



illawarra *forum*

Strategic Plan

2013 – 2018

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About the Illawarra Forum

The Illawarra Forum is the peak body working for community services and organisations in the Illawarra and the Shoalhaven.

The Illawarra Forum Inc (the Forum) is committed to social justice. It is a peak organisation representing, resourcing and supporting community services in the **Wollongong, Shellharbour, Kiama and Shoalhaven** local government areas.

The Illawarra Forum forms partnerships and undertakes projects involving local government areas outside this region when the issues and work involved coincide with the needs of the Illawarra region.

As a broad based regional peak organisation it takes up issues across program areas that impact on the region's community services and disadvantaged communities. The Forum's roles include: promoting the wellbeing of disadvantaged communities, resourcing and supporting community service organisations and their committees, advocacy, information provision, social justice strategies, building expertise in community services and representational roles.

The organisation advocates for a united Australia that respects this land of ours, values Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage and provides justice and equality for all. It is especially concerned with the wellbeing of disadvantaged and vulnerable individuals and groups, and to promote their wellbeing through socially just policies and programs.

The Forum values:

- Co-operation,
- Community participation,
- Social justice,
- People's right to equality of opportunity,
- Community development,
- Community management,
- Self-determination of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, and
- The development of innovative and alternative approaches and ideas.

Our Vision

To be the Voice, the Advocate and the Leader supporting the community services sector and our communities.

Our Mission

We:

- **support** community organisations
- **promote** expertise and innovation in community development
- **foster** industry development and
- **advocate** for social justice

Our Aims

In pursuing its aims, the Illawarra Forum strives to create a co-operative work environment wherein the skills and knowledge of all staff, committee and members are equally respected and utilised to contribute to the joint outcomes of the organisation.

Our aims are:

1. To pursue social justice in the Illawarra region and develop programs / strategies for promoting equitable access to services and participation by disadvantaged groups.
2. To strengthen the capacity of community service organisations to meet their goals
3. To encourage co-operation and co-ordination between community service organisations.
4. To provide relevant information services to members.
5. To conduct research, promote good practice models and develop innovative models of community management and community service.
6. To advocate on behalf of the community services sector and their service users and represent members.
7. To effectively administer and manage the Illawarra Forum to enhance its ability to meet its goals.

Our Context

The Illawarra Forum is changing and evolving in response to the rapidly changing environment. The changes in the policy environment, as well as changes in the economic, socio-cultural, and technological landscapes require constant renewal and adaptation.

The Forum needs to monitor our environments and adapt accordingly in order to meet the needs of our members, the community services industry, and the communities they serve.

Political

- Poverty is a key focus for our work and is a framework that can be used for all issues.
- We are in an era of constant change and reform which has put some of our funding under threat (TPRS, Community Builders, HACC).
- The policy agendas of both State and Federal governments is leading to increase in outsourcing, inclusion of for-profit sector, and open market tendering. Opportunity to promote the advantage of small local organisations – but how do we show value in being local in an atmosphere which is pro-decentralisation and desensitisation?
- Stronger networks and partnerships – better connected and supported by media, NGOs, other organisations. But we need to be invited to be “at the table”.
- The more competitive environment may lead to opportunities for collaboration and to build more alliances and partnerships.

Economic

- We need to maintain our independence by moving from total reliance on government funding to generating our own income through fee for service
- Changes to the ways organisations are funded and the move to individualised packages will change our industry into a consumer driven market. This will inevitably attract for-profit providers. Challenge: How will IFi connect with the for-profit sector?
- Small organisations are under pressure and don't have access to re-engineer their businesses.
- Reporting requirements are becoming increasingly complex.
- Energy costs are rising which may lead to reduced services. Opportunity to advocate for NGO energy rebate.

Socio-Cultural

- We need a new social framework and examine our communication strategy - IFi needs to connect with individuals.
- Volunteers are increasingly looking for 'sexy' volunteering opportunities. Opportunity for the IFi to explore new ways to attract and retain volunteers.
- Increasing levels of Mental Health issues.
- For individuals, new technology could be potentially isolating, how do we build bridges between people in person as well as through technology.
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Technological

- New technologies give access to information and allow us to connect to remote areas by being a central point of access.
- Social media enables quick reactions.
- Opportunities to use IT for training and information. May be expensive to start up but very cost-effective in the long term.
- For individuals, technology could be potentially isolating, how do we build bridges between people in person as well as through technology.

Our Future Directions

Aim	Objective	Measures
<i>Connecting</i>	Raise the profile of the community services industry and promote its importance to the region.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased activity e.g. requests for media input, • Valued participant 'at the table' with leaders across industries. • Invited to participate in key local, regional and national groups and activities. • Number of interactions with leaders from all levels of government. • Number of fact sheets produced. • Number of newsletters produced. • Number of discussion groups held around policy issues. • Number of policy submissions, position papers, and issues papers produced. • Number of times we participate in consultations • Communications strategy developed. • Number of communications effected.
	Be a voice for the industry through active membership of key committees, reference groups, and networks.	
<i>Informing</i>	Develop effective relationships with leaders across all three levels of government.	
	Communicate policy issues across the industry and up to decision makers.	
<i>Marketing</i>	Provide opportunities for industry networking and collaborative practice,	
	Develop and implement a Communications Strategy.	

Aim	Objective	Measures
<i>Representing</i>	Shape policy - influence and advocate for positive social change.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of policy submissions, position papers, and issues papers produced. • Number of times we participate in consultations. • Number of invitations to participate in parliamentary enquiries. • Number of meetings facilitated or attended. • Resources developed and disseminated. • Number of training sessions held. • Number of individual support sessions. • Number of planning sessions facilitated. • Number of collaborative endeavours supported. • Number of discussion groups held around policy issues.
	Develop and maintain networks and partnerships across industry sectors to enhance connectivity and explore new opportunities.	
<i>Empowering</i>	Source and develop professional development resources.	
	Offer opportunities for training or professional development relevant to the industry.	
<i>Building</i>	Facilitate cross-sectoral and interagency planning and co-operation.	
	Engage members, industry representatives, and stakeholders in policy analysis.	

Planning Reviews

Annual Reviews Against Plans

The Illawarra Forum will evaluate its performance annually against the objectives in each of the areas in the Strategic Plan. The Board will also monitor performance through annual review and reporting.

Review of Strategic Plan

The Strategic Plan is revised every three-five years by the CEO, Leadership Team, and Board. Revised plans are presented to members at the Annual General Meeting.