Whitsunday Counselling & Support



Our Strategic Plan

2026 - 2030

Acknowledgements

We acknowledge the custodians of the land where we are lucky to live, learn and rest – the Ngaro, Juru, Gia and Birriah people. We also wish to honour Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women: the women who have fought for themselves, for their children, for their families and for their communities. The women who have survived, the women who have lost their lives, the women who have led this work for generations, often with little recognition. What we can do in return is listen well, and do this work properly and respectfully.

Contents

Foreword from the CEO 4

About Us 6

How This Plan Was Built 7

Our Values 8

Our People 9

We believe our staff can best offer safety and care to others when they are safe, well and supported themselves. A sustainable team is critical to the foundation everything else is built on.

Strong Foundations 11

Our team at WCS can offer the best care when the systems behind them are reliable, cohesive and fit for purpose.

One WCS 13

We believe WCS is one organisation, where everyone feels united, regardless of location, and driven by the same values and shared goals.

Known & Trusted 15

We believe trust is built on understanding. When our community and partners can see clearly who WCS is and what we do, they can turn to us, refer to us, and stand behind us with confidence.

Reach & Growth 17

We believe growth is how more of the region gets the support it needs.

Foreword from our CEO

At Whitsunday Counselling and Support, we believe that every person deserves to feel safe, valued, connected and hopeful about their future.

As we embark on the next chapter of our journey, this Strategic Plan represents more than a roadmap for our organisation. It reflects our commitment to the people, families and communities who place their trust in us every day. Behind every service we deliver and every decision we make are real people navigating challenges, seeking connection, and striving for brighter futures.

The Whitsunday region is a place of strength, resilience and possibility. It is also a community that continues to experience the impacts of social, economic and personal challenges. We recognise that healing and wellbeing happen when people feel heard, empowered and supported, and when services work together to create genuine pathways to safety, inclusion and opportunity.

Over the coming years, WCS will build on our strong foundations while embracing innovation, collaboration and growth. We will continue to enhance the quality and impact of our services, strengthen partnerships across the region, invest in our people, and ensure our organisation remains sustainable and responsive to emerging community needs. Above all, we will remain deeply committed to delivering trauma-informed, person-centred support that recognises the dignity, strengths and lived experiences of every individual.

None of this work happens in isolation. It is made possible through the dedication of our staff, volunteers, Management Committee, funding partners, stakeholders and the communities we serve. Together, we share a collective responsibility to create environments where people can thrive, where vulnerability is met with compassion, and where hope is nurtured through meaningful action.

This Strategic Plan is both ambitious and purposeful. It challenges us to think boldly about the future while staying grounded in the values that have guided WCS for decades. As we move forward, we do so with confidence, determination and optimism, knowing that by working together we can strengthen lives, build resilience and contribute to a more connected, inclusive and caring Whitsunday community.

Thank you for joining us on this journey.



Kirsty Gillett

Chief Executive Officer
Whitsunday Counselling and Support

“We are committed to building on this strong foundation by strengthening our commitment to safe, accessible and trauma-informed services that respond to the evolving needs of our clients and their families experiencing domestic and family violence and sexual assault.

Through strong partnerships, innovative practice, advocacy and ongoing investment in our people and services WCS will continue to strengthen pathways to safety, healing and empowerment, while contributing to a community where everyone can live free from violence and with the opportunity to thrive.”

Margaret Kennedy

Management Committee President

About Us

Whitsunday Counselling and Support is the only funded specialist service responding to domestic, family and sexual violence across the Whitsunday region. Supporting an area from Collinsville to Hamilton Island, we work across three locations – Cannonvale, Bowen and a Refuge site, and in the last year have supported 1866 people and their families.

