

Abridged WAHTN Executive Board Minutes for the WAHTN Website Meeting No. 03/2021 held on Wednesday 21 July 2021, 8.00am - 9:30am

Attendees:

Mr Malcolm McCusker AC CVO QC, Chair

*Dr Terry Bayliss, representing the Private Hospital sector

Ms Pip Brennan, Consumer Advocate

Dr James Williamson, representing the WA Department of Health

Professor Bill Morgan, representing the Medical Research Institute sector

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 Debbie Turner, Chief Operating Officer, WAHTN

(Those marked with asterisk attended by Zoom)

Apologies

Professor Eeva Leinonen.

Management Committee

The Minutes of the Management Committee meeting held on 6 April 2021 were noted.

Professor Geelhoed advised Board members that the larger Management Committee made up of representatives from the 20 Partner Organisations of WAHTN would meet 3 times a year, in a Partnership Forum, to share information while a smaller sub-committee, meeting monthly, has been formed to set priorities and make recommendations to the Executive Board for decisions.

Management Committee members were asked to self-nominate for the subcommittee and as such, the sub committee was formed and met on 14 July 2021.

Governance and Operations

Chair and Executive Director Positions

Succession planning for the WAHTN Chair will be discussed *in camera* at the conclusion of the Board meeting.

The Chair informed Board members that Professor Gary Geelhoed's current contract as WAHTN Executive Director is due to conclude in April 2022.

2021 Board Members

The appointment of a University sector representative on the WAHTN Executive Board was an outstanding action item from the previous meeting. Professor Eeva Leinonen discussed the University sector appointment with her Vice Chancellor colleagues, as such Professor Harlene Hayne, Vice Chancellor at Curtin University was nominated as the preferred representative and subsequently accepted the nomination.

Board members RESOLVED to formally appoint Professor Harlene Hayne as the University sector representative on the WAHTN Executive Board.

Category Definition of WAHTN's Partner and Associate Membership and Fee Structure

At the previous meeting of the Executive Board, the Perth Blood Institute (PBI) were endorsed to join the WAHTN as a Partner Member. Since that meeting, the PBI Board have met to discuss the proposed annual contribution amount.

Additionally, Professor Geelhoed has met with SilverChain and Perth Radiology Clinic to ascertain their interest in joining WAHTN as a Partner Member. We are waiting further advice from both of these organisations.

Professor Geelhoed raised the need to have a formalised fee structure for WAHTN Partners and Associate Members. Discussion ensued amongst the members about options, and as such, Board members resolved that WAHTN will draft a briefing paper, which will outline all options associated with the fee structure, for tabling at the next meeting of the Executive Board.

WAHTN will ascertain fee structure information from the nine other Translation Centres across Australia, which will be included in the briefing paper for consideration.

Mr Paul Forden advised he would be happy to assist WAHTN with this process, the Chairman thanked him for this offer.

Throughout the discussion, Board members noted that in 2022, WAHTN will be required to apply for re-accreditation as an Advanced Health Research Translation Centre with NHMRC, and as such, we need to ensure that WAHTN has a clear understanding and focus on the research needs of the Area Health Services.

In light of this, it was suggested that WAHTN will schedule a workshop, inviting PathWest and all Area Health Services Executive Directors and Research Directors, to inform them of key activities being undertaken by WAHTN and outlining areas in which further involvement from this sector could be achieved. Additionally, it is an opportunity to find out what their needs and barriers are to see where WAHTN can possibly assist.

Joint Venture Agreement, Centre Agent Services Agreement

The Chair and Executive Director met with the WA Department of Health Legal Counsel to discuss the outstanding clauses. Consensus was agreed. The University of Western Australia Legal Counsel, Ms Kirsten Young will finalise the Joint Venture Agreement, and following that process, the Agreement will be circulated to the WAHTN Partner Organisations for signing and execution.

Professor Geelhoed noted that we may experience additional days due to the availability of Ms Young, and in light of this, the Chair advised that he would contact Ms Young directly to request that the process be expedited.

Science on the Swan 2022

The 2021 Science on the Swan's conference held 16 – 18 May 2021 was successful and well received. This year's conference focussed on hospital research.

Discussions have commenced with regards to the 2022 conference, which may highlight the Western Australian innovation sector. Professor Geelhoed noted that he has discussed the 2022 conference with Life Science WA and Dr Samantha South (Research Commercialisation at the University of Western Australia). The annual Ausbiotech conference will be held in Perth in 2022 (the first time in more than 15 years), which would be the perfect opportunity to show WA's capabilities and strengths.

Financial Reports

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

Professor Bill Morgan 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.

Board members discussed a number of options, which might be acceptable to the WA Department of Health, these included strategic projects related to state-wide biobanking, and projects related to the after effects of COVID-19 lockdowns. WAHTN will discuss the viability of future projects with the Department and will inform the Board accordingly. Project proposals produced for the COVID-19 Research Collaboration repurposed funds will be tabled for consideration by the WAHTN Executive Board.

Enabling Platforms

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

Consumer and Community Involvement Program (CCIProgram)

Conversations are progressing to align long-term CCIProgram funds with the renewal of the WA Department of Health's contract with Health Consumers Council WA (HCCWA). Funding has been provided to the CCIProgram as an interim measure (1 July – 31 December 2021) by the WA Department of Health. However, discussions are ongoing with the Department to ensure the CCIProgram will continue to be funded in 2022 whilst the HCCWA contract is being finalised.

