



STRATEGIC PLAN

2026 to 2029

A practical framework for safety, housing, recovery, and purposeful growth

Women's Shelter Armidale Inc

Grounded in consultation with staff and Board, and aligned to the NSW Homelessness Strategy 2025 to 2035 and the NSW Homelessness Strategy Action Plan 2025 to 2027.

This plan sets a clear public direction for Women's Shelter Armidale. It describes who we serve, what we stand for, how we will grow, and how we will communicate with our members, partners, funders, and community.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION

Women's Shelter Armidale has served the Armidale community since 1976. This Strategic Plan sets our direction for 2026 to 2029. It builds on our history, reflects staff and Board consultation, and responds to rising complexity, housing pressure, and growing demand for specialist support.

The plan is deliberately practical. It will guide decisions about service delivery, partnerships, advocacy, workforce development, governance, communication, and growth. It keeps WSA focused on what matters most: safety, housing, recovery, dignity, and meaningful community impact.

Vision

A community where women, children, and young people are safe, housed, connected, and free to shape their own futures.

Mission

To provide trauma-informed, person-centred support to women, children, young people, and their families, including those experiencing homelessness, crisis, instability, domestic, family and sexual violence, and related trauma. We work alongside people to secure safety, housing, wellbeing, connection, and choice, while advocating for stronger systems and communities that support long-term stability.

Purpose

To create pathways from crisis to safety, stability, and self-determination.

VALUES THAT GUIDE OUR PRACTICE AND DECISIONS

Safety first

We prioritise physical, emotional, cultural, and relational safety in every setting.

Respect without judgement

We meet people with dignity, privacy, compassion, and accountability.

Choice and self-determination

We support people to make decisions about their own lives, goals, and futures.

Courage in action

We speak plainly, advocate strongly, and act when systems fail the people we serve.

Equity and access

We respond to regional disadvantage, complexity, and barriers to support.

Cultural responsiveness

We commit to culturally safe, healing-centred practice and to listening to First Nations knowledge and community.

Integrity

We are honest, disciplined, and accountable for the quality and impact of our work.

Collaboration

We work with others when partnership improves safety, housing, health, and recovery outcomes.

WHAT CONSULTATION TOLD US

Consultation confirmed that WSA supports women, children, and young people facing homelessness, crisis, instability, and multiple overlapping barriers. This includes people impacted by domestic, family, and sexual violence, while also recognising that not every person who seeks support is experiencing violence.

A strengths-based strategy

WSA's strategy must remain strengths-based. We will recognise risk and complexity without reducing people to their circumstances.

Client reality

- Clients often present with intersecting experiences of housing instability, poverty, trauma, domestic and family violence, disability, mental health challenges, AOD issues, and disrupted support networks.
- Clients value safety, stability, privacy, children, family, pets, support, independence, self-determination, freedom, and being on Country.
- Clients bring courage, resilience, survival skills, and help-seeking capacity.

What success looks like

- People are safer, better supported, and more connected.
- Housing pathways are clearer and more sustainable.
- Support feels coordinated rather than fragmented.
- Services are trusted, practical, respectful, and easier to navigate.
- WSA grows in ways that strengthen impact rather than dilute purpose.

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK AT A GLANCE

Strategic pillar	What it means	2026 to 2029 direction
1. Safety, housing, and recovery	Deliver responsive support that helps people move from crisis to safety, housing, and longer-term recovery.	Strengthen crisis responses, housing pathways, practical supports, and recovery-oriented casework.
2. Client-led and culturally responsive practice	Design and deliver services around what matters most to clients, community, culture, and Country.	Embed choice, dignity, privacy, cultural responsiveness, and lived experience in service design and review.
3. Integrated and locally responsive support	Respond to complexity through partnerships, outreach, and service coordination suited to regional realities.	Build stronger links across health, mental health, AOD, education, legal, disability, and community supports.
4. Prevention, early intervention, and community change	Reduce future harm by acting earlier and influencing local systems and understanding.	Expand prevention, education, training, advocacy, and purposeful growth in domestic, family, and sexual violence responses.
5. Strong foundations, clear communication, and purposeful growth	Grow with discipline, strong governance, workforce capability, financial sustainability, and communication that is clear, useful, and purposeful.	Improve systems, data, quality, culture, decision-making, and communication so growth remains aligned to mission and community need.

1

Safety, housing, and recovery

WSA remains a practical and trusted service that helps women, children, and young people move from crisis to safety, from instability to housing, and from immediate survival to recovery.

Strategic priorities

- Strengthen crisis and transitional responses.
- Improve pathways into stable housing and sustainment support.
- Expand practical supports that reduce immediate risk and instability.
- Embed recovery-oriented, trauma-informed casework that responds to complexity.

What success will look like

- Clients access safe and timely responses.
- Housing outcomes improve across crisis, transitional, and longer-term pathways.
- Support plans reflect safety, wellbeing, and stability goals.
- Repeat crisis presentations reduce where sustained support is possible.

