



Sarah Ford Foundation Strategic Plan 2025 – 2027

*Exercise as medicine for a healthier mind –
fostering health, healing and hope.*

Welcome to the Sarah Ford Foundation

A message from our Director

As a child, I experienced anxiety without fully understanding it. This faded in my teenage years but came back in my twenties. After a marriage break-up, I was clinically diagnosed with generalised anxiety disorder (GAD) and major depressive disorder (MDD).



During the early 2000's, little information available to me about living with these conditions. As a nurse, I thought I had sufficient information to cope. Unfortunately, after a distressing incident at work, I was not debriefed and was subsequently diagnosed by a psychiatrist with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). There was little medical support offered to me other than medication, and I soon lost my way, desperately trying to run away from the symptoms. I was embarrassed and scared to talk about how I felt, and I soon got lost in a black hole. I lost my way; I lost my identity, and I lost hope. I cannot describe the pain of those years. I am grateful to my family, who never left me but many people did.



I remember praying and asking God to help me find a way out. It sounds cliché but I remember it well. Change didn't happen overnight, but eventually, a final medical treatment option began to help. Still, when I looked in the mirror, I barely recognised myself. At this time, I was not deemed fit enough to work by the health professionals and I did not want to return to nursing. What happened next was truly a miracle. With the support of my family, I tried to do some swimming and when my confidence grew - aqua aerobics. I picked up a group fitness timetable on the way out that day and the next class that I attended would pivotally change my life. Being unwell for so long had taken its toll physically and I wasn't fit, but this class allowed me to release my pain and in return I gained health and confidence. Exercise was powerful and that is where a lifelong love story would begin. I could say so much more about that class, and how in combination with medical treatment and counselling, and how it positively shaped my future. Attending that class set me on a life-changing path that I still walk today. It saved my life and gave me hope. That is why I established the Sarah Ford Foundation in 2021. To share this gift that I have been given with other women who would benefit from the life-changing power of exercise. There is a wealth of research that supports the profound connection between exercise and mental health. I believe in the transformative power of exercise to heal, bring health and to offer hope for a better future. I want to meet women where they are in their mental health journey and help them flourish, alongside whatever other treatments they may be receiving, with no judgement, just support.



As Director and founder, I am deeply committed to fight for exercise to be recognised as a research-based powerful and necessary part of mental health treatment. I welcome other organisations to join us in advocating for this change. I am committed to engaging with healthcare providers, service providers and both local and state government to educate and promote exercise in mental health recovery. It is my hope that one day that exercise will be prescribed. I stand for the reduction of stigma in society which still exists today. This will not be an easy road, but I am confident that the Sarah Ford Foundation can create change on many levels – most importantly for those women who are survivors of family and domestic violence (FDV), and for the women of the local community who experience mental health conditions.

In closing, I would like to thank committee of the Sarah Ford Foundation. I'm confident that together, we will make a lasting impact.

Thank you for taking the time to read the Sarah Ford Foundation's plan for 2025 – 2027.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Yours in health, healing and hope,

Sarah Ford

Director and Founder



Our charitable purpose - *The Sarah Ford Foundation was established to be a charity whose purpose is to alleviate the negative impact of mental health symptoms and to assist in the prevention of the further deterioration of mental health; by providing exercise services to women who have experienced domestic violence, poverty and homelessness.*

Our Values:

- *To always serve our community with honesty and integrity*
- *To communicate with purpose and respect*
- *To always work with a high level of professionalism*
- *To always act with empathy and compassion*
- *To lead by example and with courage*



We strive to create momentum – to establish a movement for change

The Sarah Ford Foundation’s Strategic Plan 2025 -2027 is driven by our commitment to the community we aim to serve and through the courage of our conviction which believes that exercise can be used as an adjunct treatment method in assisting the symptoms of mental health in women.

The Sarah Ford Foundation’s strategic plan will outline our proposed pathway to achieving our mission for 2025 – 2027. To create this plan, the needs of our local community have been examined and our vision and values have been kept at the forefront of our decision making. This has led to a set of clear actions, which will allow our Director to provide exercise services to assist those women in our community who have experienced/are experiencing FDV, homelessness and poverty, with our primary aim to improve symptoms of their mental health. Our secondary aims focus on our Director providing exercise services to the women of the local community which may assist their mental health, and this is directed at women of all ages.

