



**Women's Domestic Violence**  
Court Advocacy Service NSW Inc

# **WDVCAS NSW Inc.**

## **Strategic Plan**

### **2015 - 2018**

**Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service NSW Inc.**

PO Box K278, Sydney NSW 2000

Tel: 0474 779 847

ABN 27 935 124 470

[www.wdvcasnw.org.au](http://www.wdvcasnw.org.au)

*Adopted by the WDVCAS NSW Inc Board of Directors 12 May 2015*

## 1. Introduction

This document presents Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service NSW Inc. (WDVCAS NSW Inc.) strategic direction for the 2015-2018 period.

WDVCAS NSW Inc. is the independent peak body for the state-wide Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Services (WDVCASs) and the Local Coordination Point (LCP) workers. WDVCAS NSW Inc. is funded by Legal Aid NSW through the Women Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Program (WDVCAP) and by our members.

We act as a voice and support body for our members, the workers from the 28 WDVCASs and LCPs, and our associate members working in the domestic and family violence sector. We strengthen their role of providing better outcomes for women and children by identifying and advocating on domestic and family violence issues within social, political and legal contexts, at both state and national levels.

Over the past few years, the NSW Government has announced a suite of reforms that have marked a major change in responses to domestic and family violence and the means by which services are to be delivered in the State.

Over the next few years it is expected that all Local Coordination Points for female victims will be hosted by WDVCASs. This represents a unique opportunity and challenge for the WDVCASs as their scope of work will be expanded to include support for all women who are identified at threat of domestic and family violence, including support to those women seeking protection through the court system.

Correspondingly, the next three years will be a critical time for WDVCAS NSW Inc. The expansion of the scope of work of our members, puts the association in a unique position to monitor members' experiences. We will work with our members to monitor trends and issues in the sector, produce evidence and formulate objective policy positions across the full range of domestic and family violence issues affecting women and their children.

We will work systemically to improve service delivery through collaboration, discussion and consultation with Members of Parliament, relevant government agencies, other peak organisations, and the media.

We aim to be recognised as a leader in promoting policy and law reform on issues affecting women and children experiencing domestic and family violence. Our strength comes from listening to our members, identifying systematic issues, and making constructive recommendations to improve the policy and legal responses to domestic and family violence.

In order to meet the unique opportunities before us, a key priority for WDVCAS NSW Inc. will be to broaden its membership base, secure additional funding, hire new staff, and strengthen the governance expertise within the association.

## 2. Background and context

Policy and legal responses to domestic and family violence have intensified in recent years with the launch of *It Stops Here* which incorporates the NSW Domestic Violence Justice Strategy as well as other related reform programs of the NSW Government including the Going Home Staying Home program and major reforms in child protection.

***It Stops Here*** - On 16 February 2014 the Hon Pru Goward MP, Minister for Women, launched the final draft of *It Stops Here* – The NSW Government’s Domestic and Family Violence Framework for Reform.

A key element of the Reforms is *Safer Pathways* which is a new service delivery model intended to improve the consistency and effectiveness of the response to domestic violence in NSW. The NSW Government announced that the 28 WDVCSs would host the service delivery model's Local Coordination Points for female victims.

The Local Coordination Points are integral to the success of the new service delivery model in that they will coordinate local support for female victims and facilitate urgent action for those at serious threat of further harm through the coordination of regular Safety Action Meetings.

*Safer Pathways* was launched in Orange and Waverley in September 2014 and the results so far have been promising.

### ***NSW Domestic Violence Justice Strategy (2013-2017):***

The Domestic Violence Justice Strategy (DVJS) was launched by the Department of Justice in 2012 to strengthen the criminal justice system response to domestic violence. The DVJS was created on the basis that an effective response to violence in homes and families relies on a shared commitment from a range of relevant agencies and services.

The DVJS will have a significant impact on WDVCSs, not only in terms of them being key partners in responding effectively to domestic and family violence, but also in terms of the workload the DVJS will generate for WDVCSs. Under the DVJS and the Reforms, after Police have attended a domestic and family incident, they will be required to provide victims’ details either to the Central Referral Point for referral to the relevant Local Coordination Point, or if a Local Coordination Point has yet to be established, directly to the relevant WDVCS.

