

Overview



Executive summary



I am pleased to present the first annual report of the Department of Communities, which marks the end of a very busy year. Communities came together on 1 July

2017, and since that time we have continued the great work of our former agencies, while working more collectively to get better outcomes for the people we're here to serve.

As the flagship department for the reform of human services in Western Australia, Communities has a unique opportunity to fundamentally improve the way in which people receive our services and ensure a timely, coherent, person-centred response.

Despite the challenges presented in merging an organisation of this size, I have been delighted by the willingness of staff to get on board with a different way of working, to ensure the whole genuinely is greater than the sum of its parts.

This is in no small way due to our shared DNA.

Each of the former agencies and their component parts were focussed on

delivering quality services and diverse, healthy and well-functioning places, with safe, secure homes for people across Western Australia. Now, as a single department we have embraced "People, Place, Home" as our tagline, and "collaborating to create pathways that enable individual, family and community wellbeing" as our ultimate purpose.

At the core of everything we do and why we do it are the **People** who make up our communities across Western Australia.

We focus our efforts on building **Places** that are inclusive and connected and offer everyone the opportunity to prosper.

And we support children and families so that they can have a physically and emotionally secure place to call **Home**.

We also recognise that people's lives are diverse and inter-connected, and our services need to respond accordingly. Here lies the strength of our new agency: being able to combine our expertise and take a strengths-based approach to designing person-centred responses and better ways of working for the community.

And we're already seeing the positive results that flow from taking this kind of approach.

For example, a young man with complex issues, destined for a care facility for the elderly, has been given a safe, affordable and appropriate home thanks to the hard work and collaboration of our frontline service delivery staff, flexible interpretation of policies and a willingness by everyone involved to think differently.

This same spirit of collaboration and innovation saw staff secure appropriate housing so that a three-month old baby could be looked after by her grandmother, rather than being placed in non-relative foster care, and enable that baby to grow up connected to family and culture.

The structure of our new agency reflects this new approach. Our first year has seen the integration of our strategy, policy, corporate operations and commissioning areas to streamline our agency while maintaining specialisation and portfolio expertise where it's needed.

Our transformation of service design and delivery is starting in the Kimberley – our test bed for the devolution of decision-making to the regions in the design, coordination and oversight of services so that they can deliver local responses that suit community needs. We know that what works in the suburbs of Perth

may not work in Esperance or Katanning or other parts of the State; and as a department, we will continue to learn and grow from our activities in the Kimberley and look to roll out further place-based delivery models across the State.

