

Working Methods

Adopted 12 June 2018

About this document

The Working Methods sets out how AWAVA will operate in terms of its key elements: the Advisory Group, Policy Executive Group, Friends and Supporters and staff team. It complements the WESNET Statement of Intent, which specifies WESNET's roles and responsibilities with regard to AWAVA. For the history and context of these two documents, please refer to the Briefing Note for AWAVA Advisory Group on the Statement of Intent and Working Methods for AWAVA, dated 18 January 2018.

Vision

Our vision is to ensure that all women and their children are able to live free from all forms of violence and abuse.

We consider violence against women to be 'any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life' (United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women - A/RES/48/104)

Purpose

The purpose of AWAVA is to bring together women's organisations and individuals across Australia to share information, identify issues and their solutions, to respond to and prevent violence against women and their children. AWAVA's role is to ensure that women's voices and particularly marginalised women's voices are heard by Government, amplifying the work of its member organisations and Friends & Supporters.

Values and principles

HUMAN RIGHTS

AWAVA recognises that gender-based violence against women is one of the most serious and widespread violations of fundamental human rights, in particular, the right not to be treated in an inhuman and degrading way, the rights to respect, to physical, sexual and psychological integrity.

FEMINIST FRAMEWORK

AWAVA employs a feminist approach that understands gender-based violence against women as both a consequence and cause of gender inequity, which is embedded deeply within all levels of our society. Violence is perpetrated through institutions and the public sphere as well as in the privacy of intimate relationships. Efforts to end gender-based violence against women must be accountable to women and promote women's empowerment and social and gender equality.

EQUITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSIVITY

AWAVA is committed to representing and working respectfully with the diversity of women in Australia and prioritises collaborative approaches that draw on diverse knowledge. AWAVA recognises that the experience and impact of sexual and gender-based violence against women is not evenly distributed and that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, immigrant and refugee women, women from non-English speaking backgrounds, women with disabilities, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer and asexual (LGBTIQ+) women, and women in the sex industry are subjected to interpersonal and public violence at greater than average rates, and that such violence is compounded by experiences of marginalisation. Additional factors such as women's location also affect their experience of violence and its impact. AWAVA recognises that gender-based violence against women needs to be understood in the context of oppression and privilege arising from the intersection of race, colonisation, class, sexual orientation and gender identity, ethnicity, nationality, religion, dis/ability and age.

We also recognise that AWAVA is located within these forms of oppression and privilege. We recognise our responsibility to act ethically in terms of our positions in these structures and to reflect on our ways of working, our communication and representation. In terms of scope, this means we need to be attentive to violence inflicted upon people in settings, relationships and dynamics that do not necessarily fit the forms most familiar to recent policy and service provision in this area (domestic violence and sexual assault in intimate partner couple relationships).

We recognise the primary ethical imperative to hear and respond to voices of people interpreting their own situations and making sense of the violence inflicted upon them, which may be in ways that challenge or complicate understandings of gender inequality as they have been conceived within existing power structures (including within AWAVA). Our aim is therefore mutual support and where appropriate partnership-building.

We consider the category 'women' to include all who self-identify as a woman.

Objectives

- Provide leadership and advocacy at state and national levels in relation to all aspects of sexual and gender-based violence against women.
- Bring together in a single body the key stakeholders concerned with all aspects of gender-based violence against women in order to access and disseminate the wealth and diversity of knowledge within the sector as a whole.
- Provide policy advice and monitor policies, legislation, programs and practices which impact on women and children experiencing gender-based violence.
- Promote and prioritise equity of access to services for all women including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women from immigrant, refugee and/or non-English speaking background, women with disabilities, lesbian and same sex attracted women, trans women, women in situations of multiple disadvantage, women in rural and isolated areas, older women and young women.
- Promote primary prevention of gender-based violence against women in all its forms.

- Contribute to community awareness of gender-based violence against women and its personal and social consequences using community development, health promotion and educational strategies.
- Build and promote alliances and collaborative relationships with key stakeholders and networks.
- Promote, further develop and disseminate 'cutting edge' knowledge of gender-based violence against women arising from practice, research, community and activism.
- Connect with international mechanisms and developments in advocacy, research and practice concerning gender-based violence against women.