2

Client-led and culturally responsive practice

WSA shapes services around the realities, priorities, and choices of the people it serves. This includes connection to Country, cultural safety, dignity, privacy, children, family, and pets.

Strategic priorities

- Embed client voice and lived expertise in service design and review.
- Strengthen culturally responsive and healing-centred practice.
- Protect privacy, dignity, and informed choice across every program.
- Ensure practice builds self-determination rather than dependence.

What success will look like

- Clients report feeling respected, heard, and safer.
- Programs reflect local and cultural context, not generic models.
- Service design better reflects what clients value.
- WSA practice remains strengths-based and person-centred.

3

Integrated and locally responsive support

Regional complexity requires collaborative responses. WSA works to strengthen interagency and cross-cultural collaboration so support is more coordinated, practical, and responsive to local realities.

Strategic priorities

- Strengthen partnerships across health, mental health, AOD, education, disability, legal, and community services.
- Develop coordinated responses for people facing multiple intersecting barriers.
- Improve outreach and local service accessibility where practical.
- Use data and frontline insight to respond to local need and service gaps.

What success will look like

- Support becomes more coordinated and easier to navigate.
- Referrals are more effective and better matched to need.
- Regional barriers are better understood and addressed.
- WSA is recognised as a strong local partner and specialist contributor.

4

Prevention, early intervention, and community change

WSA will continue increasing its impact upstream. We will contribute to preventing homelessness, reducing violence, and strengthening local capacity before crisis escalates.

Strategic priorities

- Grow prevention and early intervention activity where it aligns with mission and capability.
- Expand community education, professional training, and awareness activity.
- Strengthen WSA's contribution to domestic, family, and sexual violence responses and prevention.
- Use evidence, lived experience, and regional insight to influence systems and policy.

What success will look like

- More people receive support earlier.
- Local understanding of housing insecurity and violence improves.
- WSA's voice influences local and regional responses.
- Future growth in domestic, family, and sexual violence support is purposeful and evidence-based.

5

Strong foundations and clear communication

Growth should not be accidental. WSA will continue building the governance, workforce, culture, systems, communication, and financial strength needed to grow with purpose and hold quality while demand increases. We will not communicate for the sake of noise. Our papers, public updates, member communication, and community messages will be clear, useful, timely, and connected to purpose.

Strategic priorities

- Strengthen governance, strategic oversight, and disciplined growth decisions.
- Invest in workforce capability, wellbeing, and retention.
- Improve systems, quality, policy, reporting, and use of data.
- Communicate clearly and consistently in Board papers, member updates, public messaging, and community engagement.

What success will look like

- Board and executive decisions are more strategic and better informed.
- Workforce capability and confidence improve.
- Quality, consistency, reporting, and accountability strengthen across the organisation.
- Communication is concise, purposeful, and easier for members, partners, funders, and community to understand.

ALIGNMENT AND GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES

Alignment with the NSW Homelessness Strategy

- This plan aligns with the NSW Homelessness Strategy 2025 to 2035 and the NSW Homelessness Strategy Action Plan 2025 to 2027 through its focus on prevention, person-centred support, local responses, housing stability, and system collaboration.
- The plan supports the broader direction of making homelessness rare, brief, and not repeated by linking crisis response to housing, coordinated support, and longer-term stability.
- The plan positions WSA to contribute to regional service system improvement through evidence, partnerships, advocacy, and practical service innovation.

Future growth opportunities

During the life of this plan, WSA may pursue growth where there is a clear strategic fit, demonstrable community need, workforce capability, cultural responsiveness, and financial sustainability. Growth should be disciplined, not opportunistic.

- Broader and deeper support for people impacted by domestic, family, and sexual violence, including recovery, prevention, and integrated responses.
- Expanded early intervention and community education activity.
- Stronger housing and sustainment pathways, including partnerships that reduce exits into homelessness.
- Integrated models that bring together health, wellbeing, practical support, and case coordination.
- Regional advocacy and system leadership informed by local evidence and lived experience.

IMPLEMENTATION, REVIEW, AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Focus	Approach	Review rhythm
Operational planning	Annual operational plans will translate each strategic pillar into clear priorities, accountabilities, and milestones.	Reviewed annually by the executive and Board.
Performance and outcomes	A focused set of organisational indicators will track safety, housing, service accessibility, partnership effectiveness, workforce capability, communication, and financial sustainability.	Reported through regular Board reporting cycles.
Strategic fit for growth	New opportunities will be tested against mission, need, capability, cultural responsiveness, financial sustainability, and risk.	Applied at proposal stage and monitored through delivery.
Communication discipline	Internal and external communication will be clear, concise, purposeful, and audience appropriate.	Reviewed through Board papers, public reporting, member communication, and community feedback.

Our strategic commitment

WSA will stay clear about what matters most: practical support, real safety, stable housing, stronger systems, clear communication, and growth that serves purpose rather than ego.

Safety, dignity, and practical pathways forward.

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