

STRATEGIC PLAN

FRAMEWORK 2026-28

CHAMPIONING COMMUNITY -LED, PLACE-BASED AND NOT-FOR-PROFIT EARLY LEARNING SERVICES IN WA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Carewest's 2025-2028 Strategic Plan provides a framework to support and strengthen Western Australia's not-for-profit early learning services, operating within and for their local communities. These services play a vital role in supporting families, fostering inclusion, building strong local connections, and delivering high-quality education for children.

The Plan confirms Carewest's commitment to operating as the Peak Body for NFP services in Western Australia, advocating for their unique value and shared community goals.

Carewest's 2026-2028 Strategic Plan outlines a clear framework to support, represent, and strengthen Western Australia's community-led not-for-profit (NFP) early learning centres. These services – governed by parent committees – are vital contributors to community connection, family empowerment, and high-quality education for children.

THE PLAN CENTRES ON SIX PILLARS:

1. Representation and Advocacy
2. Government and Leadership Education and Support
3. Professional Development and Mentoring
4. Child Safety, Safeguarding and Inclusive Practice
5. Visibility and Sector Growth
6. Policy

Through these pillars, Carewest will deliver governance resources, training, mentoring, and advocacy, while building a public campaign that celebrates the social and educational value of NFP community early learning.

Vision

To empower Western Australia's, place-based early learning services operating within and for their local communities to thrive as connected, ethical, and sustainable not-for-profit services that embody excellence, inclusion, and strong local engagement.

Core Values

- **Integrity:** Transparent, ethical, and accountable in all actions.
- **Community:** Rooted in local needs and parent partnership.
- **Equity:** Inclusive and accessible for all families and educators.
- **Empowerment:** Building the skills, confidence, and capacity of leaders and committees.
- **Collaboration:** Working collectively across the NFP and early childhood sector.
- **Child Safety & Safeguarding:** Embedding the National Child Safe Standards in all Carewest initiatives.

Strategic Priorities and Key Actions

1. Representation and Advocacy

Goal: Be the voice for place-based not-for-profit services, while continuing to support and represent NFP services.

Key Actions

- Advocate to Local, State and Federal Government, for policies that sustain community governance models.
- Promote and educate agencies on our policy position on funding equity, inclusion, workforce wellbeing, and quality practice.
- Ensure that our organisation has the internal structures that meet the needs of our diverse early childhood NFP community. .
- Provide advocacy and supports for stand-alone, place-based services, while maintaining inclusive representation and professional learning opportunities across the broader NFP sector.
- Work with partners where we share common goals and can advantage our positions. Advocate as always, for the vulnerable members of our child and family communities.

2. Governance and Committee Support

Goal: Strengthen governance capacity and compliance confidence among parent/volunteer-led committees.

Key Actions

- Develop a Carewest Early Childhood Centre Governance Toolkit with templates for constitutions, delegations and roles, meeting agendas, budgets, and compliance checklists.
- Deliver committee induction sessions each term to build leadership and governance capability.
- Offer governance mentoring and consultation for persons with management and control and directors.
- Provide online governance and risk management training modules.

3. Staff Onboarding, Professional Development and Networking

Goal: Build a skilled, reflective, and resilient workforce across the Carewest network.

Key Actions

- Develop a Carewest Orientation Framework consistent with NQF and aligned with National Quality Standards and the ECA Code of Ethics, and the National Child Safe Principles.
- Deliver workshops on inclusion, wellbeing, reflective practice, and programming.
- Provide one-on-one mentoring, small group and specialised mentoring, and consultation for directors, educational leaders, and Room Leaders.
- Offer Director Leadership Training covering strategic planning, governance, curriculum planning, planning, compliance, and professionalisation.
- Partner with TAFEs and universities to provide accredited and sector-relevant training pathways.

4. Projects and Innovation

Goal: Lead collaborative projects across the child and family NFP sector.

Key Actions

- Expand Early Intervention and Inclusion Support Projects, providing shared access to allied health, child development screenings, and professional learning.
- Facilitate collaborative grant applications for member centres to enhance service delivery.
- Share advocacy and develop and implement sector strengthening strategies.
- Collaborate with community organisations and inclusion agencies to co-design initiatives.

5. Collaboration and Partnerships

Goal: Raise the profile of Carewest and its members and member centres through actively developing collaborations and seeking appropriate professional public awareness.

Key Actions

- Update and redesign the Carewest website to showcase all member centres, highlight their achievements, and provide accessible professional resources.
- Celebrating the benefits of NFP community-led early learning – emphasising child-centred, ethical, and place-based models.
- Develop partnerships and collaborations with universities, TAFEs, and inclusion agencies to expand training and innovation opportunities.
- Work with government agencies to strengthen communication and collaboration.
- Grow our relationships across jurisdictions.
- Develop a stakeholder matrix to identify existing relationships and possible new connections.

6. Policy

Goal: Strengthen Carewest's voice with government by positioning place-based not-for-profit early learning services operating within and for their local communities, as essential public infrastructure, supporting sustained recognition, reform, and investment across the sector.

Key Actions

Recognition as Essential Infrastructure

- Advocate for formal recognition by the Premier and Department of the Premier and Cabinet that NFP early learning centres form critical community infrastructure.

Sector Planning

- Partner in developing a long-term Sector Needs Analysis identifying demographic trends, workforce pressures, and risks facing NFP centres.
- Advocate for the inclusion of NFP community services in all state early childhood planning frameworks.
- Establish a Carewest Policy Reference Group to support strategic responses to sector reform.

Staff Qualifications and Professionalisation

- Develop recommendations for professional recognition and remuneration structures that reflect the specialist role of educators in place-based, community-led models.
- Partner with Agencies to shape future workforce training aligned to NQS, Child Safe Standards, and community governance.
- Advocate for enhanced access to conversations and decisions about Certificate III, Diploma, and ECT reforms.
- Establish a Carewest Qualifications Reference Group to support strategic responses to sector reform.

Workforce Professionalisation

- Promote a professionalisation agenda recognising the expertise, responsibilities, and leadership roles of educators working within NFP early learning settings.
- Advocate for funding support to upskill educators, including scholarships, RPL pathways, and mentoring subsidies.
- Embed professional learning priorities (leadership, curriculum, wellbeing, reflective practice, governance literacy) into ongoing Carewest member supports
- Establish a Carewest Professionalisation Reference Group to support strategic responses to sector reform.

Implementation Recommendations

Year	Focus Area	Key Milestones
2026	Foundation & Visibility	relaunch website, member centre showcase, and NFP marketing campaign; establish hotline
2026	Leadership and Persons in Management and Control	Deliver committee induction and director leadership programs; introduce Associate Member category
	Inclusion & Innovation	Expand Early Intervention project; strengthen advocacy partnerships and grants program
2027	Evaluation & Growth	Review strategic outcomes; publish impact report; design next phase (2029–2032)

Evaluation and Reporting

- Annual Member Survey to assess impact, satisfaction, and future priorities.
- Data Collection to track professional development, hotline use, and governance consultations.
- Annual Impact Report to document outcomes, policy influence, and financial accountability.
- 2028 Strategic Review to evaluate achievements and inform the next four-year plan.