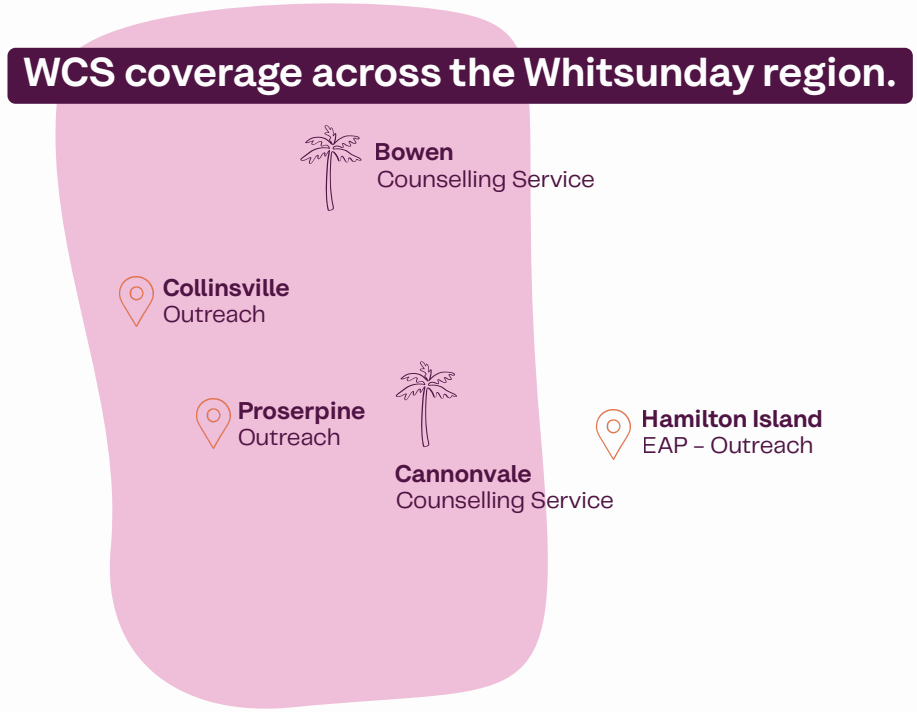
Starting out in 1991 with a group of local women dedicated to keeping their community safe, WCS is committed to supporting, advocating for and offering prevention strategies to those affected by violence. More than three decades on, our organisation strives to meet people with dignity and work toward a region where fewer families ever need to find us at all.

This Strategic Plan reflects who we are and where we want to go, shaped by strong and meaningful contributions from every staff member in our team.

"The quality of service we provide to our clients and community comes from a place of passion and strong values, giving us the ability to reduce the impacts of trauma for victim-survivors."

Charlotte | Co-ordinator of Domestic Family Violence

WCS coverage across the Whitsunday region.



1866
Clients supported between July 2025 and June 2026.

10
Women with children housed in Refuge between July 2025 and June 2026.

5
Women with no children housed in Refuge between July 2025 and June 2026.

How this Plan was built

A new Strategic Plan offers an opportunity to reflect and celebrate as well as recognising where there's room to grow.

This plan was written for our team, by our team.

Through stakeholder engagement across every part of the organisation, every voice had the chance to be heard, to reflect on where we've been, and to help lay the path for a great future. That collaboration ran through every step of the process allowing real contributions from every corner of the organisation in service of the community we exist for.

This plan has been built with our values at the core, the same way WCS shows up for the community, with dignity, respect and compassion.

"Whitsunday Counselling & Support should be known as the trusted first place families and individuals turn to for support, connection and early intervention, helping people thrive and preventing crises before they occur."

WCS Staff






Our Purpose

Empowering individuals, families and the community through education, counselling and support.

Our Vision

A respectful, safe and caring community.

Whitsunday Counselling & Support

Our Values

Safe & Empowering
We offer a safe space to seek support, guidance and the resources to empower our clients to rebuild their lives.

Respect, Dignity & Compassion
We treat everyone and every situation inclusively with respect, dignity and compassion. We approach all situations, whether it be internal communication, external engagement or client services with these values so that everyone feels seen, heard and safe.

Trustworthy & Accountable
We operate with authenticity, confidentiality and transparency so that we can earn and maintain the trust of everyone in our community. We honour our word and give confidence that we can be relied upon.

Community-Driven
We put our people and our community at the forefront of all that we do. We give back, we support one another, we celebrate the wins together and embrace those around us in times of need.

