

MEDIA RELEASE

**Embargoed until 12am, Friday 20
January 2017**



The campaign will be launched at the WACOSS
New Year Sector Breakfast
8.30am Friday 20 January at Mt Eliza House, Kings Park
at which **Colin Barnett** and **Mark McGowan** will be speaking

This Election Ask ‘What If It Was Me?’

The community services sector has put social issues firmly on the agenda for the upcoming state election, with the launch of a new campaign.

The sector’s ‘What If It Was Me?’ campaign was officially unveiled today at a breakfast attended by almost 200 people, including Premier Colin Barnett and Labor leader Mark McGowan.

WA Council of Social Service CEO Louise Giolitto said the campaign will be run in the lead up to the election in March 2017.

“Since the end of the boom, wages have fallen and jobs are being lost. Most of us know somebody who is doing it tough, even if we aren’t,” said Ms Giolitto.

“Inequality and disadvantage have always existed in WA, but for many it is now no longer something that just happens to others. More and more people are at a point where they are asking, ‘what if it was me?’

“WA has more than 240,000 people living below the poverty line, with the highest level of income inequality in the country.”

Ms Giolitto told the crowd at this morning’s launch that the upcoming election provided both voters and political parties with the opportunity to make a choice.

“WA has the biggest gap between the rich and the poor in the nation, but our political parties can take action on inequality which is at the root of disadvantage and so many of the social problems experienced in our community.

“Wouldn’t you want support that enabled you to keep your head above water when unexpected events put pressure on your financial position? Wouldn’t you want a system that is preventive and supportive to those experiencing family and domestic violence?

“If you became homeless, how would you manage to keep working and continue actively participating in society? If you, or somebody you cared about, were affected by chronic health issues, wouldn’t you appreciate accessible, high- quality services that support and promote your health and wellbeing?

“Without programs that address inequality and disadvantage, things are going to get worse. Difficult economic times are exactly the moment at which it is most important for whoever is in government to invest in our community services.

“Around the world, we are seeing the political consequences of income inequality and entrenched disadvantage.

“WA is at a crossroad - we can choose a fairer future. It’s just a question of priorities.”

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