



Supporting Communities Forum

Role in Western Australia's Recovery

Meeting #1 – Learnings from COVID-19 and Outbreak Planning and Preparedness

Monday 5 October | 4:00 – 5:00pm | MS Teams

This report is a summary of the discussions and is not intended to be a verbatim record. The summary also includes comments and questions from the MS Teams chat room.

Meeting #1 Theme	Learnings from COVID-19 and Outbreak Planning and Preparedness
Date	Monday 5 October 2020
Time	4:00 – 5:00pm
Location	Level 4, Yonga meeting room, Dumas House, 2 Havelock St, West Perth

Supporting Communities Forum Attendees

Co-Chairs

- Ms Michelle Scott, Director, McCusker Centre for Citizenship
- Ms Jodi Cant, Director General, Department of Finance

Deputy Chair

- Ms Kate George, Consultant

Members

- Ms Louise Giolitto, CEO, WA Council of Social Services (WACOSS)
- Ms Tricia Murray, CEO, Wanslea
- Mr Ross Wortham, CEO, Youth Affairs Council WA (YACWA)
- Ms Felicite Black, CEO, Women's Health and Family Services
- Ms Justine Colyer, CEO, Rise Network
- Ms Kelda Oppermann, CEO, Zonta House Refuge Association
- Ms Maria Osman, Multicultural Advisory Group member
- Ms Julie Waylen, State Manager, National Disability Services WA
- Ms Melissa Perry, CEO, Communicare
- Ms Michelle Andrews, Director General, Department of Communities
- Ms Lisa Rodgers, Director General, Department of Education
- Mr Duncan Ord, Director General, Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries
- Ms Rebecca Brown, A/Director General, Department of the Premier and Cabinet
- Ms Jennifer McGrath, A/Commissioner, Mental Health Commission
- Ms Sharyn O'Neill, Commissioner, Public Sector Commission
- Ms Susan Hunt, CEO, Lotterywest

Member Apologies

- Ms Debra Zanella, CEO, Ruah Community Services
- Mr Dan Minchin, CEO, Chorus WA
- Ms Emma Jarvis, CEO, Palmerston
- Ms Kate Chaney, Director, Innovation and Strategy, Anglicare WA
- Dr Adam Tomison, Director General, Department of Justice
- Dr David Russell-Weisz, Director General, Department of Health
- Mr Denver D'Cruz, General Manager, Inclusion Solutions

Invited Guests

- Andrew Sanders, Department of Communities
- Kate Ingham, Department of Finance
- Jodi Holbrook, Department of Local Government, Sports and Cultural Industries
- Tracey Ninyette, Aboriginal Engagement Unit, Department of the Premier and Cabinet

SCF feedback on learnings from COVID-19

- Keeping people with disability engaged and involved is important. The Department of Communities (Communities) Senior Officers Disability Taskforce along with disability sector organisations, advocacy organisations and union representatives are progressing work towards outbreak planning and preparedness.
- The focus of the Disability Taskforce is to continue work to help protect and support people with disability by:
 - Developing workforce readiness and contingency planning;
 - Sharing resources amongst the disability sector; and
 - Establishing links with relevant mainstream agencies such as WA Health.
- Consistency in engagement, information and being able to support the partnership between the community services sector and Government has been very positive.
- Having a point of contact for the Disability Taskforce is important and appreciated, to keep conversations happening, share clear timely information and provide immediate assistance to vulnerable cohorts.
- A diagram on current Taskforces and governance structure with clear responsibilities between WA State, Commonwealth and the Department of Health is important.
- The community services sector continues to engage with the State Welfare Emergency Committee (SWEC) members, sector partners and Government agencies, working to support a number of vulnerable cohorts such as people with disability; the elderly, women, young people, Aboriginal people and communities, and culturally and linguistically (CaLD) diverse communities, amongst others.
- Bringing Taskforces' under the umbrella of the SWEC is important and helpful to inform outbreak planning and preparedness.
- Some groups seem to have been overlooked, for example, seniors and grandparents caring for their grandchildren. A Seniors Taskforce would assist this recognition process.
- Recognition should be given to day-care staff across Australia who kept day-care centres open and cared for children.
- Organisations were under prepared with their Business Continuity Plans and needed guidance on how it should be tailored to suit COVID-19.
- Industrial Relations system is difficult to navigate and unclear.
- Industrial Relations legislations with two separate systems operating in WA, each with different employment laws, awards and minimum conditions, proved to be a barrier to operations of some community service sector organisations. Concerns were raised about employees who cannot work or do not want to come to work because of COVID-19?
- There were a lot of vacant properties identified during the pandemic. Efforts are required to make use of vacant properties more efficiently, as some properties are still empty.
- Members queried availability of personal protective equipment (PPE) and sufficient supplies to meet demand, particularly in the case of a second outbreak.
- Limited messaging and support was noted for children and families with young children.