Child-Focused
We put children first, to keep them safe and protected, physically and mentally. We foster and nurture healthy relationships, boundaries and give all children the opportunity to thrive.

One: Our People

We believe our staff can best offer safety and care to others when they are safe, well and supported themselves. A sustainable team is critical to the foundation everything else is built on.

Our 2030 Objective:

WCS is known as the best place with the best professionals in the region to do this work. Supervision is safe, confidential and genuinely useful. Workload and on-call are designed so that all team members have a genuine work-life balance, with real recovery time after critical incidents. Entitlements, remuneration and leave align or exceed industry standards. People stay, and the region feels the benefit of that continuity.

What we're doing:

1. **Our people are supported, safe and thriving.** We have clearly defined processes for supervisions to ensure every counsellor has the opportunity to grow and feel supported, and offer the best care for the community.

2. **Workload and on-call are sustainable.** Every role has an agreed caseload ceiling and an equitable on-call roster, with dedicated debrief and recovery time.

3. **Leadership is shared across a skilled coordinator team.** The organisational structure supports a team of coordinators to hold supervisions, escalation and day-to-day decisions with a clear upward referral management structure.

4. **We recruit quickly and support our people to build a career.** Specialist roles are filled faster through sector-specific channels, with housing, relocation and sponsorship pathways. A clear career progression and professional development in conjunction with above industry pay and entitlements becomes part of what we offer in a recognised skills shortage region.



How we're measuring success:

By 2027

- Supervision processes are clearly defined, documented and in use with training complete for the coordinator team.
- The coordinator team is established and functioning, holding supervisions, escalation and day-to-day decisions through a clear upward referral structure.
- Caseload ceilings and an equitable on-call roster are agreed.
- A current Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for critical incident management is developed to include a debrief and recovery strategy for the team.

By 2028

- Caseload ceilings and the on-call roster are applied and have scheduled quarterly reviews.
- Pay and entitlements are benchmarked against the sector, with above-industry pay and entitlements funded.
- Recruitment channels are reviewed and tested, and time-to-offer has reduced from 2025 data.

By 2029

- Career progression and professional development pathways are documented for every role.
- Workload and on-call arrangements are reviewed against real caseload data and adjusted.
- Housing, relocation and sponsorship pathways are in place to support and alleviate skills shortage.

By 2030

- All targets met, measures reviewed and reporting ready for the next Strategic Plan

One: Our People

Two: Strong Foundations

Our team at WCS can offer the best care when the systems behind them are reliable, cohesive and fit for purpose.

Our 2030 Objective:

Every core process has a current, accessible policy or procedure with a reliable source of truth. Onboarding is measured, efficient and effective. Systems and records are secure, cloud-based and audit-ready. Office and Refuge facilities are fit for purpose, conducive to a positive work environment and safe across all three sites.

What we're doing:

1. **Our records and communication are secure and cloud-based.** We have centralised and digitised our communication and data storage system to a secure cloud-based platform so that all documents are live and can be accessed and shared at the appropriate level.

2. **One client system shows the whole picture.** We have one secure, centralised Client Relationship Management (CRM) tool that holds client information, bookings, caseloads and waitlists.

3. **Policies and procedures are current and communicated with the team.** Every core process has a written, in-use standard operating procedure (SOP), reviewed on a regular cycle, including site security procedures.

4. **New staff reach their first client faster.** We have an efficient onboarding process to allow new team members to confidently see new clients sooner.

5. **Every site matches the quality of work that happens inside it.** A formal assessment is completed on the needs of the Cannonvale site and scope determined for a new location that is fit for purpose, considering rooms, size, amenities, internal and external safety, natural light and an overall feel that is conducive to a positive working environment.



How we're measuring success:

By 2027

- Core systems migration underway for communications and file storage.
- Policy and procedures system delivered
- Lockdown and evacuation procedures are current with scheduled training implemented at every site.
- Paper records digitised and filed to be audit-ready.
- New HR system live (Employment Hero).

By 2028

- Core systems migration for communications and file storage is complete.
- Client system (CRM) is live with Standard Operating Procedures and training conducted with all staff.
- The new onboarding process is live, with time from a new starter's first day to their first client reduced and tracked.
- Fit-for-purpose assessment of Cannonvale building complete with costing and plan.

