

Abridged WAHTN Executive Board Minutes for the WAHTN Website Meeting No. 02/2021 held on Wednesday 14 April 2021, 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 Peter Leedman AO, representing the Medical Research Institute members

*Professor David Morrison, representing the member Universities

*Mr Paul Forden, representing the WA Area Health Services

*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 Terry Bayliss, Manager of Research for Hollywood Private Hospital, incumbent Private Hospital sector representative

Prof Bill Morgan, Managing Director for the Lions Eye Institute, incumbent Medical Research Institute sector representative

Dr Debbie Turner, Chief Operating Officer, WAHTN

(Those marked with asterisk attended by Zoom)

Apologies

Professor Shirley Bowen and Professor Eeva Leinonen.

1. Welcome

The Chair welcomed members to the second meeting of 2021, and in particular, incumbent sector representatives; Dr Terry Bayliss, representing the Private Hospital sector; and Professor Bill Morgan, representing the Medical Research Institute sector.

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

None declared.

3. Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Board 8 February 2021

It was RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the WAHTN Executive Board held on 8 February 2021 were a true and correct record of that meeting, other than one comment raised by Dr James Williamson referring to the *Joint Venture Agreement, Centre Agent Services Agreement* (6.5 Governance and Operations).

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

The update attached to the Agenda with regards to the WAHTN National Projects for the AHRA National System Level Initiative (NSLI) Activities was noted by Board members. Additionally, the following AHRA and MRFF activities were discussed:

Professor Gary Geelhoed updated Board members on the recently held AHRA Face to Face meeting (29 – 30 March 2021, Adelaide). In light of recent changes to MRFF funding, the discussion at the meeting was mainly focused on re-visiting AHRA's role, strategy, focus and values.

Several NSLIs are progressing well in line with the current funding timelines and milestones. Some NSLIs will be well placed to apply for funding of their own to continue post the cessation of their current funding, including the two WA initiatives of Consumer and Community Involvement and Wound care.

Professor Geelhoed advised Board members that a meeting is scheduled with Professor Anne Kelso, Chief Executive Officer, National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) and AHRA Translation Centre Directors to discuss future funding opportunities for AHRA. He will update the Board Members after the meeting has taken place.

WAHTN, in collaboration with its Partners, has submitted a Registration of Interest for consideration of funding for one of 10-15 initial data infrastructure nodes across Australia through the Australian Research Data Commons (ARDC). This is as a significant step to enable systematic data sharing for a considerable set of health research data outputs. \$3M in total is available for the initial investment across the successful nodes.

The ARDC is partnering with the health research community to build a distributed national data asset from the outputs of health studies. National data assets increase the value of data collected by health studies by creating consistent meta-data, enabling deeper insights into our health and powering new research. The Health Studies Australian National Data Asset (HeSANDA) initiative aims to support health data sharing and secondary use of data in a way that brings value to the research community; increases the impact of research; maximises the investment in health research; and provides health, economic and social benefits to Australia's population. The initial focus of HeSANDA is the establishment of a national infrastructure and standards for data from investigator-initiated clinical trials. A WA-based HeSANDA infrastructure node would be of benefit (and available) to all research organisation across the State.

Professor Geelhoed noted the Registration of Interest has been submitted through Curtin University as lead organisation because of the affiliation with the WAHTN Clinical Trials and Data Management Centre based at Curtin University. WAHTN is unable to directly submit applications due to being an Unincorporated Joint Venture.

The Australian Health Research Alliance Women's Health Research Translation and Impact Network (WHRTN) is offering 20 one-off 12-month funded grants to facilitate career advancement and development in women in early and mid-career stages of their research careers. This grant round has opened and applications close on 26 April 2021.

In addition, they are also offering a one-off Establishment Grants to each AHRA Centre of up to \$50,000, to establish and/or grow a women's health local collaboration, which is linked to WHRTN. This funding is for two years, and the opportunity is designed to support both newly formed and existing AHRA Centre women's health networks to deliver on WHRTN objectives, strengthen and bolster collaboration, and assist women's career development opportunities in women's health research.