Principles for working together

- We share a focus on AWAVA's objectives (above)
- We will share information and actively contribute to AWAVA achieving its objectives
- We recognise that effective working relationships require openness, transparency, trust and courtesy
- We will communicate openly with each other
- We will honour agreements reached, even though views may differ
- We will avoid undertaking activities that will detrimentally impact the reputation of AWAVA nationally, or of another AWAVA Advisory Group member
- We recognise that the governance and financial management of AWAVA is the responsibility of WESNET, and that WESNET's management of AWAVA will be guided by the Statement of Intent.

Legal status of AWAVA

Many of AWAVA's founding and ongoing members are national women's organisations, national and or state peak body organisations. It is a founding and ongoing principle of AWAVA that the role of the Alliance is to harness and amplify the voices of the women that these organisations represent, but not to replace or usurp the role of any one of these members. AWAVA was also established with the intention of encouraging individual women to mobilise through peaks and networks to strengthen women's voices. In recognition that not all peaks and networks have membership open to individuals, AWAVA has a Friends and Supporters group which individuals can join (see below).

AWAVA is a non-legally-constituted Alliance of organisations and individuals. WESNET as an incorporated association acts as the agency that creates the legal and financial framework within AWAVA can pursue its objectives.

AWAVA's structure

AWAVA is composed of the following elements:

- Advisory Group
- Policy Executive Group

- Friends and Supporters
- AWAVA Staff Team led by Program Manager

WESNET's role

As explained in the WESNET Statement of Intent, WESNET has two roles in relation to AWAVA: One role is to provide the contract management/auspicing functions that enable AWAVA to operate, and the other role is to provide policy input and guidance as the national peak body representing the domestic and family violence services sector.

WESNET needs to be both a voice amongst many within the AWAVA Advisory Group in order to represent its members as a peak, and, separately, manage the contractual obligations, finances, risk and employment of staff.

To reflect these two roles, WESNET will be represented on the Advisory Group with a principal and proxy member (to provide the policy voice), similar to other organisational members, and by the WESNET National Director (not to provide advice on policy or issues, but to ensure that management decisions are informed by the Advisory Group's advice, and to provide the contract management perspective, where appropriate, in discussions of the Group).

Advisory Group

Role

The role of the Advisory Group is to inform the priorities and work plan of AWAVA, and to amplify the voices of the women and networks that they represent. The roles and responsibilities of the individual Advisory Group members are explained in the Advisory Group Roles and Responsibilities given as part of induction (included as Attachment A), including the expectation that members will:

- Abide by the scope of the Alliance and the working methods set out in this document
- Have a responsibility for promoting equal and meaningful participation
- Provide substantive representation and input from member organisations and networks
- Contribute to the development and delivery of the Annual Work Plan
- Recognise that WESNET manages the relationship with the funding body and is the point of contact related to the grant
- Provide sufficient information and take all reasonable steps to enable WESNET as contract holder to comply with all grant funding contractual obligations, including the provision by WESNET of progress reports, final reports and financial acquittal documentation.

Representation

- Advisory Group members are expected to be actively engaged and proactively involved in consulting with their organisations and networks to inform their input to the Group

- Advisory Group members are expected to accurately represent the positions of the member organisation on whose behalf they are participating, and to be adequately informed and up-to-date on the activities and advocacy of those organisations

Composition

The Advisory Group is intended to have membership from all relevant state/territory and national peak bodies in the area of preventing and responding to violence against women, as well as other key stakeholders, with particular emphasis on marginalised and under-represented groups of women. The Advisory Group is intended to fairly represent the different sub-sectors within the violence against women sector.

The Group aims to have representation of:

- Women in all states and territories of Australia
- Women from regional, rural and remote areas
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women
- Women from Immigrant/Refugee/non-English speaking background
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer and asexual (LGBTIQA+) women
- Young Women
- Older Women
- Women with Disabilities
- Domestic & Family Violence Services
- Sexual Assault Services
- Legal Services
- Women's Health Services
- Education Services
- Women in the sex industry
- Women who have experienced socio-economic disadvantage

As women coming together we share many experiences in common and in our diversity, including experiences of sexual and gender-based violence.