By 2029

- First full annual policy review cycle complete.
- Client system (CRM) usage reviewed against staff feedback and refined where needed.
- New Cannonvale site migration underway.

By 2030

- All targets met, measures reviewed and reporting ready for the next Strategic Plan.

Two: Strong Foundations

Three: One WCS

We believe WCS is one organisation, where everyone feels united, regardless of location, and driven by the same values and shared goals. That connectedness comes from team culture, and is underpinned by strong communication, systems and processes.

Our 2030 Objective:

Staff at every site feel like one connected team with an in-depth understanding and ability to provide support in any area or location. Cross-site crisis support is second nature and built into how the whole organisation responds. Communication is timely, cohesive and inclusive and the values are inherent in all aspects of the organisation and its staff.

What we're doing:

1. **There is a collective and cohesive understanding of the programs and services offered.** All team members have an understanding of the services offered and how to support those seeking services available elsewhere. A reference guide is kept updated and implemented as part of the onboarding process.
2. **An internal communications strategy is implemented.** The strategy will ensure that regular updates and critical incident information is disseminated effectively and efficiently across all sites. Management Committee members and registered WCS volunteers receive regular updates to stay informed, support decision making and continue their advocacy in the community.
3. **Cross-site support can be carried out by any staff member.** Every staff member is upskilled to understand daily operations across Cannonvale, Bowen and the Refuge. Accurate and regularly reviewed procedures for each site live on the cloud-based platform for all team members to access. A living roster is implemented to allow each team member to visit another site at least twice per year.
4. **The Management Committee are active members of the team.** The Management Committee are actively involved in regular whole staff meetings and events and know the people behind the work. They have an in-depth understanding of the inner workings of WCS and its people and are well informed to be advocates for the organisation and its position in the community.
5. **Our values are embedded in our daily operations.** From recruitment to team meetings and every decision in between, our values are tied to all aspects of our organisation.



How we're measuring success:

By 2027

- A reference guide to services offered, client onboarding and referrals for services WCS cannot support is complete and built into the onboarding and quarterly revisions process.
- An internal communications strategy is documented and implemented, including how critical incidents are shared across every site.
- Regular updates reach the Management Committee and registered WCS volunteers to keep them informed and engaged.
- Our values are launched with the new brand and built into recruitment, team appraisals, staff meetings and both internal and external communications.

By 2028

- Every staff member has completed cross-site training to understand daily operations at Cannonvale, Bowen and the Refuge.
- A living roster is in place so every team member visits another site at least twice per year and all staff have visibility over each team member's location.
- The Management Committee is actively involved in regular whole-staff meetings and events, with a written summary shared with those absent.

By 2029

- Cross-site coverage is tested and reviewed.
- Values are consistently referenced in recruitment interviews, staff appraisals, internal and external communications and form part of the rhythm of regular meetings.

By 2030

- All targets met, measures reviewed and reporting ready for the next Strategic Plan.

Four: Known & Trusted

We believe trust is built on understanding. When our community and partners can see clearly who WCS is and what we do, they can turn to us, refer to us, and stand behind us with confidence.

Our 2030 Objective:

The community and partners understand exactly what WCS does and why it matters. The brand reflects the seriousness and skill behind the work. Referral partners across the region know WCS and refer with confidence. WCS owns its story, telling it clearly and consistently, on its own terms.

What we're doing:

1. **WCS is rebranded to align with its true identity.** All stakeholders are involved in the brand direction, development and rollout to ensure that everyone has a voice, feels connected to the organisation's identity and understands the power of consistency.

2. **A new website clearly communicates who we are.** We have a rebranded website, with clear and easy functionality that communicates who we are to the community, but most importantly offers clear guidance and resources and a way forward to those who are in need of our services.

3. **We offer and deliver education and resources to our community.** We have a living strategy in place to deliver education to the community, aligned with our funding for this and resourced by a dedicated community engagement role to focus on outreach.