Dr Jacqueline Frayne is leading this initiative on behalf of WAHTN as the WA representative on the WHRTN. Professor Christobel Saunders has been approached to also represent WAHTN on the Steering Committee. Professor Geelhoed will keep Board members informed as the initiative evolves, particularly with regards to the alignment with State and National priorities.

5. Governance and Operations

5.1 Chair and Executive Director Positions

In consultation with WAHTN Executive Board members, the WA Department of Health are progressing the search for a suitable appointee to the position of Chair.

The Chair confirmed that he is happy to remain as Chair of the WAHTN Executive Board until a suitable appointee has been sourced.

The Chair informed Board members that Professor Gary Geelhoed has extended his current contract as WAHTN Executive Director for a further 12 month term.

5.2 *2021 Board Members*

As several Board members have exceeded their appointment term of two years and in line with the WAHTN Executive Board Terms of Reference, the positions will rotate to a representative from another organisation within that particular sector. Letters were sent from the Chair to Professors Bowen, Leedman and Leinonen on 22 March 2021 requesting a sector nominee.

Board members RESOLVED to formally appoint the following as sector representatives on the WAHTN Executive Board:

- Dr Terry Bayliss as the Private Health sector representative.
- Professor Bill Morgan, representing the Medical Research Institute sector.

A response remains outstanding from Professor Leinonen with regards to the University sector nominee, Professor Geelhoed will follow this up directly.

The Chair thanked the departing Board members for their service and contributions to WAHTN and the Executive Board.

5.3 *Partner Membership Nomination*

The Perth Blood Institute (PBI) have requested to join the WAHTN as a Partner Member, and Board members were referred to the letter from PBI attached to the Agenda which outlines their involvement in conducting clinical trials; research focus; and community engagement.

Board members RESOLVED to endorse the Perth Blood Institute as a WAHTN Partner Organisation, acknowledging that:

- PBI will become a signed Partner to the Joint Venture Agreement within the Medical Research Institute sector.
- PBI will be required to pay a financial contribution in accordance with the Joint Venture Agreement.
- WAHTN will seek approval from NHMRC to add a new Partner in accordance with rules defined by NHMRC as an accredited Advanced Health Research Translation Centre (AHRTC).

Action Item: Professor Gary Geelhoed will inform the Perth Blood Institute that the Board members have unanimously agreed to endorse them as a WAHTN Partner Organisation, and as per the rules associated with an accredited AHRTC will seek formal approval from NHMRC to add PBI as a Partner.

5.4 *Revised Executive Board Terms of Reference*

The Executive Board Terms of Reference have been revised to reflect the strategic vision and activities of the WAHTN, and incorporate membership amendments relating to the Area Health Service Provider representation.

Board members RESOLVED to endorse the revised Executive Board Terms of Reference.

Additionally, Board members discussed the newly-formed state branch of the Association of Australian Medical Research Institutes (AAMRI WA) as all six WAHTN Partner Organisations within the

Medical Research Institute sector are members of AAMRI WA. Professor Gary Geelhoed noted that he has a meeting scheduled with the Manager of AAMRI WA in May 2021 to discuss AAMRI WA's plans and areas of focus.

Professors Morgan and Leedman both remarked that the synergies between AAMRI WA and WAHTN are well aligned and the relationship is an important avenue to pursue.

5.5 *Joint Venture Agreement (JVA), Centre Agent Services Agreement*

Board members discussed the current outstanding issues related to the JVA. Whilst the majority of proposed changes are acceptable, there remains one particular clause relating to risk clause (15.2 c) that the WA Department of Health have requested be removed, which the WAHTN Centre Agent, the University of Western Australia, have advised it should remain.

Dr James Williamson informed Board members that the current iteration of the JVA contains the consolidated responses from the WA Department of Health and all five Health Service Providers (HSPs) that are Partners to the Agreement. He noted that at the recently held Health Executive Committee Meeting (WA Department of Health) individual HSPs agreed to appoint one HSP Chief Executive to represent all HSP Chief Executives. Ms Liz MacLeod (East Metropolitan Health Service) was selected to undertake this task and progress resolution of the outstanding issues.