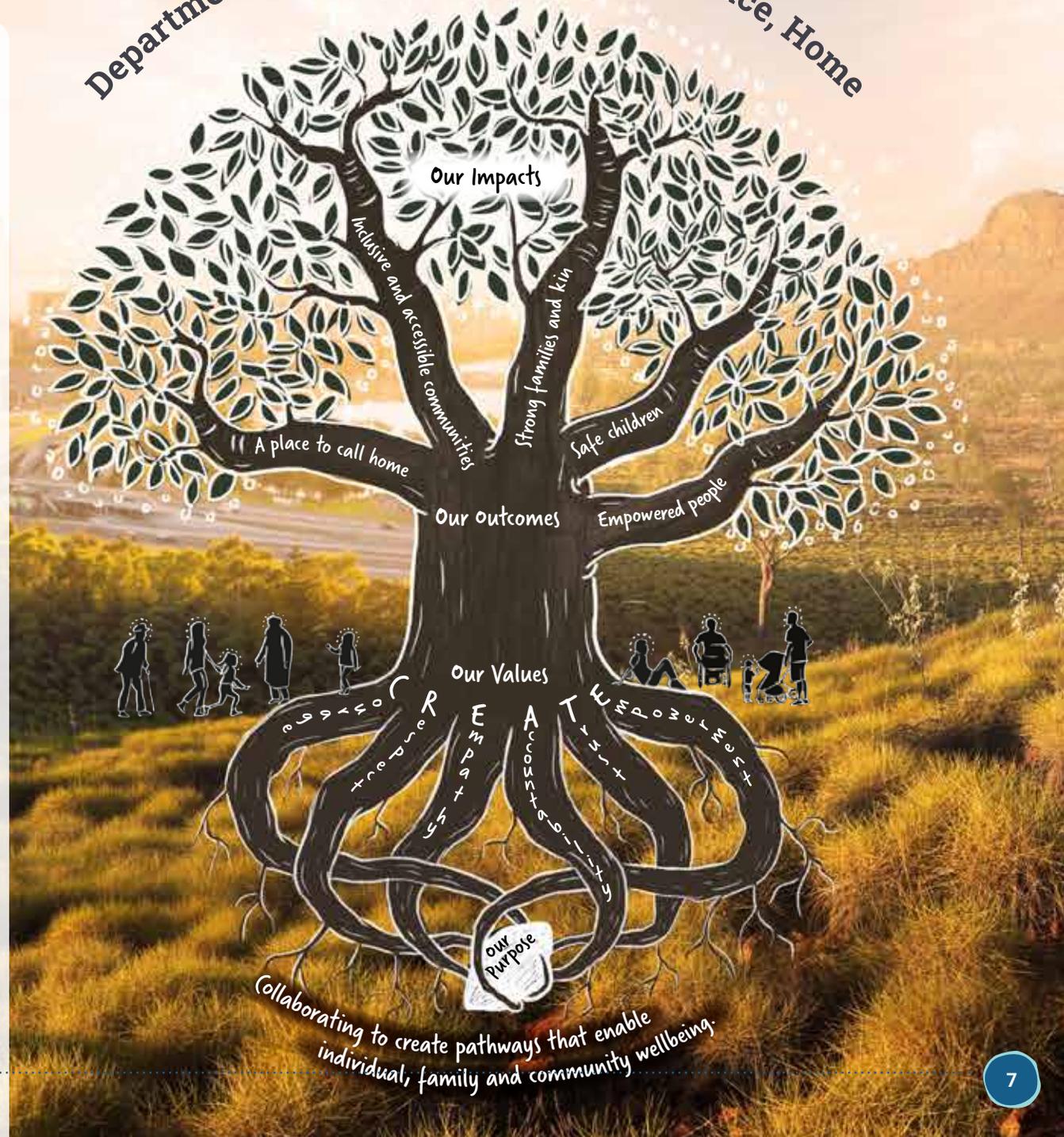
There is no doubt we have a long way to go in our transformation, but I assure you that our workforce of almost 6,000 people located across the State has accepted the challenge of working together in new and different ways to achieve better outcomes for individuals and families.

This is reflected in the results of the Public Sector Commission's 2018 employee perception survey, where Communities reported the equal second highest employee engagement level of 62 per cent when compared with eight other agencies amalgamated as part of machinery of government changes.

We recognise the unique opportunity our agency has to bring about true and lasting social change and look forward to bringing you stories on our success in making a positive difference to the lives of Western Australians.

Grahame Searle
Director General

Department of Communities – People, Place, Home



Operational structure

Responsible Ministers

At 30 June 2018, the Department of Communities was responsible to the following Ministers:

Hon Simone McGurk MLA

Minister for Child Protection; Women's Interests; Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence; Community Services

Hon Stephen Dawson MLC

Minister for Environment; Disability Services

Hon Peter Tinley AM MLA

Minister for Housing; Veterans Issues; Youth

Hon Mick Murray MLA

Minister for Seniors and Ageing; Volunteering; Sport and Recreation

Hon Alannah MacTiernan MLC

Minister for Regional Development; Agriculture and Food; Minister assisting the Minister for State Development, Jobs and Trade

Enabling legislation

The Department of Communities was established on 1 July 2017 under the *Public Sector Management Act 1994* as part of machinery of government changes. It was formed from several agencies and their components:

- Department for Child Protection and Family Support
- Department of Housing (including Housing Authority)
- Disability Services Commission
- Communities component of the Department of Local Government and Communities
- Regional Services Reform Unit
- Regional coordination and engagement component of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs.

The Disability Services Commission was established under the *Disability Services Act 1993* to provide and improve supports and services to people with disability.

The Housing Authority is a statutory authority established under the *Housing Act 1980* to provide and improve housing and accommodation in Western Australia (WA).

