



SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES FORUM Meeting #10 - Meeting Notes and Actions

Date	Monday, 11 September 2023
Time	2:30pm – 4:30pm
Location	Dumas House, Level 4 – Yonga Meeting Room and MS Team option
Members	Michelle Scott (Co-Chair), Jodi Cant (Co-Chair), Kate George (Deputy Chair), Louise Giolitto, Dan Minchin, Tricia Murray, Sandy McKiernan, Debra Zanella, Felicite Black, Emma Jarvis, Justine Colyer, Melissa Perry, Denver D'Cruz, Kelda Oppermann, Mike Rowe, Lisa Rodgers, Dr. David Russell-Weisz, Dr. Adam Tomison, Sharyn O'Neill, Ralph Addis, Lanie Chopping, Maureen Lewis, and Emily Roper.
Secretariat	Community Policy Unit - Department of the Premier and Cabinet (DPC) SCF@dpc.wa.gov.au
Invited Guests	Steven Hill (Department of Finance); Sarah Norton and Sarah Charbonneau (DPC); Erin Gauntlett (DLGSC); Nikki Kozulin (Communities), Nicole O'Keefe and Lexie Morton (Department of Health); Julie Armstrong (Minister Winton's office); Nicola Jordan (Minister Ellery's office); and Shea Halsey (Graduate Officer, Department of Finance)
Apologies	Emma Jarvis, Kate George, Dr. Adam Tomison, Dr. David Russell-Weisz, Sharyn O'Neill, Ralph Addis; Lanie Chopping; Gail Beck (Aboriginal Advisory Council of WA)

1. INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

1.1 Acknowledgment of Country and Welcome

Forum Co-Chair Jodi Cant acknowledged the Whadjuk Noongar people, the Traditional Custodians of the land throughout Western Australia, and paid respects to Elders past, present, and emerging.

Forum Co-Chair Jodi Cant welcomed members, guests and noted apologies.

1.2 Next iteration of the Forum

Members noted Government's endorsement to extend the Forum for six-months to 31 December 2023. During this period, the Forum will continue to focus on:

- implementation of the National Principles in Child Safe Organisations work;
- implementation of the State's Commissioning Strategy;
- how NGOs and agencies without statutory reporting obligations under the *Carers Recognition Act 2004* can better identify, and support staff and/or clients who are unpaid carers; and
- Federal policy opportunities (e.g. National Strategy for the Care and Support Economy).

Members also noted Expressions of Interest (EOI) were sought for community services and academic membership for the next iteration of the Forum for 2024-2025 to build on the work of the current Forum. The EOI closed on 31 August 2023 and an independent Evaluation Panel has been convened to assess applications and make recommendations for Government's consideration. Applicants will be notified on the outcome of their application in December 2023, with Government's decision on final appointments published on the wa.gov.au webpage.

Members noted that Minister Winton will attend the meeting on 13 November 2023 and participate in the Target120 agenda item update to be presented by the Department of Communities.

1.3 Confirm the meeting notes and actions from 17 May 2023

Members noted and confirmed the meeting notes from the 17 May 2023 meeting, noting one action arising regarding an update on Target120. The Department of Communities will provide an update on Target120 at the Forum's November meeting which will close this item. The Secretariat will liaise with the Department of Communities' Target120 team when planning the November meeting.

1.4 Conflict of Interest Declaration

No conflicts of interest were noted for this meeting.

2. STRATEGIC POLICY AND REFORM

2.1 Care and Support Economy

Members noted an update from the Department of the Premier and Cabinet on the Draft National Strategy for the Care and Support Economy. The Draft National Strategy was developed by the Care and Support Economy Taskforce. At the April 2023 meeting of National Cabinet, First Ministers noted the Australian Government's development of a National Strategy for the Care and Support Economy. The Australian Government released the Draft National Strategy for public consultation on 28 May 2023. It is currently unknown when the final strategy will be released.

The Draft National Strategy:

- applies across the care and support economy and encompasses major government support programs, with a vision for a sustainable and productive care and support economy that delivers quality care and support with decent jobs; and
- applies across the care and support economy and encompasses major government support programs with a program of work extending to June 2033.