ACTION 1: SCF secretariat to share feedback from SCF members to the Recovery Implementation Support Unit and COVID-19 Coordination and Community Policy Units in DPC to inform work on social and economic recovery.

Outbreak Planning and Preparedness and Feedback from Forum members

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITIES

- Andrew Sanders, Deputy Emergency Welfare Controller, State Welfare Incident Coordination Centre (SWICC), Department of Communities, delivered a presentation to the Forum on Communities response to COVID-19 outbreak response planning and preparedness. A copy of the presentation is published on the Department of the Premier and Cabinet webpage.
- Communities continues to work on:
 - joint preparedness, planning and resourcing for COVID outbreaks; and
 - responding to concurrent hazards e.g. bushfire, cyclone and flood.
- Planning focusses on welfare needs that arise:
 - ability of people to self-care, or for vulnerable people to seek and receive their usual support.
 - newly effected cohorts
- Links are being made to Victoria to help inform planning, as well as desktop scenario planning exercises to including vulnerable cohorts
- Engagement with the State Welfare Emergency Committee (SWEC) activated on 4th April following emergency management arrangements:
 - State Support Plan –Emergency Welfare
 - State Welfare Coordinator – the Director General, Communities
 - Establishment of SWICC
- Engagement with SWEC members, sector partners and across Department:
 - Service delivery regional and remote, cultural council, District Leadership Groups
 - Australian Red Cross, WACOSS, WALGA, Shelter WA
 - Department of Health, WA Country Health Service, Office of Multicultural Interest, SHICC, WACHS, OMI, ADF, DFES, WA Police, MHC, Lotterywest
- Support areas include: emergency accommodation, food, personal supports, personal requisites, financial assistance, registration.
- During March/April 2020 -immediate welfare support was provided for cruise ships passengers, and Communities coordinated the development of options for the subsequent implementation of the Pandemic Leave Disaster payments and Test Isolation payments.
- Welfare supports coordinated through COVID call centre (13COVID, 2,2), averaging 150 calls (in, out) per day for welfare needs (18,000 since March). Typical cases:
 - anxiety and stress, aged people, those with a disability, those impacted by domestic violence
 - financial stress
 - discharged patients impacted by biosecurity areas
 - impact on non-residents
- Lessons learnt from Victoria:
 - Continuity of services for vulnerable individuals and families is essential (including FDV and Child Protection)
 - Emergency welfare response, co-ordinated across government and the community services sector is required
 - Need to mobilise to respond immediately (preparedness planning and exercises)
 - Communications/Public Information is critical – language, culturally appropriate messaging, numeracy and literacy
- In the last six-months April to September 2020, Communities has:
 - developed a COVID-19 State-wide Integrated Welfare Response Plan;
 - been involved with SHICC in cluster outbreak planning;
 - carried out Pandemic planning for Remote Communities;

- focused on State-wide accommodation and regional PPE planning;
- established the SWICC control centre and development of AIIMS based emergency welfare management framework;
- established an 'exercising' methodology and COVID outbreak action planning and pre-formed outbreak actions plan. For example, remote communities, regional town, metro suburb, public housing blocks; and
- engaged with CALD groups on emergency welfare messaging.
- Communities has developed geospatial information to inform action planning and response. Data is sourced based on:
 - People with disability (NDIS and non-NDIS)
 - Children in care
 - Vulnerable groups in public housing
 - Temporary visa holders
 - Remote Aboriginal communities
- Forum members noted the presentation which led to robust discussion and information sharing.
- Members acknowledged and appreciated the clear, prompt and sharp messaging from Government.
- Members discussed:
 - the importance of Government continuing to share information, faster and more frequently, and in different languages to cater to different cultures and communities.
 - the significant increase in family and domestic violence during the lockdown period, and that attention should be drawn towards how women can be assisted to seek help and safety, and be relocated or alternatively to remove the perpetrator.
 - that learnings from Victoria are really important, for example, women are exempt from curfews.
 - whether there is data on test isolation payments and other payments available? What does the data show for CaLD communities?
 - asylum seekers and international students who suffer the most and the need access to a number of support services especially during the pandemic.
 - the need for targeted communication around public health messaging.
 - the need to invest in ensuring digital connectivity across the State is consistent.
 - their interest to hear more from the SWEC, including more data and information relating to FDV (and intersectionalities) for the sector and individual service responses.
 - the importance of reviewing the innovations that worked and those that did not work during the pandemic. Learn from and fix what did not work.
 - that feedback from Government is welcomed on areas where the community service sector can assist or work towards or respond better to Government.

ACTION 2: Department of Communities presentation on Outbreak Planning and Preparedness to be shared with Forum members and published on the DPC – SCF webpage.

ACTION 3: SCF secretariat to share feedback from SCF members to Communities to inform work on Outbreak Planning and Preparedness.