

Abridged WAHTN Executive Board Minutes for WAHTN Website Meeting No. 03/2020 held on Wednesday 22 July 2020, 8.00am - 9:30am

Attendees:

- *Mr Malcolm McCusker AC CVO QC, Chair
- Ms Pip Brennan, Consumer Advocate
- Dr James Williamson, representing the WA Department of Health
- Professor Shirley Bowen, representing the Private Health Sector members
- *Professor Peter Leedman, representing the Medical Research Institute members
- Professor Eeva Leinonen, representing the member Universities
- Associate Professor Dan McAullay, representing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- *Professor Gary Geelhoed, Executive Director WAHTN, ex officio

*Executive Officer: Ms Lauren White, WAHTN

By Invitation:

- *Dr Debbie Turner, Chief Operating Officer, WAHTN
- (All save those marked with asterisk attended by Zoom)

Apologies

Professor Neale Fong.

1. Welcome

The Chair welcomed members to the third meeting of 2020.

2. Declarations of potential or perceived Conflicts of Interest (COI)

None declared.

3. Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Board 27 May 2020

It was RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the WAHTN Executive Board held on 27 May 2020 were a true and correct record of that meeting, other than one comment raised by Dr James Williamson referring to the Guardianship Act (11. Executive Director's Quarterly Report). It was decided post meeting, that the draft would not be shared with Dr James Williamson to ensure independence is maintained.

4. WAHTN COVID-19 Research Collaboration

4.1 *Minutes of the COVID-19 Research Collaboration*

The Minutes of the COVID-19 Research Collaboration meetings held on 15 June and 13 July 2020 were noted with a comment made by Dr James Williamson with regards to item 3 (COVID-19 Research Response) of the Minutes from the meeting held on 13 July by Professor Toby Richards. The Minutes will be modified to reflect that a formal written proposal for funding has not yet been received by the WA Department of Health.

The COVID-19 Research Collaboration group continues to meet on a monthly basis.

4.2 *COVID-19 Research Collaboration Philanthropic brochure*

Professor Gary Geelhoed noted that the brochure was developed during the early stages of the COVID-19 crisis to promote the COVID-19 research undertaken by WAHTN Partner Organisations and to generate additional funding support. He advised members that, given

the crisis has abated in WA, the brochure will be utilised in a number of ways to raise awareness of COVID-19 research and as a marketing brochure for WAHTN and the Partner Organisations. The brochure is still in draft format and feedback is welcome from the Board.

4.3 *COVID-19 Research Collaboration Funding*

Professor Gary Geelhoed commented that the WAHTN COVID-19 Research Collaboration is an example of how WAHTN can coordinate and facilitate a collaborative approach to state-wide initiatives. The establishment of the WA COVID-19 Immunity Collaboration group (led by Dr Dominic Mallon) and the Telehealth Collaboration project (led by Professor Fiona Wood) demonstrates the significant benefit of such forums.

Discussion continued amongst Board members regarding the WA Future Health Research and Innovation Fund (Bill passed State Parliament in May 2020).

The strategy for the Fund is awaiting endorsement from the Minister for Health and once approved, an Advisory Council will be established. Dr Williamson noted that some funding will be allocated to existing and new funding streams. The process will be competitive and the WA Department of Health will encourage “near misses” to apply for funding.

Ms Pip Brennan raised whether it was possible to re-purpose and divert research funds into alternative COVID-19 recovery research opportunities across the sector. Dr James Williamson noted that given the lack of community transmission in Western Australia, the WA Department of Health are currently investigating opportunities around the impact of mental health, cancer diagnoses that were missed/delayed and annual health checks. The WA Department of Health will accept proposals from researchers focusing on these, and other, areas of research.

Dr James Williamson referenced the previous meetings held with the WA Minister for Health regarding the DETECT project and noted there is residual funds remaining. There is an opportunity for further funds to be contributed from mining companies (i.e. CME) and that WAHTN could be the avenue for receiving these funds. Dr James Williamson advised he would seek an update from the Ministers office.

At the direction of the WA Department of Health, a review of the COVID-19 Project Grants is underway to ascertain if the projects are still applicable with the current COVID-19 research requirements. Some funding may be re-purposed for other studies and projects.

ACTION ITEM: Dr James Williamson will seek an update from the office of the WA Minister for Health to follow up on additional funds from the DETECT project and the opportunity for WAHTN to receive these funds.

5. Australian Health Research Alliance (AHRA)

- Professor Gary Geelhoed has been appointed interim Chair of the AHRA Council, the role commenced on 1 July 2020 with the appointment for 6 months and will conclude on 31 December 2020.
- WAHTN collaborated with the WA Primary Health Alliance (WAPHA) to submit a national Wound Care proposal, we are currently awaiting advice on whether or not the submission has been successful.

- **National Wounds Initiative: Project 1 (Cost of Wound Care)**
A tool is currently under development for measuring the actual cost to healing of wounds, developed by Silver Chain, it has been modified for broader use in a variety of wound care settings – tertiary health care, primary health care and community health care.
- **Wounds Initiative: Project 2 (National Wound Standards)**
An updated and integrated Australian Wounds Standards which brings together all relevant wound care standards into one framework is being developed with an expected delivery date of 30 June 2021.
- **National Consumer and Community Involvement Initiative: Project 1 (Best Practice)**
A CCI Best Practice Framework is in first draft and is currently being reviewed by a range of stakeholders Australia wide. It provides a practical guide for embedding consumer involvement in research organisations at both policy and practice levels.
- **Consumer and Community Involvement Initiative: Project 4 (International CCI Alliance)**
The feasibility of establishing an international CCI Alliance will be explored later in the year once the disruptions from COVID have abated.

6. Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF)

WAHTN are hoping to receive additional funding from MRFF Rapid Applied Research Translation (RART) in July 2021, however the RART initiative is currently under review and the process remains unclear at present.

MRFF have engaged Allen and Clarke Policy and Regulatory Specialists Ltd to evaluate the RART initiative. WAHTN are participating in the evaluation. As part of the evaluation process, WAHTN Partner Organisations will be asked to participate in an online survey in July/August 2020. The outcomes of the evaluation will be used by the Commonwealth Department of Health to determine any changes to the MRFF RART process going forward.

7. Governance and Operations

7.1 *WAHTN: the first five years (Draft)*

The Board members were supportive of the document, the Chair asked members to review the draft and provide any comments for incorporation into the final version.

It is intended that the final document will be provided to the WA Minister for Health, Government bodies, WAHTN Partner Organisations and other key organisations.

ACTION ITEM: A separate clean version of the draft WAHTN first five years document will be provided to Board members for review and additional comments.

7.2 *Joint Venture Agreement, Centre Agent Services Agreement*

The revised Agreement is awaiting endorsement from WA Department of Health, they have indicated a few minor concerns with regards to wording. Dr James Williamson apologised for the delays which have been caused by the COVID-19 crisis and priority Legislative matters.

A meeting will be arranged with the WA Department of Health to progress the Unincorporated Joint Venture Agreement.

ACTION ITEM: Dr James Williamson will organise a meeting with Professor Gary Geelhoed and the WA Department of Health Legal team.

7.2 *Strategic Review*

Board members noted that this had been delayed due to COVID-19 and agreed that the strategic review process should re-commence.

A meeting will be arranged with a smaller core group of individuals to provide some clarity and focus for the future direction of WAHTN.

7.3 *Final Lotterywest Evaluation Report*

The final Lotterywest Evaluation Report was attached to the Agenda for Board members review. The Board members endorsed the report unanimously.

Ms Pip Brennan and Professor Peter Leedman noted that the Consumer and Community Involvement Program has a wide range of community programs that have been a great success across the various Partner Organisations. This was particularly evident in the 'Buddy Program' that has successfully matched Cancer researchers with consumers to improve the quality and relevance of their research.

8. Financial Reports

The WAHTN Financial Report was circulated – expenditure is within budget.

Professor Geelhoed noted that all 2020 Partnership Funding have been received, with the exception of the Telethon Kids Institute; Harry Perkins Institute; and Lions Eye Institute.

Professor Peter Leedman informed members that discussions are continuing amongst the three Medical Research Institute Directors that have not yet made their 2020 partnership payments towards WAHTN. He noted that as a collective group, they wish to see a cohesive strategic plan prior to progressing payment. The Chair requested that Professor Leedman, along with Professor Jonathan Carapetis and Professor Bill Morgan table the WAHTN: the first five years document at the next meeting of their respective Boards.

ACTION ITEM: Professor Geelhoed will follow up the outstanding Partnership payments with respective organisations accordingly.

9. Enabling Platforms

- *Research Education and Training Program (RETProgram)*

A plan is under development to broaden the platform of research education and training research across the State. A survey has been developed to establish what research training is available across the sector and identify the current gaps.

WAHTN submitted a request for an extension of the WA Department of Health Funding Agreement relating to the current RETProgram funding period (1 December 2019 to 30 June 2020). In addition, a further Funding Agreement has been requested for current staff and operation costs for another 12 months (until 30 June 2021).

The RETProgram is broadening a uniform fee structure for student access that will be used across all five WA Universities.

In conjunction with the WA Department of Health, the sourcing of an independent review and impact assessment of RETProgram is currently in discussions.

- *Consumer and Community Involvement Program (CCIP)*
Name change from CCHRN to Consumer and Community Involvement (CCI) Program occurred on 1 July together with an upgrade and launch of the CCIP website and new promotional videos.

The renewal of CCIP Partner Agreements is currently underway with Partner Universities, Medical Research Institutes and Health Service Providers.

A Review and development of the Fee for Service model for the delivery of CCIP services and resources outside of CCIP Partner Agreements is currently underway.

- *Australian National Phenome Centre (ANPC)*
Professor Eeva Leinonen advised Board members that Professor Elaine Holmes has been awarded the prestigious ARC Australian Laureate Fellowship. Her research is pivotal to further understanding gut bacteria composition and function.

ACTION ITEM: WAHTN will send a letter of congratulations to Professor Elaine Holmes.

10. Executive Director's Quarterly Report

The following items were discussed in further detail:

- *Guardianship Act*
In collaboration with the Health Consumers' Council of WA and WAHTN a joint submission in response to the Guardianship and Administration Amendment (Medical Research) Bill 2020 was submitted to the Legislation Committee Inquiry. The Legislation has now passed, however, there are still complexities on how to operationalise the current Legislation for emergency department clinical trials.
- *AICC(WA) Annual Healthcare event*
The event has been sponsored by WAHTN and will be held on Wednesday 29 July at 2.00 to 3.15pm "Fighting the war against COVID-19, lessons from the frontline in WA and Israel".

WAHTN received unlimited complimentary tickets for the event to allocate to partner members who are not currently AICC members. If Board members wish to attend, please inform WAHTN of your rsvp.

11. Other Business

The following Western Australian organisations, MTPConnect, OncoRes and Artrya have been awarded federal funding from the Department of Health of \$1million each towards supercharging digital health technologies.

12. Next meeting of the WAHTN Executive Board

The next meeting will be held in late August/early September 2020 and the Executive Officer will source an appropriate date and time that is convenient for all Board members.