Supporting Communities Forum

Role in Western Australia's Recovery

Meeting #2 – Digital Inclusion

Monday 12 October | 3:00 – 4:00pm | 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 #2 Theme	Digital Inclusion
Date	Monday 12 October 2020
Time	3:00 – 4:00pm
Location	MS Teams Meeting + option to attend in person at Level 4, Yonga meeting room, Dumas House, 2 Havelock St, West Perth

Supporting Communities Forum Attendees

Co-Chairs

1. Ms Michelle Scott, Director, McCusker Centre for Citizenship
2. Ms Jodi Cant, Director General, Department of Finance

Deputy Chair

3. Ms Kate George, Consultant

Members

4. Ms Tricia Murray, CEO, Wanslea
5. Mr Ross Wortham, CEO, Youth Affairs Council WA (YACWA)
6. Ms Felicite Black, CEO, Women's Health and Family Services
7. Ms Kate Chaney, Director, Innovation and Strategy, Anglicare WA
8. Ms Justine Colyer, CEO, Rise Network
9. Ms Emma Jarvis, CEO, Palmerston
10. Ms Kelda Oppermann, CEO, Zonta House Refuge Association
11. Ms Maria Osman, Multicultural Advisory Group member
12. Ms Julie Waylen, State Manager, National Disability Services WA
13. Ms Melissa Perry, CEO, Communicare
14. Dr Adam Tomison, Director General, Department of Justice
15. Ms Rebecca Brown, A/Director General, Department of the Premier and Cabinet
16. Ms Jennifer McGrath, A/Commissioner, Mental Health Commission
17. Ms Sharyn O'Neill, Commissioner, Public Sector Commission

Member Apologies

1. Ms Lisa Rodgers, Director General, Department of Education
2. Dr David Russell-Weisz, Director General, Department of Health
3. Ms Jennifer McGrath, A/Commissioner, Mental Health Commission
4. Mr Duncan Ord, Director General, Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries
5. Ms Michelle Andrews, Director General, Department of Communities
6. Ms Louise Giolitto, CEO, WA Council of Social Services (WACOSS)
7. Mr Dan Minchin, CEO, Chorus WA
8. Mr Denver D'Cruz, General Manager, Inclusion Solutions
9. Ms Debra Zanella, CEO, Ruah Community Services

Invited Guests/ Presenters/ Observers

- Jonas Peterson, Chief Digital Officer, Office of Digital Government (DGov), DPC
- John Dixon, Director, DGov, DPC
- Ashleigh Pruitt, DGov (Observer)
- Teena Forrest-Benavides, DGov (Observer)
- Nadia VanAswegen, DGov (Observer)
- Samantha Palmer, Department of Communities

Introduction

The WA Government is committed to making sure that our people and communities can confidently and safely enjoy the benefits of digital technologies in their everyday lives.

The draft WA Digital Inclusion Blueprint (the Blueprint) proposes a strategic approach and program of initiatives to support Western Australians and their communities to confidently and safely enjoy the benefits of digital technologies in their everyday lives. Achieving this objective will require action in four key priority areas: connectivity, affordability, skills, and design. The draft Blueprint outlines:

- how digital inclusion benefits Western Australians;
- the WA Government's vision for a digitally-inclusive state;
- the strategic partnership approach to achieve digital inclusion in WA; and
- key priority areas for improving digital inclusion.

On **28 July 2020**, the Minister for Innovation and ICT released the draft Blueprint for public consultation. Following early feedback, the consultation materials were simplified and revised into more accessible versions, with additional support materials developed, including an 'infographic' and 'Consultation Guide for Community Service Organisations'.

As at **22 September 2020**, over 400 responses have been received, comprising feedback on the draft Blueprint and community lived experiences. Due to the high volume of community interest and feedback, the Minister for Innovation and ICT approved an extension to the consultation period to **30 October 2020**. The consultation materials, including an online and print version of the survey, can be accessed at https://www.wa.gov.au/government/have-your-say-digital-inclusion-western-australia.

A coordinated approach is required to improve the trend towards digital inclusion and develop solutions for communities and people across the State. The Blueprint proposes a collaborative approach between the government and community services sectors, industry and communities to make Western Australia more digitally inclusive.

The Supporting Communities Forum (SCF) meeting on 12 October 2020 provides DGov an opportunity to:
- outline the Government's proposed digital inclusion approach;
- obtain SCF feedback on the draft Blueprint; and
- outline how SCF members can use the consultation materials to engage with their clients and networks.

Consultation materials provided to SCF members for feedback included:

- Cover Paper – Status Update on the Blueprint
  - o the Draft Digital Inclusion in WA Blueprint **(Attachment A);**
  - o Community Version of the Blueprint **(Attachment B);**
  - o Digital Inclusion Infographic **(Attachment C)**; and
  - o Community Sector Consultation Guide **(Attachment D)**

SCF feedback on the Draft Digital Inclusion Blueprint

- Members acknowledged and appreciated the importance of Government partnering with the community services sector to make Western Australia (WA) more digitally inclusive.