The Disability Services Commission and Housing Authority have specific reporting requirements in accordance with the *Financial Management Act 2006* and have, therefore, prepared separate Annual Reports to meet those requirements. All other information for the financial year is contained in this Annual Report.

Administered legislation

Communities administers the following legislation:

Adoption Act 1994

Carers Recognition Act 2004

Child Care Services Act 2007

Children and Community Services Act 2004

Country Housing Act 1998

Declared Places (Mentally Impaired Accused) Act 2015

Disability Services Act 1993

Education and Care Services National Law (WA) Act 2012

Government Employees' Housing Act 1964

Housing Act 1980

Housing Societies Repeal Act 2005

Volunteers and Food and Other Donors (Protection from Liability) Act 2002

Working with Children (Criminal Record Checking) Act 2004

Reviews of administered legislation

The statutory review of the *Children and Community Services Act 2004* was tabled in State Parliament in November 2017. The review made 70 recommendations for improving the operation and effectiveness of the Act, including:

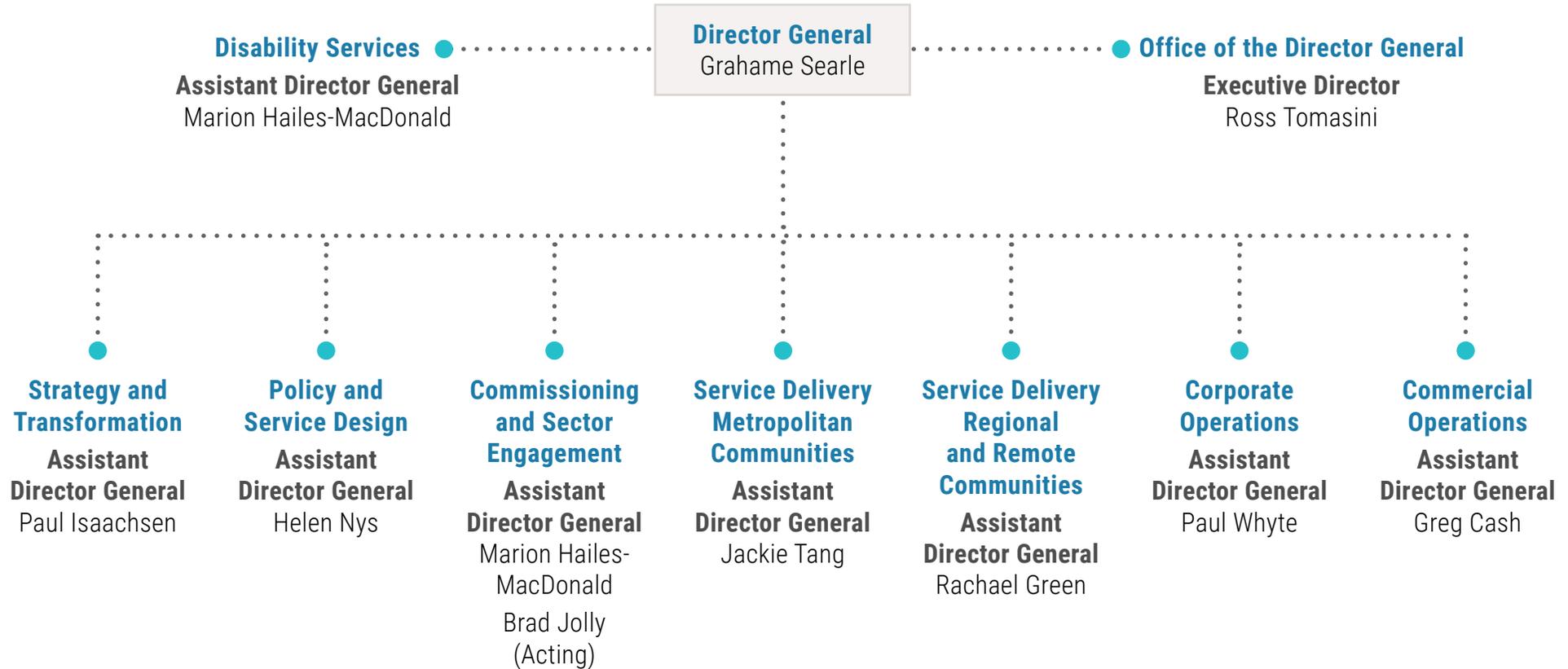
- improving outcomes for Aboriginal children in care through increasing the participation and involvement of Aboriginal people in decision-making processes
- promoting the timely delivery of cross-government services to children and young people who are, or have been, in care
- increasing independent oversight of out-of-home care.