Members noted that National Cabinet has agreed to work together to progress the first tranche of work. This will involve the Care and Support Economy Taskforce presenting options for reform to National Cabinet by the end of 2023. Reform areas of focus will include:

- Streamlining worker screening – reform options to simplify the regulation of workers without compromising quality and safeguards;
- Improve work safety – reform options to improve worker safety in the care and support sector;
- Grow the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander care and support workforce – identify reform options to grow the First Nations care and support workforce.

Members noted key issues identified for WA including:

- understanding the various intersections with work and reviews already underway and their impact to ensure there is cohesiveness across the various work streams;
- reducing duplication of work;
- having flexibility to allow jurisdictions to respond to individual state and territory needs, noting that the expertise of the Forum could assist in informing the articulation of WA's unique context; and
- engaging with all the jurisdictions to develop and agree clear funding frameworks.

Members discussed housing challenges as a barrier to building workforce, the need for a holistic approach and for WA's unique population and geographical context to be represented nationally. Louise Giolitto agreed to provide information of work and intersections on the care and support economy arising from the Department of Social Services' Community Services Advisory Group (CSAG) to the Department of the Premier and Cabinet relevant team for consideration.

Actions:

- **The Forum Secretariat to circulate the Care and Support Economy presentation to Forum members.**

2.2 Carers Recognition Act 2004 – application in WA including compliance reporting and showcasing best practice

The Department of Communities presented on activities as part of administration of the *Carers Recognition Act 2004* (the Act) and assuring compliance of the Western Australian Carers Charter. This included:

- Implementing the 12 recommendations of the review of the Act;
- Improving the Annual Compliance Reporting Process and reporting tool;
- Supporting the Carers Advisory Council in its provision of advice to the Minister for Community Services on issues affecting carers
- Facilitating the Carers Advisory Council's regional Carer Community Conversations events;
- Continuing to ensure best practice is followed, enabling carers voices to be heard, considered and reflected in legislation, policy and strategy;
- Establishing an internal Carer's Network and Community of Practice with Reporting Organisations; and
- Further refining the future Compliance Reporting Tool in consultation with Reporting Organisations.

The Department of Communities has also applied for accreditation as an Accredited Carer Employer, through Carers NSW's Carers and Employers program.

Members noted National Carers Week will be held from 15 - 21 October. The theme will be 'Millions of Reasons to Care'. Members were encouraged to contact the Department of Communities if they wish to be more involved.

Members noted the WA Country Health Service presentation on their initiatives that support unpaid carers, as an example of best practice. Initiatives include promoting visibility of the Western Australian Carers Charter; sharing information about carers in local industries and orientations; improving collaboration across health service providers and with carers, for example by establishing the Carers Corner and Community Café concepts; introducing carer policies and platforms to gather data; and coordinating activities to support National Carers Week and other events to promote carers.

Members discussed the need to:

- improve information sharing across agencies to improve patient experience and quality of care;
- consider capacity individually, and collectively as a Forum, to support Department of Communities' work relating to the Act and Carers Charter.
- acknowledge the economic value of carers;
- improve flexible working arrangements to support carers; and
- build capacity to comply with the Carers Charter, particularly in smaller organisations.

Actions:

- **The Forum Secretariat to circulate the Carers agenda item presentation to Forum members, including information about the carer friendly workplace accreditation.**

2.3 State Commissioning Strategy Implementation

The Department of Finance provided an update on the implementation of the State Commissioning Strategy. In alignment with the State Commissioning Strategy Implementation Plan Priority #1, agencies have completed developing Agency Commissioning Plans. Central agencies have reviewed the Agency Commissioning Plans submitted by agencies and feedback will be provided to agencies by October 2023, with Agency Commissioning Plans to be published in December.

Five-year Agency Commissioning Plans provide a mechanism to clearly communicate with the community services sector and government on how line agencies are driving change at a departmental, program and individual service level.

Agency Commissioning Plans are to be published biennially by commissioning agencies and will outline an agency's upcoming commissioning activities, with a focus on expiring contracts. Agency

Commissioning Plans will act as a key tool to communicate with Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations about upcoming commissioning work).