The launch of the course titled '*Introduction to CCI in Health Research*' is imminent. Developed in collaboration with the WAHTN RETProgram and funded through an MRFF grant, the online training course will be made freely available to all and will be distributed widely across the State and at a national level.

Research Education and Training Program (RETProgram)

The newly developed [GCP Refresher](#) course was launched in May 2021. The abridged course, consisting of three sections will take participants approximately 90 minutes to complete, based on the assumption of prior GCP knowledge.

The following courses are currently under development:

- The development of the Navigating WA Data Linkage course has commenced, in partnership with the WA Department of Health's Data Linkage Client Services team. The course learning objectives and course structure have been developed.
- The RETProgram is in the process of creating a repository of vetted and approved biostatistic training courses and relevant information to be included on a dedicated section of the RETProgram website, utilising the expertise of the Biostatistician Advisory Group through the WAHTN Clinical Trials and Data Management Centre.

Clinical Trials and Data Management Centre (CTDMC)

The scheduling of a Clinical Trials Workshop is underway, in collaboration with the WA Department of Health and CTDMC.

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:

WAHTN has chaired the AHRA Council for a 12 month term (1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021). The Chair role rotated to another AHRA Translation Centre, Sydney Health Partners on 1 July 2021, they will lead and develop the activities of AHRA over the next 12 months.

WAHTN has been awarded an Establishment Grant totalling \$50,000 from the Australian Health Research Alliance Women's Health Research Translation and Impact Network (WHRTN) for a collaborative to promote women research and women's health research.

Additionally, three Western Australian women have won AHRA Early and Mid-Career Awards for projects relating to the burden of frailty in older women, acceptance of radiotherapy in breast cancer treatment, and harms of infant removal from Aboriginal women.

Indigenous Research(er) Capacity Building Initiative is progressing its three priorities, namely to: Progress and strengthen a robust indigenous researcher network; Invest and develop the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce; and Enhance Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research(er) capabilities. Registrations are open for the second annual AHRA IRNet National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research Showcase, to be hosted on 23 – 24 November by the University of Sydney and Sydney Health Partners. The showcase will bring together Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health researchers across all career stages to present their research, reflect and discuss today's most critical health challenges and solutions. All AHRA Translation Centres have provided financial support to the Showcase.

The NHMRC submission relating to a National Network for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Researchers, was successful and resulted in a total of \$10million over 5 years to be shared across the 5 contributing organisations. Associate Professor McAullay and Professor Sandra Eades are leading the Western Australian component, which is being aligned with AHRA counterparts. A link to this initiative can be found here: <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/news-centre/nhmrc-national-network-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-health-researchers>

As part of the National Consumer and Community Involvement initiative, the CCI Handbook has been completed and is currently undergoing final external graphic design and content edits.

WAHTN is in discussion with Minister Hunt's office about him launching the Handbook later this year. A small soft launch is being planned with Minister Roger Cook involving only the Board members, WAHTN Partners and a small number of key stakeholders. This will enable the WAHTN Partners to understand and be familiar with the Handbook before it is made public.

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:

- Australian Research Data Commons (ARDC)
The WAHTN coordinated several of our Partner Organisations to submit an application for the Australian Research Data Commons (ARDC) Health Studies Australian National Data Asset (HeSANDA) program. The application was successful and WAHTN will now establish a WAHTN Health Data Node, embedded within the Clinical Trials and Data Management Centre at Curtin University run by Professor Chris Reid. WAHTN are currently awaiting further details, which will be circulated to the Board members once received.

- **Animal Resources Centre (ARC) Closure**

The ARC, located on the Murdoch University campus, announced on 2 July 2021 their decision to close the facility. Reasons stated were that they are unable to operate in a financially self-sustaining manner, as required by legislation and Murdoch University will not renew their lease after 2023. The facility will wind up their operations within the next 12-18 months. No specific date of closure has been announced at this time. This decision will have a serious impact on medical research undertaken within WA and across the Australasian region, as well as other consequences. The decision has attracted national and international attention.

The WA Chief Scientist, Professor Peter Klinken AC is arranging a meeting of all key stakeholders to discuss the concerns surrounding the closure. Professor Geelhoed will keep Board members updated as discussions around the closure of the ARC progress.

Promotion of Clinician Researchers

Professor Geelhoed provided a brief background on this proposed activity; the clinician researcher cohort in Australia will not be sufficient to underpin the innovation required to support Australia's future health needs. Although 63% of Australian medical graduates are interested in research, the number of medically qualified researchers appears to be in decline in Australia. Between 2013 and 2017 medical practitioner researchers dropped by 3.9% when they should have increased to meet the increased demand for MRFF disbursements.

Professor Geelhoed referred to the model implemented by the Melbourne Academic Centre for Health (MACH), who have redeployed existing resources to establish the MACH Track, which "commits to trainees who have a commitment from their specialty." Successful trainees must have won a place in an accredited vocational training program (advanced training for physicians).

WAHTN could consider implementing a similar model in Western Australia. Professor Geelhoed advised the Board members that he has spoken to the Postgraduate Medical Council of WA and they were supportive of the initiative.

Board members agreed that it is crucial that Colleges are embedded and involved in the clinician pathway. Additionally, members highlighted that the model should define "clinician researchers" to ensure that all are included, such as nursing, allied health etc.

The Board members agreed that they are supportive of the WAHTN pursuing the promotion of clinician researchers model. Professor Geelhoed will update the Board members as the activity progresses.