The State Government is considering the recommendations.

In 2018, Communities commenced reviews of the *Adoption Act 1994* and the *Carers Recognition Act 2004*. Both reviews will be completed by the end of the year.

Organisational structure

Department of Communities Corporate Structure



Corporate Executive



Grahame Searle
Director General

Grahame is driving the integration of the new Department of Communities and the broader transformation of the way human services are delivered across WA. Grahame successfully led major organisational change in his former roles as Regional Services Reform Unit Leader (2015-2017), Department of Housing Director General (2008-2015) and Landgate Chief Executive Officer (2004-2008).



Paul Isaachsen
Assistant Director General,
Strategy and Transformation

Paul leads the division that sets the Department of Communities' direction, outcomes and priorities. His background is in law and public policy, and he has experience in a diverse range of policy areas, including domestic violence, health, macroeconomics, transport and welfare reform.



Helen Nys
Assistant Director General,
Policy and Service Design

Helen is responsible for developing evidence-based strategies, policies, models and initiatives that shape integrated services, focusing on how we can get better outcomes for people rather than better program outcomes. Helen has previously worked in executive roles at the Disability Services Commission, where she was involved in negotiations on the delivery of the National Disability Insurance Scheme.



Marion Hailes-MacDonald
Assistant Director General,
Disability Services

Marion is overseeing the transition to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and the integration of those services that are not transitioning to the NDIS into broader government to ensure continuity of services for people with disability. She has extensive experience in the disability sector and has led significant funding and policy direction and reform across both State and national agendas.



Brad Jolly (Acting)
Assistant Director General,
Commissioning and Sector Engagement

Brad has stewardship of developing and overseeing responsive service systems and high performing services. He manages service contracts and relationships and shapes provider markets to respond to client needs and policy outcomes. Brad is the former Chair of the National Early Childhood Policy Group, which provides advice on early childhood education policy to the Council of Australian Governments' Education Council.



Jackie Tang
Assistant Director General,
State-wide Service Delivery

Jackie oversees the delivery of outcomes for people and communities in the Perth metropolitan area. Her role incorporates child protection and family support, community, disability and housing services. Jackie has overseen State-wide operational service delivery of community reintegration, healthcare, education and rehabilitation for disadvantaged and vulnerable people.



Rachael Green
**Assistant Director General,
Service Delivery Regional and
Remote Communities**

Rachael oversees the delivery of outcomes in regional and remote communities, with a focus on services tailored for the combination of complex client needs, vast distances and small population centres. Rachael was previously the Youth Justice Services Deputy Commissioner. She has extensive experience in operational service delivery and expertise in service design and reform.



Paul Whyte
**Assistant Director General,
Corporate Operations**

Paul oversees internal governance, standards and integrity, and corporate assurance and performance. Paul was previously Housing Authority Acting Chief Executive Officer and Department of Housing Acting Director General, and has previously served on the board of Keystart and significant land joint venture projects.



Greg Cash
**Assistant Director General,
Commercial Operations**

Greg is responsible for delivering housing and community assets, focusing on inclusion, diversity and affordability. He establishes partnerships with the private sector to develop new and renewed communities. Greg has more than 20 years' experience in the leadership, management and delivery of social and affordable housing in WA.



Ross Tomasini
**Executive Director,
Office of the Director General**

Ross oversees the strategic governance functions of the Office of the Director General, including liaison with ministerial offices, corporate communications and audit. Ross has held a number of senior management roles at Western Australia Police Force and was awarded the Australian Police medal in the 2011 Australia Day honours list.