- DGov is working to leverage from work already happening well in different parts of WA. There is a need to co-design solutions and what will be fit for purpose, working hand-in-hand with the community services sector.

- Research indicates that the most disadvantaged areas across WA have poor internet services – this includes Derby, Halls Creek. Efforts need to be made to improve services in these areas.

- Youth Affairs Council of WA (YACWA) is currently partnering with the Department of Communities and DGov to deliver the Youth Digital Inclusion Project – which has collected hundreds of stories of digital exclusion of young people from across the state. This project is providing mobile phones, tablets and laptops to some of our most vulnerable young people. There is a lot of learnings to come in the next few months which will be made shared widely.

- Data is one of the biggest challenge and it is good to see this well represented in the Blueprint.

- One important learning to be made is on how refurbished devices are re-used through DGov and multiple government agencies to provide free resources to vulnerable young people, and extended to many other demographics of society.

- Partnering with the community services sector to reduce the digital divide is great.

- Consultation with the Multicultural Advisory Group (MAG) is important and will be very useful to take place. A case study on the Culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) communities will be useful to add in the Blueprint and related material.

- CaLD and multicultural communities are a very diverse and important group of the community. The Blueprint will also benefit from having a separate section on CaLD and multicultural communities, and should refer to the Multicultural Policy Framework released in March 2020.

- For good case studies on CaLD communities, consider contacting the Humanitarian Group (now Circle Green Legal Centre) who developed some innovative approaches during COVID-19.

- Connectivity in the regional areas is a real issue that needs to be addressed.

- It is critical to ensure access to digital infrastructure and connectivity, particularly in the regional and remote areas. It is important to note that connectivity is inconsistent in different areas e.g. Kalgoorlie can have good connectivity and Northam can have poor connectivity, though this can change on a daily basis.

- There is a need to take a region by region approach, with the metropolitan area being one region, and not necessarily representing the needs of all of WA.

- It is also important to promote STEM education particularly in the Pilbara region. This needs to be articulated better in the Blueprint.

- Coordination is important between programs and ensuring people are trained and equipped with the right practical skills to access and use technology.

- Specific needs of Aboriginal and CaLD people need to be highlighted in the Blueprint.

- There is a need to make programs more innovative. Try to integrate people from diverse backgrounds/cultures and people who cannot read.

- Responding to COVID-19, Palmerston brought devices and data to connect with clients in remote areas. It is important to ensure we get voices of clients without devices and data as these are the voices that are needed. Unfortunately, online consultation excludes these clients. This needs to be considered, so the community sector can consider how to best consult and provide feedback on important Government initiatives.

- There are many grandparents/ older adults in the rural areas who are carers for young children. There needs to be consideration of feedback from older adults and how to upskill this demographic as well as the youth.

- National Disability Service has provided a submission on the draft Blueprint to help better understand the importance of accessibility and digital inclusion for People with disability and their families.

- English is the second language for many in the community, including people with disability. It is important to make sure WA is more digitally smarter to reflect the diversity of WA.

- Technology for Ageing and Disability WA (TADWA) is a not-for-profit organisation that repurposes devices and pass these devices to people most in need at low cost along with low cost support services. TADWA is doing great work with equipment and assistive technology for people with disability along with a number of other organisations in the disability sector space.

- TADWA are also taking care of all the repurposing work for the Youth Digital Inclusion Project and are doing an excellent job.

- It is useful to look into the Hello Initiative at https://helloinitiative.org.au/., a volunteer-based program.

- It is useful to refer to the August 2020 report by Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre on 'The Early Year – Investing in Our Future'.

- It is important to not miss out on the work already done in this space and to not re-invent the wheel. For example, it important to leverage from work already done on the ServiceWA program.

- The 'Collaboration Report' produced by the previous SCF 2018 – 2019 is a useful resource to refer to. The report includes 32 collaborative exemplar case studies with themes being fairly consistent including the importance of trust between parties and challenges of change management. The report suggests practical tools, strategies and 10 recommendations to support behavioural change and improve collaboration and effectiveness. Learnings from the report can be applied to work to improve connectivity and reduce the digital divide.

- SCF members to be provided information on the 3-hour workshop hosted by WACOSS and DGov on **Friday 16 October 2020** at Dumas House, West Perth. The Workshop aims to discuss the Government's proposed approach for digital inclusion in WA; and to understand what digital inclusion means for the community sector clients and their communities; and how can Government partner with the community services sector to deliver the best outcomes.

ACTION 1: SCF secretariat to share the previous SCF's 'Collaboration Report' with DGov.

ACTION 2: SCF secretariat to email members (after the SCF meeting) information on the 3-hour workshop hosted by WACOSS and DGov scheduled on Friday 16 October 2020.

ACTION 3: SCF secretariat to share feedback from SCF members to DGov to inform finalisation of the draft Blueprint.