Organisational members will aim to increase the diversity and representativeness of the Advisory Group by prioritising these principles when selecting their representatives and proxies for participation in AWAVA.

The Advisory Group does not have a Chair but a facilitator to manage meetings. When external bodies extend an invitation to “the AWAVA Chair” on policy and content issues, the Program Manager will determine the best-placed person to participate on AWAVA's behalf.

The meeting facilitator will, in each meeting, have a mandate to actively work towards achieving inclusive representation.

Process for membership

Each organisational member will be responsible for selecting their representative and proxy, subject to these people's agreement with the Vision, Principles, Values & Objectives, and Roles and Responsibilities, as documented in the induction process.

Organisations who identify as a key stakeholder peak or network can apply to become a member of the Advisory Group. AWAVA may also seek new organisational members to meet the criteria contained under Composition above and to encourage diversity of membership. If the proposed new member organisation meets these criteria, the Program Manager will seek a decision from the Advisory Group about whether or not the organisation will be invited to join the Advisory Group.

Requests from new organisations to join the Advisory Group will be assessed by the Program Manager and National Director of WESNET against the criteria contained under Composition above. If the proposed new member organisation meets these criteria, the Program Manager will seek a decision from the Advisory Group about whether or not the organisation will be invited to join the Advisory Group.

At least annually, the Advisory Group will discuss membership and composition and make recommendations about any changes required.

Removing inactive / non-participating organisational members from Advisory Group

We expect members to be active and participate but we recognise that at times this might be difficult. If an organisational member has not participated or been in regular contact with the secretariat for several months, including providing advice on key policy issues and pieces of work, they will be approached with a view to encouraging them to provide another representative. If this is not feasible, the organisation may be removed from the Advisory Group. In some cases we may maintain membership despite a period of non-participation, with regard to the need to maintain diverse representation.]

Other National Women's Alliances

Other National Women's Alliances and their working groups / sub-groups are eligible to be organisational members of the Advisory Group, providing they meet the criteria above and the other requirements. However, other National Women's Alliances will not be eligible to join the Policy Executive Group.

Multiple roles and conflicts of interest

In light of the fact that many Advisory Group members will have multiple roles in the sector, members are required to be transparent about which different organisations they represent in general, and which they are representing in their advice to and through the Advisory Group. Members must refrain from using their Advisory Group representation to advance the objectives of an organisation other than the one they are formally tasked with representing in the Advisory Group. Advisory Group members are required to act in good faith and for proper purpose. AWAVA Advisory Group members are not permitted to use their position on the Advisory Group, or information obtained through the Advisory Group to advantage themselves or their organisation over other Advisory Group members. Members are required to declare any conflict of interest in relation to any agenda item for each meeting of the Advisory Group.

Annual Face-to-Face meeting

Subject to budget constraints, a meeting of the Advisory Group will be held annually, with the intention of covering the costs of travel, accommodation and participation for at least one representative of each organisational member.

Meeting practices

The Advisory Group aims to meet every two months by teleconference (in addition to an Annual Face to Face meeting – see above).

Teleconference meetings will be facilitated by one of the Policy Executive Group members. The facilitator for the next meeting will be decided at the end of each meeting, and if the designated person becomes unable to do the facilitation, they will organise a replacement from within the Policy Executive Group.

Papers for the meetings will be prepared and circulated in advance by the secretariat, with the intention of providing adequate time to prepare and provide input on the agenda.

Meetings will be facilitated in a way that promotes respectful, inclusive and fair participation, creates a safe space for discussion, and enables all members' voices to be heard. This is the responsibility of everyone in attendance, and a particular responsibility of the person facilitating / chairing the meeting. Constructive feedback on meeting practices is to be invited, heard and responded to.

Decision-making

Keeping in mind that the Advisory Group's role is not to provide governance or management for AWAVA, but to inform the priorities and work of AWAVA, and to amplify the voices of the women and networks that members represent, decision-making in the Advisory Group relates to the formation of policy positions and advice about priorities for AWAVA's work.

The Advisory Group is not always required to form a single agreed position, but where decisions of the Group are required, these should be formed by consensus where possible. Where possible, Advisory Group members should be given adequate opportunity to review relevant documents ahead of time, to inform participation in meetings, give member organisations an opportunity to consult within their own networks, and enable members to provide input by email or other means if they are unable to attend the relevant meeting.