It is important to note that throughout this document, the Sarah Ford Foundation will be referred to as the ‘the Foundation’ and that the interchangeable use of the terms ‘we’ and ‘our’ refers to the Foundation’s committee. The committee of the Foundation is anonymous for reasons of privacy and safety. The committee are consulted at every step of the decision-making process, and we abide by our own Rules of S Ford Incorporated as well as upholding the standards of the Australian Not-for-profit and Charities Commission (ACNC).



Throughout 2025 - 2027, the Foundation will work to ensure that our plan is upheld, and this means that whilst steadfast in our overall aims, we must also be dynamic, ensuring that we are evolving so that we ensure that we meet our community's needs. The types of changes that we may encounter are those such as increased service demand or changes in government policy. We must be clear in stating that any change made will be done so in consultation with the committee and will be made in the best interests of the community we serve. The Foundation welcomes feedback from service users and other service providers. We are committed to staying updated in the women's mental health space through research and personal development.

The Foundation's strategic plan will also include raising societal awareness about the benefits of exercise as medicine for women's mental health, working to reduce the stigma, whilst encouraging the use of exercise as an adjunct treatment method by professional services such as general practitioners (GP's), clinical psychologists and counsellors. We also plan to reach out to local and state government, with a plan to reviewing and/or implementing legislation regarding how exercise could be used to assist mental health for future generations.

Since its inception in 2021, the Foundation has begun its work with minimal self-funding from our Director, from fundraisers and from very kind private donations. This strategic plan will also set out our financial plan to create stronger, more sustainable income streams through fundraising, grants and private donations.



We are a charity committed to providing hope

“Hope is being able to see that there is light, despite all of the darkness”

Desmond Tutu

The Sarah Ford Foundation strives to be service provider that provides high-quality, professional exercise services with the hope of instigating powerful change in the lives of women to assist with their mental health. Thus, allowing women to experience personal freedom through the alleviation of the symptoms of mental health conditions.

The Foundation stands united in the fight to reduce the stigma associated with women’s mental health.

These are just a couple of the ways that we aim to provide hope to those that need it the most.





Our key objectives

"Life's most persistent and urgent question is, 'What are you doing for others?'"

Martin Luther King, Jr

"Some men see things as they are and ask, "Why?" I dream things that never were

and ask, "Why not?""

Robert F. Kennedy

Commitment to Community

Developing and delivering effective strategies that extend to the women who need assistance, that connect and that foster meaningful participation.

January 2025 – the continuation of the Women’s Walk in Byford, supported by the Shire of Serpentine Jarrahdale.

July 2025 – to commence a mindfulness initiative within the Shire of Serpentine Jarrahdale.

September 2025 – extending the women’s walk to Armadale and continue the women’s walk in Byford.

January 2026 – establishing a unique exercise service for survivors of FDV. The Strong, Fearless and Free program will be a referral-based program, located within the Shire of Serpentine Jarrahdale.



September 2027 – establishing the second Strong, Fearless and Free program, a referral-based program, located within the City of Armadale

The Sarah Ford Foundation is also looking to work with older adults in the Shire of Serpentine Jarrahdale and City of Armadale communities providing them with seated exercise options to help reduce loneliness and the symptoms of mental health conditions.

This planned service does not yet have a set date for commencement. The Foundation encourages interested organisations to contact us via our email:

admin@sarahfordfoundation.org





Building Relationships

The Foundation is committed to working to establish valuable relationships with healthcare professionals, service providers, local and state government departments and any other professional who aligns with our values and vision. These collaborations will always work for the greater good of the client.

Throughout 2025 – 2027, the Foundation will look to continue established connections within local government e.g., the Shire of Serpentine Jarrahdale and the City of Armadale, local elected members and the appropriate state government Ministers for FDV, Women’s Interests and FDV. We also aim to continue to communicate with the Department of Local Government Sport and Cultural Industries (DLGSCI) and services that can assist with furthering our charitable purpose.

During 2025 – 2026 we are looking to establish a connection with:

- WA Police,
- Service providers and other healthcare professionals working within FDV services, to start the process of building a referral system
- The DART Institute – to obtain professional development for our Director within the FDV space. To assist us in building our own policies and procedures around working with vulnerable adults and children within the FDV space.
- Risk management specialist – to allow us to build safe process for our clients
- AUSactive – the governing body of fitness. How can they support us as a not-for-profit organisation.