***Going Home Staying Home:*** In June 2014 the NSW Government announced the tender outcomes of the *Going Home Staying Home* reform program which marked a major change in the way women’s domestic and family violence services were to be delivered in NSW. There has been a shift away from refuges providing specialised domestic violence services to generalist homelessness service providers.

### **WDVCAS Orange and Waverley as host of the Local Coordination Point**

As of 20 February 2015:

- ✓ The Waverley Local Coordination Point hosted by Sydney WDVCS has received over 1205 referrals<sup>1</sup> from women who are victims of domestic and family violence, of which 973 were assessed as women ‘at threat’ and 237 were assessed ‘at serious threat’ of further harm.
- ✓ The Orange Local Coordination Point hosted by Central West WDVCS has received over 694 referrals<sup>1</sup>, of which 478 of the women had been assessed by Police and other service providers as being ‘at threat’ and 216 were women assessed as ‘at serious threat’.

### **In 2013 the 28 individual WDVCSs:**

- ✓ helped clients obtain 10,476 final Apprehended Domestic Violence Orders and
- ✓ made 61,602 referrals for clients to local support services to ensure their other social, welfare and legal needs were met.

WDVCAS NSW Inc. will, in close coordination with DVNSW, monitor the impact on the quality of support to victims given there has been a reduction in the number of specialised women's refuges, where women have previously been able to access domestic violence specific counselling and group work etc.

As a logical consequence of anticipated increases in the number of domestic and family violence victims being supported under the new service delivery model, there will obviously be a parallel increase in referrals to specialised DFV services that will make monitoring the impact of the *Going Home Staying Home* reforms on service delivery for women and their children of paramount importance.

### 3. Vision, purpose and objectives

WDVCAS NSW Inc. is the peak non-government association representing its members (the 28 WDVCASs including the Local Coordination Points) who are advocating for women and their children experiencing domestic and family violence.

Our **VISION** is to achieve better outcomes for women and their children by identifying and advocating on systematic domestic and family violence issues within social, political and legal contexts.

The **PURPOSE** of the WDVCAS NSW Inc. is to:

- advocate in social, legal and political settings on behalf of its members who provide support to women and their children who have experienced domestic violence;
- collaborate and consult with key stakeholders; as well as
- formulate recommendations for systemic policy and law reform.

For the next three years the **OBJECTIVES** of WDVCAS NSW Inc. will be:

1. To identify and advocate on domestic and family violence issues with a focus on systemic policy and law reform;
2. To produce high quality policy documents, submissions and independent research that is circulated widely;
3. To draw upon the expertise of our members and in turn, to provide high quality professional support to them;
4. To develop strong partnerships and work collaboratively with our stakeholders; and
5. To be a well governed and managed association with an expanded funding and membership base.

