

Abridged WAHTN Executive Board Minutes for WAHTN Website Meeting No. 04/2020 held on Wednesday 23 September 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 David Morrison, representing the member Universities

Professor Neale Fong, representing the WA Health Service Boards

*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 Eeva Leinonen.

1. Welcome

The Chair welcomed members to the fourth meeting of 2020.

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

None declared.

3. Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Board 22 July 2020

It was RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the WAHTN Executive Board held on 22 July 2020 were a true and correct record of that meeting.

4. WAHTN COVID-19 Research Collaboration

The Minutes of the COVID-19 Research Collaboration meetings held on 10 August and 14 September 2020 were noted. Dr James Williamson noted that it was disappointing the Mental Health COVID-19 collaboration had chosen not to submit an application to the MRFF funding round and that where possible, we should be encouraging all researchers to submit for funding opportunities where they arise.

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

5. Australian Health Research Alliance (AHRA)

- A body of work is being led by Professor Sir John Savill (Melbourne Academic Centre for Health) focusing on *Research Translators to improve healthcare and boost the economy*. Professor Gary Geelhoed, Professor Helena Teede (Monash Partners) and Chris Levi (SPHERE) have provided feedback and input to the document, which will be presented at the next meeting of the AHRA Council on 29 September.

- Associate Professor Dan McAullay discussed the NHMRC call for submission relating to a National Network for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Researchers, totalling \$10million over 5 years. The NHMRC has called for a single collaborative application from five successful EOI applications. Associate Professor McAullay and Professor Sandra Eades are leading the Western Australian component which is being aligned with AHRA counterparts.
- A Women's Health Research Translation and Impact Network (WHRTN) has been formed which has received funding of \$5 million over five years, for research with strong potential to improve health outcomes for women and girls. Media release can be found here: <https://www.health.gov.au/ministers/the-hon-greg-hunt-mp/media/169-million-investment-for-australian-health-and-medical-research>
- National Wounds Initiative: Project 1 (Cost of Wound Care)
A tool for measuring the actual cost to healing of wounds, developed by Silver Chain, has been modified for broader use in a variety of wound care settings – tertiary health care, primary health care and community health care. This is one of four projects being conducted across several AHRA Translation Centres under this Initiative.

Survey of Wounds in four Public Hospitals;

This survey replicates surveys undertaken by Wound West 2007, 2009 and 2011, which surveyed wounds in every public hospital bed in Western Australia (86 hospitals).

The data will be compared to the data collected at the same sites in the previous surveys for comparison. The Silver Chain costing model will be applied to the data to determine the cost of caring for the wound based on best product best practice.

Survey of Wounds in General Practices;

A surveyor will be located at each practice for a one-week period and review all wounds attending the practice. The Silver Chain costing model will be applied to the data to determine the cost of caring for the wound based on best product best practice. This can be compared to the actual costs for the practice.

Survey of Wounds in Aged Care;

Surveys will be undertaken in four aged care facilities – Bethanie, Hall & Prior, Brightwater and Amana. The Silver Chain costing model will be applied to the data to determine the cost of caring for the wound based on best product best practice.

Survey of Wounds in Community Care;

Silver Chain's data which used the costing model based on best practice, best product will be compared to a similar community care provider in Queensland – Blue Sky.

- 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 March 2021.
- National Consumer and Community Involvement Initiative: Project 1 (Best Practice)
A CCI Best Practice Framework resource will provide a practical step by step guide for embedding consumer involvement in research organisations and provides information for administrators, researchers and consumers. The working draft of this resource is currently

with an editor and will then go to a graphic artist for initial design work. The draft will then be reviewed extensively by: the Project Working Group; CCI Initiative Coordination Group; WAHTN and CCI Program teams. Subsequently the resource will be road tested by 5 organisations – Department of Health, Curtin University, Telethon Kids Institute, Perron Institute and SPHERE (our collegiate Translation Centre in NSW).

The project is supported by a Working Group comprising consumers, researchers and research administrators and organisations including MRIs, Universities and health departments.

- Consumer and Community Involvement Initiative: Project 4 (International CCI Alliance)
A study into the feasibility of establishing an international CCI Alliance will be explored in September. The Alliance will be initiated with those countries with which the CCI project has already established relationships (UK, USA, Canada, Israel, NZ).

6. Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF)

Professor Peter Leedman queried if there had been disruptions related to the COVID-19 crisis, particularly to research activities. It was noted that Science on the Swan 2020 was postponed until 2021 due to the crisis and that AHRA submitted a collective request for an extension (12 months) to the Round 2.2 Rapid Applied Research Translation Projects. The extension was granted by the NHMRC.