Members noted that:

- the Delivering Community Services in Partnership Policy is also being updated to enable agencies to procure directly from Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations; and
- the development of further commissioning education, training and guidance material is also progressing, which includes developing additional online modules and tools.

2.4 Closing the Gap Implementation Plan

The Department of the Premier and Cabinet provided an update on Closing the Gap activities, including the development of WA's Closing the Gap Implementation Plan 2023-25. The updated WA Implementation Plan outlines the actions the WA Government will take as it transitions to mature delivery phase of implementation of the National Agreement over the next two years and aligns with the Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy.

Members noted the [Productivity Commission's draft three-yearly Review of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap](#) which was released in July 2023. General findings of the draft report included that:

- there has been slow, uncoordinated and piecemeal progress against the Priority Reform Areas;
- existing accountability mechanisms are not sufficiently independent, lack timely and appropriate consequences for failure, have unclear responsibilities and are not informed by high-quality evaluation; and
- there is a need for improved governance arrangements and careful prioritisation of data development efforts.

Members noted that there is a strong consensus among members of the Partnership Working Group that the negative 'deficit-based' language in the Draft Report needs rebalancing. The Productivity Commission is seeking further feedback on the draft report by 6 October and a WA Government response is being developed.

Members noted the release of [Western Australian Aboriginal Expenditure Review 2022-23](#) which identifies spending on Aboriginal programs and services using data from 23 agencies and provides insights which will help inform investments to generate better outcomes for Aboriginal people. Aboriginal organisations were shown to play a significant role in delivering 70 per cent of existing WA Government initiatives relating to Aboriginal people. This included Aboriginal organisations as the sole providers of \$115.8 million (or 20 per cent of all expenditure) across 46 programs in 2021-22. The WA Government has committed to the AER being an annual process to ensure ongoing, consistent and transparent data collection on Aboriginal expenditure in WA, with work already commencing on the next round of the AER.

Members noted the Coalition of Peaks meeting with WA Cabinet. Members also noted that the recruitment process to appoint the Council of Aboriginal Services WA's (CASWA) CEO is currently underway. Members discussed and agreed consideration is to be given to including a CASWA representative as a member of the next iteration of the Forum.

3 WORKING GROUP REPORT

3.1 Building Capacity and Capability to Implement the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations

The National Principles for Child Safe Organisations Working Group provided an update on the important work progressed by members of the working group to build capacity and capability to implement the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (National Principles).

At the Working Group meeting on 3 August 2023, members were updated on current activities to support organisations implementing the National Principles relating to the:

- Child Safe Organisations Campaign 2023-24 targeting community services sector organisations;

- The development of the slogan '**Every organisation has the responsibility to keep children and young people safe**' as part of consultation on the development of the Child Safe Organisations Campaign. The Communications Strategy for Child Safe Organisations Campaign will outline further detail regarding the campaign and will be circulated to the Working Group out of session.
- Ten case studies showcasing the work of various organisations in implementing the National Principles were finalised and approved for inclusion on the Child Safe Organisations Knowledge Hub.
- The Child Safe Knowledge Hub, is a central location for organisations to access and stay up to date with information and resources. The Knowledge Hub will go live during National Child Protection Week (3-9 September 2023).
- Child Safe Organisations Forum that will take place on 24 October 2023 as part of National Children's Week, focussing on supporting organisations to build their capacity to implement the National Principles. Minister Winton will open the event, and few Forum members and the Co-Chair Michelle Scott will also attend the event. A wide range of community service organisations have been invited to the Forum, with a focus on targeting smaller and medium sized community services sector organisations; and
- Child Safe Project, which is being implemented by the Western Australian Council of Social Service (WACOSS), in partnership with the Department of Communities, to provide support to organisations in a targeted and practical way to aid their progress with the implementation of the National Principles.

The Forum recognised and acknowledged the Working Group and the Department of Communities for the excellent work undertaken to date in supporting the implementation of the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.

4 OTHER BUSINESS

Other business discussed by members included the value of understanding the intersections with commissioning and the authorising environment. Members also welcomed an update on the work of the Family and Domestic Violence Taskforce at the 13 November Forum meeting.

The meeting closed at 4:25pm