

Western Australian Council on Homelessness

MINUTES OF MEETING Wednesday 1 August 2012

Large Executive Conference Room, Level 2
Department for Child Protection
189 Royal Street, East Perth
Meeting commenced at 9:00am

1. Welcome and Introductions

The A/Chair welcomed members to the meeting:

Present

Mr Richard Aspinall	FaHCSIA
Mr Steve Glew	Department for Child Protection
Ms Kathleen Gregory	Foundation Housing
Ms Genevieve Errey	Department of Housing
Professor Paul Flatau (arrived 9:50am)	University of Western Australia
Ms Kedy Kristal (departed 10am)	Pat Giles Centre
Mr Sean Loke (proxy)	Mental Health Commission
Ms Leanne Strommen (proxy)	Centrecare

In attendance

Hon Robyn McSweeney MLC	Minister for Child Protection
Ms Hilary MacWilliam	Department of Housing
Ms Maureen Flynn	Department for Child Protection
Ms Sandra Flanagan	Department for Child Protection

Apologies

Mr Stanley Jeyaraj	Independent Chair
Mr James Hunter	Drug and Alcohol Office
Mr Ross Kyrwood	YMCA
Ms Judi Morris (proxy attended)	Mental Health Commission
Ms Nanette Williams	Pilbara Community Legal Service
Mr Ian Giles	Department of Corrective Services
Mr Tony Pietropiccolo (proxy attended)	Centrecare

2. Hon Robyn McSweeney MLC, Minister for Child Protection; Community Services; Seniors And Volunteering; Women's Interests; Youth

The A/Chair welcomed the Minister to the meeting and gave the Chairperson's apologies.

The Minister thanked members for the considerable time and effort they contribute to the Council. Discussion then ensued on the following:

- The importance of the continuation of NPAH funding. To date there has been no commitment by the Commonwealth government to continue the funding beyond June 2013. This is on the agenda for the Select Council on Homelessness which is meeting at the end of August in Perth.

- It was stated that it would be devastating to the sector should the programs not be funded to continue.
- There has been an analysis of data provided by services through progress reports and tracking sheets from the past two years. All relevant information is being reviewed and utilised to provide good evidence regarding the successes of the programs.
- The Commonwealth has been briefed on all the good work and success of the programs.
- The Departments of Treasury and Premier and Cabinet have also been briefed on the positive outcomes of the NPAH programs using preliminary aggregated data from the tracking sheets for the period January 2010 to December 2011.
- While the recent increase in funding has been valuable, additional DV funding to manage the growing demand regarding refugees is required.
- Bed vacancies – the demand in the metropolitan area outweighs the supply. The potential of utilising vacant country beds when metropolitan beds are filled was discussed. Members noted that this may be possible for some women/women with children, however concerns including employment and education must be considered.
- Exit point accommodation – the potential to shift the support rather than the person/people out of the house was discussed. This would enable people to stay in the area where they have established external supports, eg schools etc. It is destabilising to move away, losing all supports that have been established. The Department of Housing agreed to discuss this further outside of the meeting, with Foundation Housing.

The Minister noted that recently there had been a number of apologies for Council meetings. She advised members that once a member had given three consecutive apologies, they would receive a letter from the Minister asking them to reconsider their position on the Council and where necessary, the position would be refilled.

The Minister thanked members for inviting her to the meeting and engaging in open dialogue.

The A/Chair thanked the Minister for her attendance and contribution to the discussions.

3. Minutes of meeting held 4 July 2012

The minutes of the WA Council on Homelessness meeting held on 4 July 2012 were confirmed as an accurate record of the proceedings.

4. Future Directions of WACH

Items for consideration include:

Review and monitoring of regional plans/ Regional initiatives and issues including integration at the local levels/the scope and role of local governments in homelessness

- It was agreed that the review and monitoring of regional plans is and should remain a key area of focus for the Council, including rural remote challenges, identification of gaps in service delivery and the role of local government.
- Data analysis – look at the SHSC data, ABS socio-economic trends (2011, plus 2001 & 2006 which are being revised under the new methodology) and mortgage stress.
- Consider how WACH can support regions where the regional plans are not progressing well.

Action: A WALGA representative to be invited to a meeting of WACH.
The progress reports on the regional homelessness plans to be provided to members prior to the next meeting for discussion at the meeting.

Review of the State Plan

- The State Plan was developed to June 2013 so will need to be reviewed based on progress and future development regarding the NAHA and NPAH.