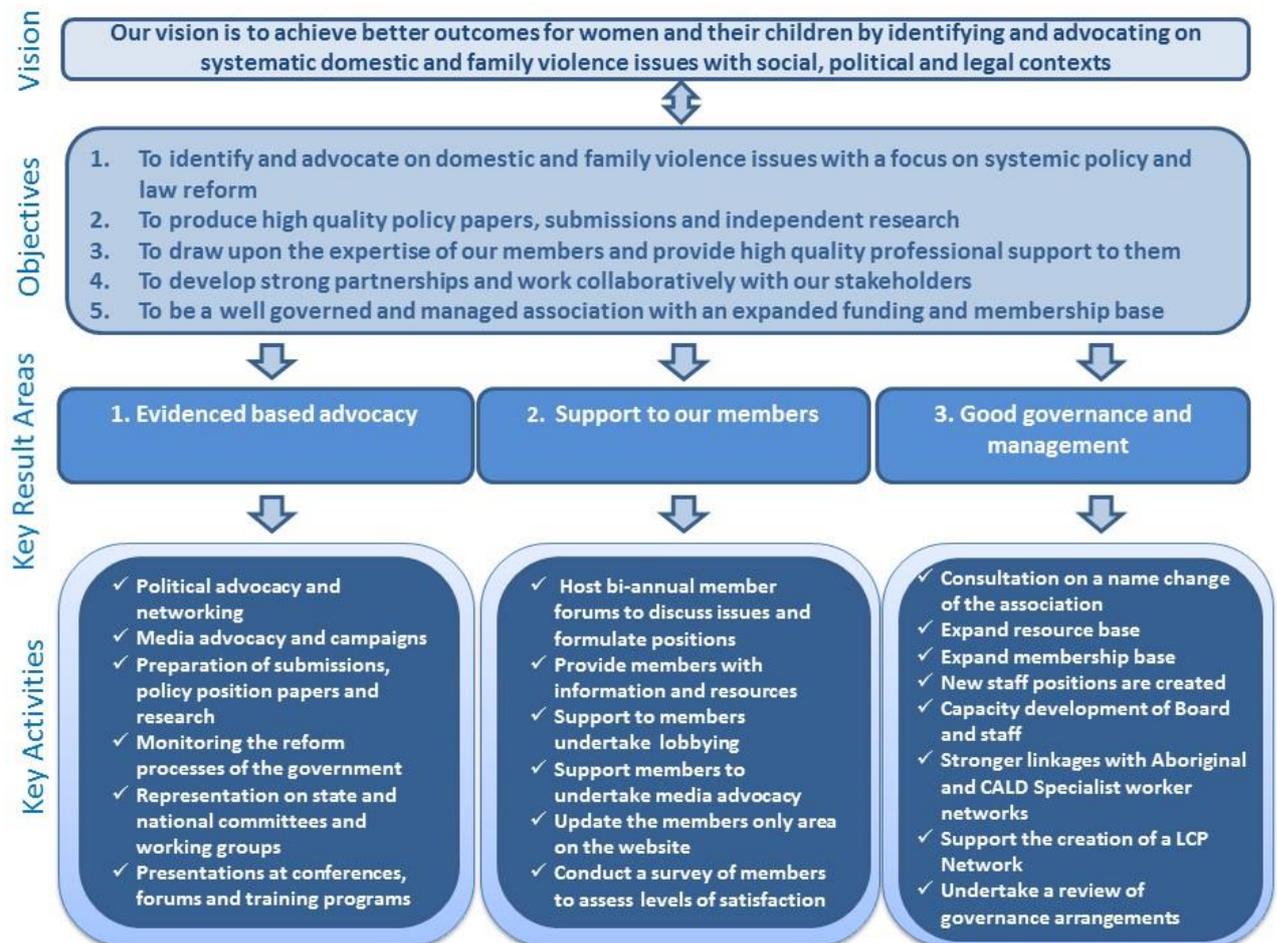
#### WDVCAS NSW Inc. Guiding Principles

WDVCAS NSW Inc. is founded on human rights principles, which:

- are informed by a feminist analysis which seeks to empower and recognise domestic and family violence as a crime and a violation of the human rights of women and children;
- recognise the gendered nature of domestic and family violence and its disproportionate impact on women;
- are determined to identify systemic policy and law reform issues impacting on service delivery to clients experiencing domestic and family violence;
- are informed by a focus on positive outcomes for WDVCAS clients;
- communicate openly and believe that consultation is a priority where possible and practical;
- respect and value individual differences of opinion; and
- practise decision making by consensus where possible.

## 4. Key Result Areas and strategies

To achieve our vision and objectives, we will focus on three key result areas:



### **Key Result Area 1: Evidence based advocacy**

Since WDV CAS NSW Inc. was incorporated, undertaking systematic policy and law reform work has been the key aim of WDV CAS NSW Inc. We intend to intensify our advocacy efforts by engaging with our membership to draw upon their unique and specialist expertise to inform the ongoing policy and law reform agenda.

A key ongoing strategy will be to develop collaborative relationships with key stakeholders at the state level, including members of parliament, government agencies, police, courts, other peak organisations and state wide service providers. To achieve this, we will:

- ✓ closely monitor trends and issues in the domestic and family violence sector and provide constructive recommendations to policy makers
- ✓ act as a voice for our members through political advocacy
- ✓ develop close partnerships with government agencies and actively represent our members on state and federal government committees and working groups
- ✓ incorporate our findings and analyses into position papers, submissions and inquiries
- ✓ identify research opportunities to complement the government’s evaluation work for domestic and family violence related reforms

- ✓ engage in state-wide media advocacy on systematic policy and legal reform issues through media campaigns, including the issue of media releases
- ✓ continue to be an active member of the NSW Women's Alliance and actively promote collaboration and partnership within other peak organisations
- ✓ proactively develop relationships with other peak organisations including those in the homelessness and justice sector

A key partner of WDV CAS NSW Inc. is Legal Aid NSW through the WDV CAP. Legal Aid NSW is responsible for the funding and management of the WDV CAS', and they are also a key player in the inter-government response to domestic and family violence in NSW. We will continue to maintain a strong, open and collaborative relationship with the WDV CAP team.