Who we are

People, Place, Home

The concept of People, Place, Home describes the essence of why the Department of Communities exists and why our work is so important to all Western Australians. We provide services to a diverse range of people, including people with disability, children who are in the legal care of the State and those who need a place to call home.

Our purpose is to create an environment of collaboration to shape pathways that enable individual, family and community wellbeing. We do this by focusing on our five outcome areas:

- A place to call home – that provides a secure foundation for life
- Inclusive and accessible communities – that enable social, economic and cultural prosperity
- Strong families and kin – to provide safe and nurturing environments
- Safe children – to enable a good start to life
- Empowered people – with valued roles and fulfilling lives



Our organisational values have been developed with our staff. They form the acronym CREATE.

- **Courage:** we understand that what is right is not always easy. To achieve something new, we must be willing to both think creatively and do what we have never done before.
- **Respect:** we treat everyone with dignity and fairness. We recognise contribution and value diversity.
- **Empathy:** we extend ourselves to understand the perspectives and experiences of others; to actively 'walk in their shoes'. We communicate and act in a way that is respectful and makes sense to others.
- **Accountability:** we are individually accountable and collectively responsible. We own our actions and see them through for the best possible outcomes.
- **Trust:** we say what we mean and act accordingly. We are honest in our dealings and use of resources. We keep our promises and act with integrity.
- **Empowerment:** we help our colleagues, individuals and the community to be the best they can be.

When we combine our efforts with others, when we move from a focus on good individual programs to great collective outcomes, we can have an even more profound impact on the lives of the people we serve.





Simon's story

In March 2018, Broome local Simon* was sentenced to 18 months in prison. A public housing tenant since July 2011, he presented no past tenancy issues and qualified as a good tenant. Simon is the primary carer of his two young children, aged two and one, who were being monitored by Communities due to his 'on again, off again' relationship with their mother, Erica.*

After his arrest, Simon added Erica and his youngest child as householders for the tenancy, while the oldest child was taken into care by Simon's mother. But Erica didn't pay rent while Simon was in jail and, at one point, the power supply was cut. Despite efforts by Communities to reconnect the service, the youngest child also ended up going into Simon's mother's care.

Simon's mother was living with other family members, as she was in the process of relocating to Derby. She decided to postpone the move to care for her grandchildren, but the addition

of two kids to the family home caused overcrowding in their household. Even in a caring family environment, increasing in the number of people sharing a space can add pressure and cause tensions.

Given his diagnosed mental health condition, Simon's nurse in prison expressed concerns for Simon's mental health after his arrest, as he seemed stressed and anxious with his housing situation and the wellbeing of his children.

In July 2018, Communities' Regional Recovery Officer Alan Ingram became involved. It was confirmed that Erica had vacated the property, which meant Simon had been accumulating arrears and an official notice to terminate the housing agreement had been issued.

However, Communities assessed Simon's family situation holistically and looked at his specific circumstances.





Simon's parole hearing was scheduled within the next four months. According to the Department of Justice guidelines and considerations for early release, Simon's chances of being granted parole would increase significantly if he had a permanent home to return to.

In consideration of Simon's circumstances, Communities decided to flexibly apply our tenancy policies dealing with incarceration and housesitting, so that Simon's mother could housesit in Simon's rental and look after his children there, with the support of Communities staff, while he waited for parole.

Before, Simon was concerned about where he would live when he came out of prison, but prison staff noted an improvement in his overall wellbeing since knowing that his mother and Communities' teams were working together to ensure his family was taken care of.

Focussing on the rigid application of process, Simon's case is symbolic of Communities' journey towards

transforming the way services are delivered across WA.

Just over a year after the creation of the department, a greater focus on collaboration and a holistic approach to individual, family and community wellbeing are having a positive impact on all involved, including Communities' staff.

The message we are getting from the top is that Communities' staff need to be policy-centric, but not apply policy for policy's sake. We shouldn't allow the policies to become more important than the vulnerable people they are supposed to be protecting.

"Executive is supporting staff and empowering regional management to make these decisions," Alan said. "As the ones with the local knowledge and expertise, we are being encouraged to look at timely, realistic applications of policies to real life issues."

* Real names have been changed.