to transform systems which impact ACCOs and the communities they serve.

As custodians of culture, local knowledge and service delivery expertise in their communities, ACCOs are best placed to inform policies and programs that impact Aboriginal people. Policy and institutional reform, and new approaches to funding ACCOs, requires CASWA and WA ACCOs at the negotiation table with all levels of government, and with our non-government partners.



### WHAT WE WILL DO

- ◉ We will actively listen to our membership to understand the strengths, interests and priorities of our members and the communities they serve.
- ◉ We will participate in decision-making processes at state and national levels to shape policy.
- ◉ We will advocate to policy makers and others to fund the sustainable and effective transition of Aboriginal services to the ACCO sector.
- ◉ We will develop strategies to improve and increase the commissioning and procurement of ACCOs.
- ◉ We will support government to build their capability and readiness to partner and collaborate with ACCOs.



### HOW WE WILL MEASURE SUCCESS

- ◉ The ACCO sector will receive sustainable and equitable levels of funding.
- ◉ Policies and institutions will reflect Aboriginal experiences and dismantle systemic barriers.
- ◉ Institutions will prioritise ACCOs in their procurement and commissioning processes.

# PRIORITY 4



## **We will help define and measure sector and system outcomes, holding ACCOs, governments and community services to account.**

In the past, research has been conducted on Aboriginal people without Aboriginal people resulting in poor outcomes for individuals and communities. Numerous reports and inquiries have made recommendations which have not been implemented or have led to further inequality for Aboriginal people. By developing and maintaining a strong evidence base of Aboriginal policies, programs and investment, and promoting research methods which embed data sovereignty principles for Aboriginal people, CASWA can hold the sector and system accountable to its commitments.



### **WHAT WE WILL DO**

- ⦿ We will advocate for Aboriginal data sovereignty, to ensure ACCOs maintain ownership and control of the data they collect, and that it is used in a culturally safe and respectful way.
- ⦿ We will actively contribute to the design of reviews and evaluations of ACCOs and the ACCO sector so that Aboriginal people define and measure success in their own terms.
- ⦿ We will develop an evidence base of past, present and future inquiries, recommendations and investments in Aboriginal programs and outcomes, which we will use to advocate for change in the way that policy is made, and services are procured, commissioned and delivered.
- ⦿ We will proactively share information with our membership in a way that is accessible for members and their communities.



### **HOW WE WILL MEASURE SUCCESS**

- ⦿ Government partners will be accountable to their commitments and will work with us on reforms to improve outcomes.
- ⦿ ACCOs will have access to a comprehensive evidence base to advocate for change.
- ⦿ The design of evaluations and agreements will be Aboriginal-led and delivered.



# ORGANISATIONAL ENABLERS

## STRONG FOUNDATIONS FOR DELIVERING OUR STRATEGY

In order to serve its members, CASWA will demonstrate the highest levels of cultural safety, governance, workforce management, financial management, business efficiency, and relationship management.

### **Strong governance**

We will maintain strong governance structures that build the connection to our communities and our culture, and reflect the diversity of our membership.

### **Financially sustainable**

We will identify and access a range of funding sources to ensure our sustainability, and will apply a high standard of financial management.

### **Excellent workforce**


We will attract, develop and retain excellent, committed staff, and seek to maximise their safety and wellbeing.

### **Robust systems and processes**

We will utilise systems and technology which enable CASWA and its members to succeed.

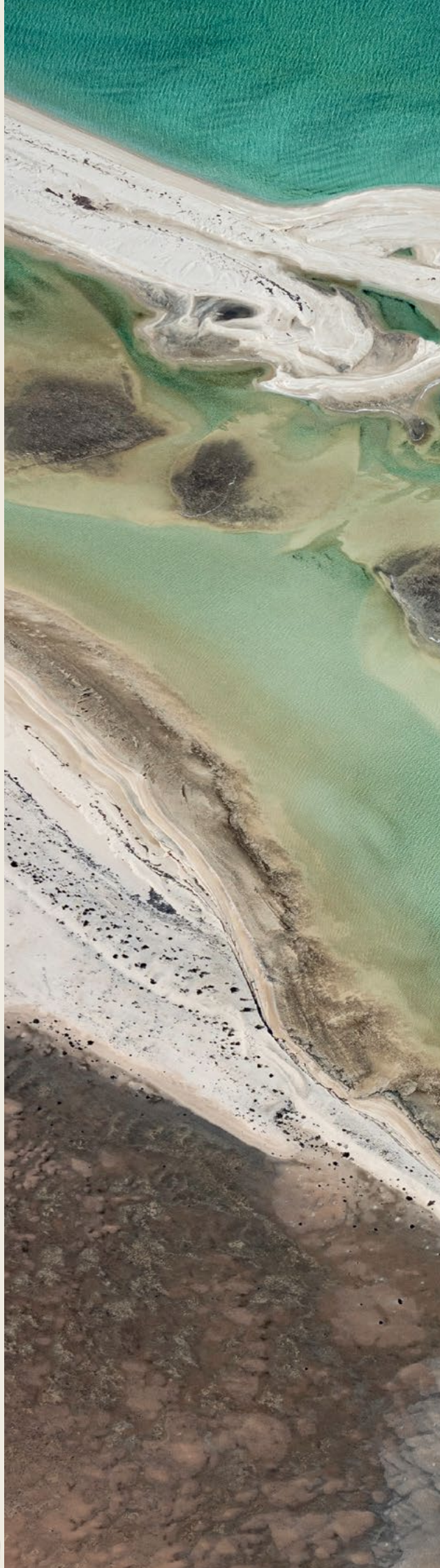
### **Strong partnerships**

We will develop and maintain strong organisational partnerships within and beyond the ACCO sector.



**CASWA ASPIRES  
TO BE AN ENDURING  
INSTITUTION,  
WHICH SERVES ITS  
MEMBERS AND  
THE WIDER ACCO  
SECTOR OF WA  
FOR GENERATIONS.**





## CASWA ARTWORK BY RICKESHA BURDETT

Rickesha Burdett is a Noongar woman from the Menang Region of Western Australia. This artwork represents the Aboriginal community and their leaders. They are working together to close the gap and strengthen ACCOs with a new peak body for social services.

The two meeting places in the centre represent the community and their leaders. The footprints represent the continuous journey to bettering the outcomes for Aboriginal people.

The earthy pink dots represent Country. The blue waves represent health services within the communities who work with the Aboriginal people that surround them. The services are coming together in this story to continue closing the gap.