4. **We have a solid foundation and procedure for building and maintaining referral partnerships.** We build trust and understanding deliberately amongst our current referral partners and use this as a platform to extend the approach to schools, health services and neighbouring agencies across the region.

5. **We own our story and celebrate our success.** With a sound communications strategy, we control the narrative and tell our story regularly and consistently across owned and earned platforms. We use our website, social platforms and opportunities to share stories and events with the wider community as a positive lever to advocate for the work we do.



How we're measuring success:

By 2027

- The rebrand is complete and rolled out across all sites, with small and large format brand coverage complete from buildings to vehicles, marketing collateral and internal documents.
- A rebranded website is live, with clear functionality that communicates who we are and offers guidance, resources and a way forward to anyone in need of our services.
- Social Media platforms and the Google Business accounts are closely monitored to ensure safe commenting and reviews.
- A living community education strategy is in place, aligned with our funding.

By 2028

- A dedicated community engagement role is in place, focused on outreach.
- Contracted community education hours are delivered in full.
- Trust and understanding with our referral partners is built deliberately through education and resources.

By 2029

- The referral partnership approach is extended to schools, health services and neighbouring agencies across the region.
- Client outcomes and our brand story are published on our owned and earned channels, providing anonymity accordingly.

By 2030

- All targets met, measures reviewed and reporting ready for the next Strategic Plan.

Five: Reach & Growth

We believe growth is how more of the region gets the support it needs. When our team, our programs and our funding grow together, WCS becomes stronger, and so does every community we reach.

Our 2030 Objective:

Specialist support reaches communities across the region, including Bowen, Proserpine, Collinsville and communities currently without local access, delivered by a larger and more diverse team. New funded programs, from art therapies to group and outreach work, are meeting real gaps in the community. Funding is diverse and abundant with transparency to all staff, giving WCS a stable foundation to keep growing from.

What we're doing:

1. **Our reach grows beyond clinic days.** Building on the outreach already running in Proserpine and Collinsville, we expand what each community can access, adding prevention, education and group programs alongside counselling. We extend specialist support to communities that currently have limited local access.

2. **Children and youth in refuge are supported.** Funded case management and dedicated family support increase the success rate of transitioning families from refuge into the community.

3. **Transitional housing that is secure and fit for purpose.** We increase the number of transitional properties available and secure lease arrangements that allow us to meet safety and security standards quickly, easing housing pressure and giving women and children leaving refuge a secure and reliable next step.

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How we're measuring success:

By 2027

- Current outreach is reviewed and the communities across the region without local access to specialist support are identified, with a reach plan agreed.
- Transitional properties are audited against agreed safety and security standards, and those standards are documented as a requirement for all future lease arrangements.
- Funded case management and dedicated family support are in place for children and young people in the Refuge.
- Our services to support men align with our organisational values, enable a safe environment for all members of the WCS community, and are clearly published and communicated internally and externally.

By 2028

- Prevention, education and group programs are delivered in Proserpine and Collinsville alongside existing clinic days.
- Lease arrangements are in place that meet agreed security standards, with an agreed maintenance response time for safety-critical repairs.
- The success rate of families transitioning from refuge into the community is tracked and improving.
- Arts therapies and generalised counselling options are available.

By 2029

- Specialist support is reaching at least one community not previously serviced.
- The number of transitional properties has increased, with capacity reviewed annually against demand.
- The success rate of family transition is reviewed against the previous year, reported on and actioned accordingly.

By 2030

- All targets met, measures reviewed and reporting ready for the next Strategic Plan.

Whitsunday Counselling & Support



Implementation and Governance

This plan runs from July 2026 – June 2030. We're committed to seeing it through together, working collaboratively to celebrate the successes and find a path forward to grow.

Through a dedicated tracking dashboard, each pillar will have an assigned lead and progress against each milestone is tracked in one place, providing status updates at every stage.

A quarterly meeting will ensure progress updates are reported and there is accountability across every pillar, every milestone and the whole WCS team.

This Strategic Plan was developed in consultation with Carolyn Richardson Creative. The process included a survey, several on-site stakeholder engagement sessions with staff, volunteers and the Management Committee.



WCS

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