Professor David Morrison noted that there is a significant concern across the University sector with regards to University's ability to meet obligations related to NHMRC and MRFF projects, given there is no additional funding available to complete the projects awarded (which are already subsidised by the corresponding University). The situation requires Federal Government assistance to bridge the gap. Professor Morrison informed the Board Members that he would contact his Western Australian counterparts to ascertain an approximate figure on what the impact would equate to.

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. In addition, the MRFF 2021-2023 funding priorities have not yet been established and may not be received prior to the commencement of 2021.

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 have been 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 Strategic Plan

A core focus group of key individuals from WAHTN Partner Organisations met on 16 September to provide input and finalise the draft WAHTN Strategic Plan. It was noted that the document is current a work in progress and the Chair welcomed further input and feedback from members of the Executive Board.

It was agreed the WAHTN would revise the Strategic Plan, based on amendments suggested by the Focus Group members and comments from the Executive Board members. A meeting of the Focus Group will be reconvened (over a 3 hour workshop) to re-work the Strategic Plan. The final draft will be tabled at the next meeting of the Executive Board, for endorsement.

Professor Gary Geelhoed informed Board members that he is in the process of meeting with Heads from each WAHTN Partner Organisation. These meetings are scheduled throughout September/October and is an opportunity to highlight all WAHTN matters, in particular the Strategic Plan and learn what is occurring at Partner Organisations, which may be of mutual benefit.

ACTION ITEM: A meeting of the Focus Group will be reconvened (over a 3 hour workshop) to re-work the Strategic Plan. The final draft will be tabled at the next meeting of the Executive Board, for endorsement.

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

The Board members endorsed the WAHTN: the first five years (Draft) document.

ACTION ITEM: The WAHTN first five years document will be finalised and produced in a promotional manner and circulated to the WA Minister for Health, Government bodies, WAHTN Partner Organisations, funders and other key organisations.

7.3 *Joint Venture Agreement, Centre Agent Services Agreement*

The revised Joint Venture Agreement remains un-signed by WAHTN Partners at present.

Dr James Williamson advised the Executive Board that the WA Department of Health Legal Team have provided a coordinated response (including the five Area Health Services) outlining proposed amendments and felt that these recommendations have not yet been adequately addressed by the University of Western Australia Legal Team. The main concern is related to the 'RiskCover' clause.

To progress the current impasse, the Chair advised that he will arrange to meet with the relevant Legal Counsel at the University of Western Australia to advance the discussions and work towards an effective resolution appropriate to all Partners.

In addition, it was noted that the Strategic Plan proposes at this time, the pros of a Joint Venture Agreement with Centre Agent arrangement outweigh the cons and should be continued for the life of this Strategic Plan - July 2020 to June 2025.

ACTION ITEM: The Chair will arrange to meet with the relevant Legal Counsel at the University of Western Australia to advance the JVA concerns raised by the WA Department of Health.

8. **Financial Reports**

The WAHTN Financial Report was circulated – expenditure is within budget, however, at present, the WAHTN does not have sufficient Partnership funds to cover the small FTE of the core office.

The funding received for the WAHTN enabling platforms is via short term Funding Agreements, which does not allow longevity, nor discretionary funding. Professor Gary Geelhoed noted that the Director General (WA Department of Health) has suggested the WAHTN submit a formal application which requests all of WAHTN's financial requirements (including RETProgram, CCIPProgram, CTDMC and the WAHTN core) with the aim to fund the WAHTN as a whole, rather than on separate funding agreements.

The Chair emphasised that he was initially selected as Chair of WAHTN with the primary purpose to achieve NHMRC recognition as an Advanced Health Research Translation Centre, which was achieved. It was with the understanding that the Department would fund WAHTN on an ongoing basis. The Chair

noted that the WAHTN has accomplished a great deal to date, however, we now require the assurance that funding will be available to continue. Board members agreed with this sentiment.

Dr James Williamson reiterated that the Department wants to ensure WAHTN succeeds. He queried what financial commitment the other WAHTN Partner Organisations have provided, given the strain the University sector is under at this time. Professor David Morrison answered that WAHTN is important, however all funding is being scrutinised at present. At Murdoch University, funding contracts are being negotiated on an individual basis.

Professor Peter Leedman noted that the Medical Research Institute sector has suffered sizable financial losses, particularly as the WA MRI's have a heavy reliance from fundraising opportunities.