Refer to annex for key activities and performance indicators for this key result area.

### ***Key Result Area 2: Supporting our members***

A key objective for the 2015-2018 period will be to draw upon the expertise of our members and provide high quality professional support to them. This will become increasingly important as the WDV CASs progressively become hosts of the Local Coordination Points. This work will be central to the success of all the work undertaken under key result area 1. We will:

- ✓ host bi-annual member forums to provide space to discuss systematic policy and legal reform issues and to develop policy positions in an open and consultative manner
- ✓ act on issues raised by our members as per strategies outlined in key result area 1
- ✓ provide members with regular updates on developments in the sector (state, national and international developments) including via the 'members only' area of the WDV CAS NSW website
- ✓ provide members with opportunities for information exchanges and opportunities for discussion of common issues of concern
- ✓ provide memberships to participate in WDV CAS NSW Inc governance mechanisms such as the monitoring subcommittee (refer key result area 3)
- ✓ support the creation of a state-wide Local Coordination Point worker network
- ✓ support members to engage the media in their local area through the provision of mentoring and resources, for example, sample media releases
- ✓ support members to engage in lobbying and advocacy work in their local area through the provision of day to day support and resources, for example, sample letters to MPs
- ✓ participate in training for new WDV CAS workers via Legal Aid NSW core training
- ✓ work collaboratively with Legal Aid NSW to develop the Legal Aid Forums programs and training programs.

In 2015/2016 we will conduct a survey of our members to give them the opportunity to comment on the service we provide to them and make recommendations for improvement.

Refer to annex for key activities and performance indicators for this key result area.

### ***Key Result Area 3: Good governance and management***

WDV CAS NSW Inc. is a relatively new organisation (established in 2011) and the need to continuously find ways to strengthen the governance and management of the association remains a key priority.

We aim to build the governance capacity of the Board of Directors and staff to ensure they can fulfil all their obligations to achieve the organisation's aims and objectives. This will be achieved by:

- ✓ providing training and mentoring for Board of Directors, members and staff
- ✓ developing stronger links with the Aboriginal and CALD specialist worker networks to ensure our work is informed by their unique experiences and to ensure the Board membership reflects the diversity of WDV CAS workers
- ✓ support the creation of LCP worker networks with links to the Board of Directors
- ✓ ongoing succession planning
- ✓ undertaking a review of the current governance and management arrangements to assess whether any adjustments to the structure are necessary to ensure the association's needs are best met.

To embrace the new opportunities introduced by the Reforms, a key priority will be to expand our resource base by securing additional funding and partnering with other organisations. We also aim to expand our membership base (full and associate members) and we will progressively increase membership fees.

Given the expanding role and responsibilities of WDV CAS NSW Inc. and if the association's goals are to be achieved effectively and within deadline, there will be increased demand for strong administrative and policy services. Consideration of two new positions (in addition to the Executive Officer) will be essential. This would include an administration and finance officer and a policy and research officer.

Finally, WDV CAS NSW Inc. will consult closely with its members to consider a change of name for the association given the broadening scope of work of the WDV CASs. This will be done in full consultation with our funding body – Legal Aid NSW.

Also refer to Annex for key activities and performance indicators for this key result area.

## 5. Review and Reporting

The Executive Officer will inform the Board of Directors on the attainment of the strategic performance indicators and other relevant information by way of a report presented at their monthly meetings.

The Executive Officer will report against the strategic performance indicators through monthly reports prepared for Board of Directors meetings.

WDV CAS NSW Inc. will review the strategic plan on an annual basis at the Annual General Meeting.

An annual report will be prepared which reports on progress made on all performance indicators and will be circulated to members prior to the Annual General Meeting.

WDV CAS NSW Inc. will produce six monthly progress reports (performance based and financial) to Legal Aid NSW (and any other funding body which may be secured), which will report on progress made on the key result areas and related performance indicators.

The strategic plan will be updated, as required, pending feedback from our members and our funders.

