

Abridged WAHTN Executive Board Minutes for WAHTN Website Meeting No. 05/2020 held on Wednesday 23 November 2020, 8.00am - 9:30am

Attendees:

- *Mr Malcolm McCusker AC CVO QC, Chair
 - Ms Pip Brennan, Consumer Advocate
 - Dr Darren Gibson, 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:

- Mr Paul Forden, Chief Executive, South Metropolitan Health Service
 - *Dr Debbie Turner, Chief Operating Officer, WAHTN
- (All save those marked with asterisk attended by Zoom)

Apologies

Dr James Williamson and Professor Neale Fong.

1. Welcome

The Chair welcomed members to the final meeting of 2020.

Due to his role as Chief Executive of the South Metropolitan Health Service, Mr Paul Forden was invited to attend the meeting as an observer, representing the Area Health Services.

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

None declared.

3. Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Board 23 September 2020

It was RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the WAHTN Executive Board held on 23 September 2020 were a true and correct record of that meeting.

4. Minutes of the Meeting of the Management Committee

The Minutes of the Management Committee meeting held on 6 October 2020 were noted.

5. Strategic Plan

The WAHTN Strategic Plan 2021 – 2025 was endorsed by Board members, noting that an Operational Plan will be developed outlining key performance metrics and objectives that allows flexibility. Once drafted, the Operational Plan will be tabled for Board members consideration at the next meeting of the Executive Board.

ACTION ITEM: The WAHTN Operational Plan will be developed and provided to Board Members for consideration.

6. Governance and Operations

6.1 *Proposed Governance Structure*

The proposed WAHTN Governance Structure was not finalised in time for tabling at the meeting of the Executive Board. It will be circulated out of session, for consideration.

ACTION ITEM: The proposed WAHTN Governance Structure will be circulated out of session, for consideration.

6.2 *Investing in Western Australia's Research Future*

Meetings have been held with Minister Roger Cook, Dr David Russell-Weisz and Dr James Williamson at which the proposal; *Investing in Western Australia's Research Future* and a proposed budget was submitted and discussed.

Malcolm McCusker and Professor Geelhoed met Minister Cook on 22 October 2020. They pointed out that WAHTN was established on the clear understanding that the Department of Health would support it, and that without a firm commitment that funds would be provided to meet budgeted expenses for at least the next 3 years it would be difficult to provide certainty for staff, or to attract a suitable successor to the present Chairman, on his retirement after 5 years in office. The Minister expressed full support for WAHTN and said he would try to provide some assurance before WAHTN's November Board meeting. Whilst the Minister and WA Department of Health have expressed their support of WAHTN, there has been as yet no firm ongoing increased funding commitment.

Professor Gary Geelhoed informed the Board that the WAHTN does not have sufficient funds to support the core business of WAHTN.

The Chair said that WAHTN requires funding certainty reasonably soon if it is to move forward. Following conversations with the WA Department of Health, it is understood that if WAHTN Partner Organisations were to commit to providing additional funding for the core operations of WAHTN, the WA Department of Health would potentially have capacity to match that amount.

Discussion ensued amongst the Board members and is summarised as follows:

- Two of the WAHTN Enabling Platforms require an injection of funds to continue. Professor Gary Geelhoed informed Board members that whilst the RETProgram and CCIPProgram are of great benefit to the State and researchers, they are both costly to operate.

The CCIPProgram has been generously supported by Lotterywest for the last 4 years, however that funding has now ceased, and while the program now receives 50% of its funding from Partner Agreements, if the CCIPProgram is not successful in securing additional funding, it will be forced to early in the New Year. He stated that CCI is now important and in some cases mandatory for medical research and the CCIPProgram which has operated for over twenty years is seen as an exemplar is Australia.

Professor Eeva Leinonen suggested that there could be an opportunity for the RETProgram to be included as a broader platform within Open Universities Australia - FutureLearn Platform to generate additional income. WAHTN will explore this further.

- Professor Shirley Bowen noted that she felt it would be unlikely that the Private Hospital sector would contribute additional resources to WAHTN without input/security from the State Government.

Professor Eeva Leinonen remarked that she and fellow Vice Chancellors are supportive of the WAHTN and will likely continue to provide financial support. Professor Leinonen will discuss this at the next meeting of the Vice Chancellors.

Mr Paul Forden commented that it would be difficult to request an increase of funding from the Area Health Services, given the current environment. However, he suggested that WAHTN could consider reducing the WAHTN cost base through a commercial approach via fee for service opportunities.

ACTION ITEMS: WAHTN will explore cost cutting measures and seek a commitment from the WA Department of Health and/or the State Government of what amount they are prepared to fund, and over what period. WAHTN will then approach the Partner Organisations to confirm their contributions.

6.3 *Joint Venture Agreement, Centre Agent Services Agreement*

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

Agreement has not yet been reached between the Department of Health and UWA on a few clauses, one being the 'risk cover' clause, for which the WA Department of Health is awaiting confirmation from its insurers.