To manage decision-making, in general members who disagree should express this, and members who do not express disagreement but have been given reasonable opportunity to consider the question or document will be considered to be in agreement. However, this principle will be applied with proper consideration of relevant factors such as the nature of the issue, the timeframes involved and previous communication.

Where consensus is not possible or cannot be assumed (considering the nature of the issue, the timeframes involved, previous communication and any other relevant factor), decisions can be taken by a vote of the Advisory Group, either in a teleconference or by email.

For the purposes of decision-making, a quorum of 8 members of the Advisory Group is required, representing at least four (4) of the sectors represented by the AWAVA Advisory Group (e.g. domestic and family violence services, sexual violence services, legal services, etc.). A decision requires a majority of those present or who have provided their position by email.

Documenting of Advisory Group advice and decision

The Advisory Group's advice and decisions will be documented in minutes / notes taken by the secretariat and stored on the secretariat's secure drive. These will be made available to the Advisory Group for correction and confirmation at the subsequent meeting of the Group. As well as being circulated after each meeting, minutes/notes will be provided to Advisory Group members on request, including past minutes.

AWAVA's work

Advocacy of policy positions

Where a policy position has been formed by the Advisory Group, the secretariat has delegation to advocate for that position within relevant policy processes and under supervision through management structures, without seeking re-endorsement from the Advisory Group for each instance of advocacy.

In cases where staff are developing major policy submissions and other work that requires the formation of new policy positions, these will be taken to the Advisory Group for comment in a timely way enabling consideration and input, apart from exceptional cases where time constraints require a quicker response. In such cases, the Policy Executive Group will be empowered to consider, provide input on, and approve relevant positions.

While it is intended that Advisory Group / Policy Executive Group advice be the determining factor in advocacy of policy positions, the National Director of WESNET may in exceptional circumstances intervene in order to maintain contract compliance and/or meet other governance or financial responsibilities. Any such intervention should be transparently on the basis of WESNET's governance and contract management role, and not to advance WESNET's policy positions or voice.

Representing AWAVA in the media and in public

Member organisations are free to make media and public statements in their own capacity but should avoid publicly taking positions that contradict documented AWAVA positions. Unless specifically authorised to do so, member organisations must not present themselves as speaking for AWAVA.

WESNET in discussion with the secretariat will determine how to respond to media requests and opportunities for public representation. If expertise exists in the Advisory Group, such opportunities may be referred to Advisory Group member organisations.

Complaints and disputes

Any complaints about AWAVA which relate to the Alliances' substantive work in delivering its Work Plan should be referred in the first instance to the Program Manager, who may if necessary refer the complaint on to the National Director/CEO. Any complaints about AWAVA which relate to the management of the contract, governance or financial management should be referred to the National Director/CEO. If resolution cannot be achieved at the level of the National Director/CEO, the complaint should be referred to the WESNET Committee. Records of complaints made will be kept.

In relation to disputes between Advisory Group members, staff, Friends and Supporters and/or representatives of WESNET, all parties will work together to ensure that if disputes arise, every effort is made to reach an amicable resolution, in a timely manner. However, if a conflict or dispute arises that cannot be resolved the parties agree to the following process being applied:

1. The parties concerned shall immediately arrange to discuss the matter
2. If discussions fail to resolve the matter, the dispute will be referred to the WESNET National Committee
3. If the concerns are still unresolved or not address within three months of referral to the WESNET National Committee, both parties agree to utilise the services of an independent mediation service to resolve the dispute.

Policy Executive Group

Role

The role of the AWAVA Policy Executive Group is to expedite decisions about AWAVA policy positions and work priorities when timelines mean convening the entire Advisory Group is not feasible. Decisions to refer matters to the Executive will be made by the Program Manager in consultation where appropriate with the National Director. The AWAVA Advisory Group will be informed of key decisions referred to the Policy Executive Group as a regular agenda item in meetings. It is expected that members of the Policy Executive Group will be required to commit 1+ hours per month to the role.