Given the Agreement has been underway for some time, Board members decided that a meeting will be arranged between the relevant Legal Counsel at the WA Department of Health and the University of Western Australia to progress to finalisation.

Once finalised, a final draft will be executed to individual Partner members for signing.

Action Item: The Chair and Executive Director will follow up with the WA Department of Health and the University of Western Australia with regard to the outstanding clauses. A meeting will be arranged 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. Financial Reports

The WAHTN Financial Report was circulated. Expenditure is within budget.

Dr James Williamson queried the remaining balance of the COVID-19 Research Collaboration, and Professor Gary Geelhoed confirmed that two research grants were unable to progress due primarily to the lack of COVID-19 patients. As it is unlikely WA will see a large numbers of COVID-19 cases, the WAHTN has sought approval from the WA Department of Health to repurpose the remaining funds.

7. Enabling Platforms

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

7.1 *Consumer and Community Involvement Program (CCIProgram)*

Conversations are ongoing to align long-term CCIProgram funds with the renewal of the WA Department of Health's contract with Health Consumers Council WA (HCCWA). The contract is expected to cover the period of 1 January 2022 – 31 December 2026.

7.2 *Research Education and Training Program (RETProgram)*

The following courses are currently under development:

- Good Clinical Practice (GCP) Refresher

- Consumer and Community Involvement
- Navigating WA Data Linkage
- Biostatistics Repository
- REDCap Training for Designing Clinical and Translational Research Databases

The RETProgram Steering Committee has morphed into a State-wide Research and Education Platform which includes broad representation across key Partners. The Committee will develop a business case to secure funding for the platform from the WA Department of Health.

The basis of the platform will likely be a web based online portal, coordinated across the State. Further information will be provided as this platform progresses.

The Independent Review and Evaluation of the RETProgram has been completed, with the Final Report received from ARTD Consultants and attached to the Agenda for information.

The report is positive towards the benefits of the RETProgram and its value to the WA health and medical research community. Dr James Williamson noted that the Department are keen to support the fundamentals of undertaking research, in particular research governance training.

8. Executive Director's Quarterly Report

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

- *Science on the Swan 2021*

Registrations have opened for the 2021 Science on the Swan 2021. Our theme for the 2021 conference is *Embedding Research and Innovation in Health Care with COVID-19 Insights*. The Conference has been promoted widely across the WAHTN Partner network.

- *Ethics and Governance*

Professor Gary Geelhoed discussed the Brisbane Diamantina Health Partners (BDHP) Research passport agreement which standardises and streamlines the process of low risk research and audits within Brisbane which is planned to be extended across Queensland. As this process currently remains more fractured in Western Australia, he suggested that a similar approach may be useful here, with WAHTN playing a role in facilitating this if the Board considered this a worthwhile avenue for WAHTN to pursue.

Dr James Williamson agreed that this could be beneficial and noted that there are currently a number of projects occurring at the WA Department of Health with regards to research governance and ethics that WAHTN would be well placed to assist with.

- *Team WA Lobbying*

Professor Gary Geelhoed raised with Board members that there is concern WA researchers are missing out on NHMRC/MRFF funding and invited suggestions for how to improve this situation, such as increased representation in Canberra to hear early of upcoming opportunities and provide strong advocacy for Team WA.

Board members agreed that this is important. Dr James Williamson informed members that he will be attending a WA Future Health Research & Innovation Fund Advisory Council strategic planning meeting in the coming days which aims to establish how WA can foster research and source better returns on investment. Dr Williamson will inform the meeting that WAHTN are available to assist where necessary throughout the process, and he will update the Executive Board members as further details become available.

- *WAHTN Management Committee*

Professor Gary Geelhoed advised that at the most recent meeting of the WAHTN Management Committee held on 6 April 2021, it was agreed that rather than six meetings per year consisting of representatives from all 20 Partner Organisations, it would be more beneficial and streamlined to create a smaller dynamic sub-group to manage and set priorities.