ACTION ITEM: The Executive Director will follow up with the WA Department of Health and UWA with regard to the outstanding clauses. If agreement is not obtained through this method, a meeting between the relevant Legal Counsel at the WA Department of Health and the University of Western Australia will be scheduled, to finalise the Agreement.

6.4 *WAHTN positions – Chair and Executive Director*

The Chair confirmed that he will remain as Chair of the WAHTN Executive Board *pro tem* and step down from the position, once the Agreement is finalised, and future funding arrangements for WAHTN are confirmed.

Professor Gary Geelhoed informed Board members that pending resolution of the uncertainty around future funding for WAHTN, he is prepared to remain in the role as Executive Director for a reasonable time beyond his current contract term (due to conclude April 2021).

6.4 *WAHTN: The First Five Years*

The *WAHTN: The First Five Years* document has been printed in a promotional manner and circulated to the WA Minister for Health, Government bodies, WAHTN Partner Organisations, funders and other key organisations.

7. **Australian Health Research Alliance (AHRA) and Medical Health Research Future Fund (MRFF)**

A detailed update on AHRA and MRFF was attached to the Agenda for Board members' information. Key information is summarised as follows:

- National Wounds Initiative
Cost of Wound Care Burden: a survey of wounds in hospitals, aged care homes and general practice in WA and Queensland is currently underway with the project scheduled to be delivered by June 2021.

- **National Consumer and Community Involvement Initiative**
The first draft of the CCI Handbook has been completed including the graphic design. The testing will involve four workshops, one for consumers, one for researchers, one for organisations and the fourth with Telethon Kids Institute.
- Discussions are ongoing with regards to a WA Department of Health initiated revision of linked data and the establishment of a Linked Data Committee. WAHTN is establishing whether such a committee will cover the wider Data issues or not. If not WAHTN will form a committee to interact with the AHRA Data group.
- The Women's Health Research Translation and Impact Network (WHRTN) has met to discuss distribution of funding received. Board members will be advised of the outcomes as the Network progresses.
- MRFF applications are expected to open early 2021 for commencement on 1 July 2021. A Strategic Planning sub-group will be established to ascertain how the funding should be invested to ensure WAHTN adds value across the State.

8. Financial Reports

The WAHTN Financial Report was circulated. Expenditure is within budget. However, as discussed within Agenda Item 6.2, the WAHTN does not have sufficient Partnership funds to cover the small FTE of the core office.

9. Enabling Platforms

In addition to the attachments tabled, the following items were discussed in further detail:

- *Research Education and Training Program (RETProgram)*

The RETProgram Steering Committee will be reshaped into a broader State-wide Education and Training Platform Steering Committee. Membership will be reviewed as the Steering Committee progresses. RETProgram will be dealt with under a standing Agenda item of the State-wide Education and Training Platform Steering Committee.

The independent external review of the RETProgram is well underway. The ARTD Consultants team have completed key stakeholder interviews and will shortly distribute a survey as per the contract milestones. A draft report will be provided by the close of December 2020, with the final report to be received in February 2021.

- *Clinical Trials and Data Management Centre (CTDMC)*

The CTDMC assists projects at many levels. CTDMC are currently using the Research Electronic Data Capture (REDCap) platform to develop databases for clinical research. An extensive list of projects that CTDMC has funded and/or had significant input in was included within the Agenda for Board members information. If these grants are successful, they will generate funding for the CTDMC to either coordinate the aspects associated with the clinical trial/s or provide data management services for the project.

Board members remarked that the CTDMC report showed how CTDMC was having significant impact of research translation across the health and medical sector.

10. Executive Director's Quarterly Report

The Executive Director's Quarterly Report was spoken to by Professor Gary Geelhoed utilising the attachment tabled. The following item was discussed in further detail:

- *Future Health Research and Innovation Fund (FHRIF)*

The Minister for Health and Director General of the WA Department of Health have informed WAHTN that WAHTN is complimentary to the newly created Future Health Research and Innovation Fund. Gary Geelhoed hopes to have an opportunity in the near future to meet with the Chair of the FHRIF and highlight the important role of WAHTN.

- *WAHTN Distinguished Professor Series*

Professor Paul Glasziou spoke as part of the WAHTN Distinguished Professor Series on Tuesday 1 December 2020, 10am to 11am. As a Professor of Evidence-Based Practice at Bond University and the Director of the Institute for Evidence Based Healthcare, Professor Glasziou's presentation will focus on "how can we reduce the waste in health care research?"

- *Science on the Swan*

Science on the Swan 2021 is scheduled for 16 – 18 May. The SOTS Organising Committee met on 27 October and 17 November 2020 and discussed the format options for the 2021 conference. The program is expected to focus on showcasing top WA health research, particularly in the hospital clinical setting.

The 2021 SOTS conference will likely be a 3 day program, with 1 day focusing on COVID-19.