Composition

The AWAVA Policy Executive Group is formed of 5 Advisory Group member representatives, representing at least 4 of the sectors represented by the AWAVA Advisory Group (e.g. domestic and family violence services, sexual violence services, legal services, etc.), together with, in non-voting roles, the Program Manager (for the purposes of communication and coordination) and the WESNET National Director (for the purpose of ensuring decisions are consistent with WESNET's responsibilities for contract management and governance). The Policy Executive Group must include at least one member representing WESNET and one representing the National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence (NASASV), to ensure that expert advice is received from those two key sectors nationally

Decision-making

For decision-making purposes a quorum of the Policy Executive Group consist of 3 voting members of the Policy Executive Group.

Generally, the Executive will be required to make decisions via group email, or where time allows, via teleconference.

Process for determining Executive membership

Membership of the Executive will be determined at the annual Advisory Group Face-to-Face meeting, or if no Face-to-Face meeting is held in a given 18 month period, at the next teleconference. Advisory Group members who are unable to attend the Face-to-Face meeting (or relevant teleconference) but are interested in becoming Executive members will be invited to register their interest for consideration at the meeting ahead of time. Membership of the Executive may be determined by discussion and consensus, with due regard to principles of fairness and inclusivity as well as the required composition (above). If there is disagreement or more people interested in the positions than there are positions available, a ballot may be held either in the meeting itself or, if requested by the Advisory Group, by an email ballot conducted by the secretariat.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation should be preferred for any representation on the Policy Executive Group.

Friends and Supporters

Friends and Supporters are individuals and organisations that sign on as supporting AWAVA's Vision, Values, Principles and Objectives document. Friends and Supporters do not have a decision-making role in AWAVA but have opportunities to influence AWAVA's work, raise issues for consideration and take part in discussions (primarily online) about issues relevant to violence against women. Friends and Supporters receive regular updates about AWAVA's work and opportunities to contribute to relevant processes (separate from the weekly email newsletters, which have a broader circulation), and are eligible to join a closed Facebook group.

Staff team

The staff team are employees of WESNET and will be led by a Program Manager and may include other staff such as a Policy Officer and an Administration and Communications Assistant. The delegations of the Program Manager and staff are specified in the delegations document approved by the WESNET Committee in January 2018. The staff team as a whole, through the Program Manager, is overseen by the WESNET National Director.

Attachment A

Advisory Group Members

Roles & Responsibilities

The role of the Advisory Group is to inform the priorities and work of AWAVA, and to amplify the voices of the women and networks that they represent. The Advisory Group members do this by:

- Identifying and setting priorities, assisting with the planning and evaluating of AWAVA's activities
- Proactively engaging with AWAVA on workplan activities and undertaking projects that meet AWAVA's strategic priorities
- Reporting regularly and responsibly to constituent members
- Attending and participating in teleconference and face-to-face meetings
- Taking an active role in all AWAVA meetings and activities, including membership on working groups
- Reading all agenda papers and reports, providing advice and feedback and raising any issues of concern
- Consulting with networks/groups represented by members prior to, and after, attending meetings and presenting the views of those networks/groups
- Promoting an understanding of AWAVA within those networks/groups
- Reporting back after meetings for the benefit of those networks/groups
- Providing written reports to AWAVA on any events/conferences attended on behalf of AWAVA
- Sharing information on:
 - Best practice (including on service provision and primary prevention)
 - Case studies (survivor voices, cases that demonstrate barriers or issues)
 - Information on barriers and what is working to build national picture
 - Events
 - Position papers
 - Work/projects/funding applications/reports/submissions for AWAVA to support, endorse and/or promote
 - Items to be considered for AWAVA's weekly round-up or AWAVA's website
- Helping to build AWAVA's Friends & Supporters base by actively promoting AWAVA
- Ensuring member organisation has an active proxy who is kept regularly informed of AWAVA business
- Identifying national projects and funding streams/activities

Time Commitment

- AWAVA aim to have 1 face-to-face meeting per year, requiring 2 days in a location to be agreed
- 90 minute bi-monthly teleconferences 6 times per year which require preparation and follow-up time
- Participation in working-groups typically requires 1–2 hours per month, dependent on the activity level of the group
- 3 hours per quarter to review quarterly reports and workplans
- Ad hoc reviews of submissions, papers and other AWAVA work – typically 4-6 hours per month maximum

- Ad hoc Office for Women forums and training as needed