Financial stability and sustainability

The Foundation is committed to maintaining rigorous financial processes.

The Foundation aims to create a strong financial base that will allow for the continuation of established services and to allow for the creation of new services. This base will allow the Foundation to support ongoing costs each year such as insurances, ongoing professional development, for the payment of services and costs of hiring facilities. These are examples and there may be further expenditure that we have not yet accounted for.

The Foundation will be looking to raise \$20,000 during 2025 – 2027.

We aim to acquire this amount through fundraising activities, applying for grants and funding. Our treasurer will ensure that moving through 2025 – 2027, as per previous years, accurate financial records are maintained, and that any financial decision will be discussed, and any financial decision will be discussed with the committee and there will be a vote held.

The treasurer will be ensuring that all required financial reports are submitted to the ACNC when necessary and in a timely manner, working without out nominated account, to ensure that we are fully compliant and that our financial data is transparent. If required by the ACNC, the financials of the Foundation will be reported on both the ACNC website and the Foundation's website.



Raising Awareness

The Sarah Ford Foundation aims to increase professional and public awareness around the concept that exercise can be viewed as medicine. The Foundation envisions a day when exercise will be prescribed alongside traditional treatments for mental health.

Throughout 2025 – 2027 we are looking to provide education for healthcare professionals and organisations about the benefits of exercise as an adjunct treatment methodology for assisting the symptoms of mental health conditions. These educational talks will use current research.

During 2025 – 2027 it is the Foundation’s intention to share monthly research updates that are applicable to our field of work.

In 2024, our Director was privileged to be able to talk to the Premier Roger Cook, the Minister for Women’s Interests Sue Ellery, the Minister for FDV Sabine Winton and the Minister for Sport and Recreation, David Templeman. Over the coming 2-year period we plan to continue these conversations. The Foundation is encouraged by our discussions, and we would welcome further opportunities to talk to local elected councillors, local party members and state politicians about how exercise can be used in the treatment of mental health conditions.



Proactive Promotion

Throughout 2025 – 2027 our Director is aiming to attend relevant public events and professional networking opportunities to promote the Foundation, provide education regarding our charitable purpose, our values and the services we provide. We will be looking to talk to interested parties who may wish to engage with our services, or if they would like a service developed specifically for their organisation. Our Director, Sarah Ford, will represent the Foundation at all these events, as our committee will remain anonymous. As previously stated, anonymity for the committee was decided upon in consultation with the ACNC for the committee's privacy and safety as we will be working with particularly vulnerable groups.

The Foundation will be looking to hold talks in public spaces such as libraries, service providers, or for any interested party, not only about the work we do, but we can also provide educational talks on how exercise can benefit mental health. We hope to help to educate the community that exercise doesn't have to be a chore and that there are many ways that exercise can be achieved with potential benefits for mental health.

The Foundation will always strive to maintain brand integrity no matter what the circumstances.



Confidentiality and Anonymity

The Foundation will always protect the client's confidentiality and anonymity. Rigorous methods are currently utilised, and we will be looking to further the security when working with particularly vulnerable groups.

When working with specific organisations the Foundation will work together with the organisations to ensure that their codes of conduct/policies are upheld.

The Foundation will work in alignment with the Privacy Act 1988 and when group services are established, our Director who will be providing the service will also be working within the Australian Counsellors Association (ACA) Code of Ethics and Practice. When services commence, a copy of the ACA's Code of Ethics and Practice will be available on the Sarah Ford Foundation website.

Contact us:

Director: Sarah Ford

Telephone: 0416 547 952

Email: admin@sarahfordfoundation.org

www.sarahfordfoundation.org



The Sarah Ford Foundation acknowledges the strength and resilience of adults, children and young people who have experienced family and domestic violence. We pay respects to those who did not survive and acknowledge the families, friends and communities who have lost loved ones to this preventable and widespread issue. We are committed to ensuring responses to family and domestic violence are informed by lived experience.

The Sarah Ford Foundation acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Custodians and first peoples of Australia. We recognise the impacts of colonisation and dispossession and the contemporary disadvantage experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



Sarah Ford Foundation

S Ford Incorporated trading as the Sarah Ford Foundation

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