A meeting with the Minister Roger Cook is scheduled on 30 September. The Chair will join the Executive Director at this meeting.

The Chair requested that a briefing note be prepared outlining WAHTN's financial constraints for discussion with the Minister.

ACTION ITEM: In preparation for the meeting with the Minister for Health, the Chief Operating Officer will prepare a briefing note which outlines WAHTN's financial constraints.

9. Enabling Platforms

- *Research Education and Training Program (RETProgram)*

ARTD Consultants have been engaged to conduct an independent external review of the RETProgram. The ARTD team, led by Dr Brad Astbury, Director, will formally evaluate the RETProgram using a mixed-method evaluation design that will synthesise evidence from key sources. The evaluation will establish a solid foundation for the RETProgram's future impact and economic evaluations and support identification of program strengths, weaknesses and areas for improvement.

A Grant Agreement with the WA Department of Health (for Financial Year 2020-2021) has been fully executed. This includes part funding towards FTE and operational costs. No funding has been allocated to a Head of Program position which has made it very difficult to progress and lead the deliverables of the Funding Agreement.

As part of the scoping exercise to develop a broader state-wide education and training platform for WA, a survey was conducted across the Partner and Associate organisations of WAHTN. The survey questions asked what education and training programs already exist at each organisation and how these resources could be integrated into, or adapted to be part of a WA state-wide research education and training platform.

An additional survey was conducted across RETProgram course participants to ascertain which future courses/modules should be developed. The WA Department of Health have been asked to consider the top 5 and suggest which two topics resonate best with their needs.

The substantial re-write and upgrade of Good Clinical Practice (GCP) has been finalised, titled "GCP in Australia". The new course was launched on Thursday 3 September 2020. 83 new enrolments had been received since the launch.

The new module titled Health Economics: Cost Effectiveness for Clinical Trials has been finalised. Anticipated release date in late September 2020.

The second module related to the bespoke modules created for the Telethon Kids Institute focusing on Paediatric Aboriginal Lung Health – Asthma Diagnosis and Spirometry is close to finalisation, with an anticipated release date in late September 2020.

- *Consumer and Community Involvement Program (CCIP)*

Virtual Morning Tea Launch of CCIP program name and website update has been held with members and stakeholders to celebrate and acknowledge the work done over the past years with consumer and community involvement in research.

COVID-19 Consent Survey Report Virtual Session was held in July to present the results of the Consent Survey conducted by the CCIP program.

Following a review of CCIP program Training sessions, the team have begun new online training sessions for consumers and researchers. Work on an e-Module is also underway.

A WA Department of Health Funding Proposal is being prepared to seek future funding of the CCI Program Hub services (as opposed to CCI Coordinators) to build CCI capacity with the WA state-wide research sector and provide CCI support to the FHRI Fund Strategy.

Deb Langridge has been invited by DoH Research Development Unit (now known as Research and Innovation Office) to join the WA Mental Health Research Strategy Advisory Group. The CCI Program team will be supporting the development of the first WA Research Strategy for Mental Health.

Support is being sought for business development and marketing assistance to finalise the development of a user-pay model for CCI services supplied to those organisations that do not have a Partner Agreement with the CCI Program.

Growing CCI opportunities with WA Health Service Providers has been occurring with SMHS and EMHS over the past month. A pilot CCI Needs Assessment process is being planned with SMHS Executive Paul Fordham and Head of Research Merrilee Needham to scope current activity of consumer involvement across the health service, together with developing a plan for future CCI options in research.

EMHS have appointed Deb Langridge to the Command Centre Research Steering Committee to collaborate on Royal Perth Hospital's HIVE Project. This project plans to incorporate consumer and community involvement in the governance and delivery of this future model of health service delivery. A proposal to work with EMHS more broadly on pilot consent process for patients and consumers in research, beginning at RPH, is scheduled for discussion.

- *Australian National Phenome Centre (ANPC)*

The ANPC is expecting to receive samples from key collaborators within the International Phenome Centre Network. This will represent the best collection of COVID-19 samples in the world.

The ANPC has published its two COVID-19 related papers with more to follow.

10. Executive Director's Quarterly Report

- *Science on the Swan*

The Science on the Swan Organising Committee is in the process of reconvening. It has been agreed that the 2021 conference will continue with the original theme as planned, with the addition of a COVID-19 focus during one day of the conference.

11. Other Business

Nil raised.

12. Next meeting of the WAHTN Executive Board

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