## Annex: Key activities and performance indicators

<b>Vision:</b> To achieve better outcomes for women and their children by identifying and advocating on systematic domestic and family violence issues within social, political and legal contexts		
<b>Key Result Area 1: Evidence base advocacy</b>		
Key activities	Performance Indicators	Annual targets
1.1 Make representations to Members of Parliament and senior government officials (also see activity 2.2)	Total number of meetings held with MPs and senior government officials	6
1.2 Actively represent WDVCSs in relevant government and non-government committees and working groups	Total number of committees/working groups attended	4
1.3 Media advocacy on systematic policy and legal reform issues (also see activity 2.3)	Total number of state-wide media releases/campaigns run	3
1.4 Develop high quality position papers and submissions (where relevant)	Total number of position papers and/or submissions prepared	1-2 <sup>1</sup>
1.5 Provide members with opportunities to have input into the development of WDVCS NSW positions	Evidence of having reflected on membership issues and evidence of decisions	Refer activity 2.5
1.6 Undertake research on key issues in partnership with relevant research organisation	Number of research reports	1 (in three years) <sup>2</sup>
1.7 Present at conferences, seminars, workshops, training programs and meetings	Total number of public presentations made	3

<sup>1</sup> The number of submissions prepared by WDVCS NSW Inc is dependent on the number of calls of relevant submissions

<sup>2</sup> Pending securing additional project funding

<b>Key Result Area 2: Support to our members</b>		
<b>Key Activities</b>	<b>Performance Indicators</b>	<b>Annual targets</b>
2.1 Provide members with up to date information on sector developments through e-bulletins, members only area of website, and other means	Number of e-mail bulletins sent to members	20
2.2 Support members to undertake lobbying and advocacy work in their local area (linked to activity 1.1)	Members advocacy kit developed and proforma letters circulated Number of lobbying letters sent by members	1 5
2.3 Support members to undertake media work in their local area (also see activity 1.3)	Members media kit developed and updated and sample media releases circulated Number of media events in local areas	2 3
2.4 Provide members with opportunities for information exchanges and networking (also refer activity 1.3)	Number of meetings/teleconferences and training for members	3
2.5 Host bi-annual meeting of members to discuss organisational developments and to develop positions	Total number of membership forums to discuss organisational and systemic policy issues	2
2.6 Conduct a members survey to assess level of satisfaction in WDV CAS NSW Inc. and the services it provides	Survey completed and results circulated to members	1 (in 2016/2017 only)
<b>Key Result Area 3: Good governance and management</b>		
<b>Key Activities</b>	<b>Performance Indicators</b>	<b>Annual targets</b>
3.1 Engage with membership to consider a name change for the association	A decision about the name of the association is made by members in consultation with Legal Aid NSW	n/a
3.2 Pursue opportunities to diversify the association's funding base	Additional funds received	50% increase in funding over three years
3.3 Increase the membership revenue of WDV CAS NSW Inc	Number of full and associate members	10% increase in associate members

	Total increase in membership revenue	40% increase in total membership revenue over 3 years
3.4 Create new paid staff positions	2 new positions are created (administration, policy/research)	2 new positions created <sup>3</sup>
3.5 Strengthen the capacity of Board of Directors and succession planning	Governance expertise within the organisation is strengthened via training and mentoring  Board of Directors orientation packages provided for all new Board members	6 board meetings are held per year  Training provided to Board members as required
3.6 Strengthen the capacity of staff	Supervision of Executive Officer  Staff expertise is strengthened	Monthly supervision of Executive Officer  1 Training opportunity for staff
3.7 Review, and develop if required, internal policies and procedures to ensure compliance with relevant legislative and regulatory requirements	The association's internal policies and procedures are fully compliant with relevant legislative and regulatory requirements.	Review of policies and procedures is completed in 2016/2017
3.8 Foster strong linkages with Aboriginal and CALD Specialist worker networks	Number of Board meetings attended by Aboriginal and CALD Special Advisors	70% of Board meetings are attended by CALD and Aboriginal Specialist Worker Special Advisors
3.9 Support the creation of an LCP workers network meeting	LCP network is creation and meeting bi-annually	LCP issues are reflected in Board minutes
3.10 Undertake a review of the association's governance and management arrangements	A governance review is completed  Evidence of the Board making adjustments if required	Governance review is completed in 2016/2017

<sup>3</sup> Pending securing additional core funding