Sector funding and sustainability/Fair Work Australia Social and Community Services Equal Remuneration Case

- This is an ongoing issue that should remain a focus of the Council.
- The additional 7.5% has been valuable, however there is still disparity and retaining staff remains difficult.
- FWA's Equal Remuneration Order only applies to those SACS workers in Western Australia who are employed by a constitutional corporation and are therefore covered by the Commonwealth SACS Modern Award. Organisations with affected workers will receive funding supplementation from the Commonwealth Government if they are a Commonwealth Owen Purpose Expense (COPE) program or are a joint funded Commonwealth State/Territory funded program, including specialist homelessness services. The process of identifying the number of services in WA that are covered by the Commonwealth SACS Modern Award is proving more difficult than originally anticipated.
- Members noted that the sector is concerned that the larger organisations will receive the increase and smaller organisations will not.
- Members also noted the disparity between the State and Commonwealth indexation levels.
- Members discussed an emerging concern in housing provision – increasing focus on leveraging and growth. The high level of support required for clients with complex needs, which is an important part of the service provision, severely impacts capacity to leverage housing stock. Existing funding for tenancy support is not extended to the community housing sector.

Action: Ms Gregory to provide data on managing the financial and resource costs of complex tenancies when it becomes available.

Reports by government departments at the Council meetings

It was agreed that government departments will report on papers and emerging issues as they arise, rather than monthly updates.

Action: Members to advise Ms Flanagan when they have an update to be included on the agenda.

National agenda/whole of government engagement regarding Homelessness.

Items to be included to ensure a clear understanding and influence where possible:

- National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness
- National Affordable Housing Agreement
- Whole of government and community response to homelessness
- National Quality Framework
- Workforce development
- Data collection
- Funding and sustainability

Members discussed concerns about how and if people were counted as homeless. For example, a significant number of DAO clients are homeless but not counted as such by DAO. Clients are often clients of a range of services. Recognition that there is a need for common assessment.

It was also noted that Homelessness is not owned by DCP but across many government departments and the community sector.

Service gaps

- Regional planning is tight enough to know what these are.

System monitoring

- Strategic look at systems including data and trends.
- What are they and how do they intersect with other systems.

Further discussion is necessary on this item to fully understand what this may mean and if there is a role for WACH.

Innovative responses to homelessness.

- Parity will provide an opportunity to showcase this.
- How do we find out about the range of innovative responses?
- Guest speakers to WACH.
- Forum – good opportunity to showcase.

5. GENERAL BUSINESS

5.1 Next meeting – clash with National Homelessness Conference in Melbourne

Members agreed to change the date of the next meeting given several members will be attending the National Homelessness Conference in Melbourne on the next scheduled WACH meeting date. Options for an alternate date for the September meeting to be circulated to members with the view to securing a suitable day and time for all/most members.

Action: Ms Flanagan to provide members with alternate dates and re-schedule the meeting as appropriate.
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5.2 Other Business

5.2.1 Project - research into 'big builds' in WA

Ms Flynn discussed the *big builds* currently being undertaken in WA, including the Oxford Foyer, St Barts and Lentara. No evaluation regarding the effectiveness of these projects has been built into the project briefs. It is proposed that WACH be involved in this research into the effectiveness of these builds.

Lotterywest has grants available for this type of funding, which may be accessed by non-government organisations. It was suggested that a WACH representative meet with the key players involved in the *big builds* and discuss the merits of accessing funding to undertake long term research into the outcomes and effectiveness of the projects and their capacity and willingness to work together to drive the project.

Members provided broad support for the research and it was agreed that Ms Gregory, as a WACH representative with involvement in the Foyer Model (Foundation Housing), would meet with Ms Flynn and key individuals involved in the other *big builds* (St Barts, Anglicare, The Salvation Army) to progress this proposal.

Action: Ms Flynn to invite key players in the current and planned *big builds* to a meeting to discuss the above proposal.

5.2.2 OAG review

The OAG review of the NPAH implementation is now in *full audit* across Australia. The process has been positive and the report has shown a very clear picture of the programs.

5.2.3 Farewell to Julie Waylen

The A/Chair advised that Ms Julie Waylen has been successful in winning the position of Director State-wide Contracting with the Department of Health. She will be finishing her secondment at MercyCare and commencing in her new position on 3 September 2012. The A/Chair congratulated Ms Waylen and acknowledged her 19 years of dedication to the sector. Members commented that her contribution and passion will be missed.

6. Next Meeting

The A/Chair thanked members for their attendance and closed the meeting at 10:30am. The next meeting date will be advised.