

**MINUTES
EMERGENCY RELIEF AGENCIES FORUM**

**EMERGENCY RELIEF FORUM
MINUTES OF MEETING held on the 1st December 2010
(Meeting held City West Lotteries House, West Perth)**

Item 1 Attendance

Present:

Doreen Rossiter	Leeming Hampers
Katherine Morison	ST Vincent De Paul
Bridget Little	CARAD
Loreta Williams	St Vincent de Paul
Johanna Notley	Yanchep Emergency Food
Jan Iwanow	St Patricks Community Support Centre
Bill Cosentino	Creditcare
Katya Cunjak	Centrecare
Jenny Lydon	The Salvation Army Perth
Julie Abela	The Salvation Army
Kira Meadus	Ngaanyatjarra Council
Carley Meyers	WACOSS
Aimee Wynne	FC Hotline of WA
Sharon Patterson	PMH
Camille Line	PMH Student
Uta Conway	FAHCSA
Tewin Siripatanakulkajorn	The Australian Asian Association of WA
Bill Toon	The Big Issue
Evelyn Thompson	ADRA
Halina Szunejko	WA Association of Polish Women

Apologies:

Brian Niedzwieck	St Vincent de Paul
Manelka Perera	GCLC
Joy Smith	The Salvation Army

Chair: Bernie Fisher

Minutes: WACOSS (Carley Meyers)

Item 2 Minutes of the October Forum

Amendments: Centrecare will forward information that should have been in the October minutes re agency services. It was pointed out that the successful Lotterywest ER applicants are listed on their website (which appeared contrary in the last minutes).

Motion: The November minutes be accepted.

Moved: Bill Cosentino **Seconded:** Julie Abela

Minutes Accepted.

Item 3 Business Arising from the Minutes

There was no business arising from the minutes.

Item 4 Agency Information

The Salvation Army – Jenny advised that they had purchased an ‘Add em Up’ Calculator. She will report back to the group at the forum in February as to how the tool is going.

FAHCSIA – Uta gave the group an update re FaHCSIA’s position on current funding and contracts. Uta said they are concerned about underspending. FaHCSIA had distributed a lot of additional funding (Gap Fill, Vulnerable People etc) in response to the GFC. Uta asked agencies to please make sure that they spend their funds this financial year. It doesn’t look good when agencies are saying they need more funding, while at the same time there are underspends.

ER funding next year will most likely go back to pre-GFC figures so agencies will probably get less. It is unlikely the financial counselling positions will be refunded, as the Government believe the GFC has now passed.

Bill suggested that the FC funded agencies (and others) get together now to lobby the Federal Government to maintain this vital funding. Financial Counsellors are unable to cope with the workloads now, so any reduction will be catastrophic and only put more pressure on ER agencies.

Problems being presented to the FCs are now much more complex and the demographic has changed. The most vulnerable in the community are living with the outcomes of the GFC so funding should not be reduced now.

It was suggested that agencies should start thinking about seeking more philanthropic and private sector assistance. Charities cannot be expected to meet all the ER needs indefinitely.

PMH - Sharon pointed out another issue facing overseas students who had babies in hospitals in WA. They are not covered by Medicare and are being asked to pay the full costs, which most can’t meet and are going underground.

CARAD – Bridget said that the same problem is arising with refugees who are not covered by Medicare. Ambulance costs are big issue.

The Big Issue – Bill said that they were looking for partnerships with agencies. Contact Bill for more information if you are interested.

The Financial Counsellors Hotline – Aimee said they are offering ongoing casework for people who meet specific criteria. There are four financial counsellors on the Hotline at any one time. They have been very busy.

WACOSS – Bernie confirmed the ER Conference will be on 17/18 May 2011 at the Riverview Church Burswood and a ‘Save the Date’ flyer would be going out soon. ACOSS is developing a new ER handbook, probably around March and hopefully we can have a WA launch at the conference.

Item 5 Review of Emergency Relief 2010

Achievements in 2010

WACOSS – Bernie thanked the group on behalf of Sue for their feedback throughout the year, which has been invaluable in assisting WACOSS with their policy development and media messages in relation to ER. Bernie said other achievements in 2010 were:

- The changeover of the Power Assist Scheme from Anglicare to St Vincent de Paul, which was a smooth transition and Bernie thanked both agencies.
- Increase in Lotterywest funding.
- The delivery of more free ER training to the sector.
- Having FaHCISA, DCP and Lotterywest representatives attend the ER Forum regularly and keeping the sector up to date.

The Salvation Army – Opening up of the HUGS program and securing funding for a financial counsellor and assistant in the city office.

WA Association of Polish Women – Receiving referrals from the bigger organisations to assist people and other agencies getting to know about their service.

The CWA have been promoting Poland as part of their Community Partner Program. Promotional material about Poland can be obtained by contacting Halina on email kolopolek@iinet.net.au

Lemming Hampers – Doreen said they now have a new permanent home at the All Saint's College in Bulls Creek.

Big Issue – Received funding to expand to regional areas, including Bunbury, Albany, Geraldton, Busselton.

St Vincent de Paul – Have extended their Passages Resource Centre program to the Peel region (drop in centre for young people), in collaboration with Rotary. They have also been able to purchase 400 new swags, secure a number of new properties and have an increased the number of call centre cubicles to meet phone support demand.

St Patricks Community Support Centre – The service is operating to capacity; they have gone over budget. The housing and outreach team have expanded. The Hands-On health clinic is setting up an extension of the program in the Kwinana area.

Review of 2010

It has been a very busy year and it only seems to be getting busier. Most agencies spoke of the large increase in numbers seeking assistance over the year. In Northbridge people seeking assistance sometimes had to queue down the road as the whole reception area of the Salvation Army office was full. St Vincent de Paul have taken on more phone receptionist to cope with the increasing number of assistance requests.

Many agencies have already run out of Christmas hampers, although some of the smaller outlets still have some.

Item 6 Emergency Relief Services – Christmas and New Year

Moratoriums

Alinta 16 Dec 2010 – 4 January 2011

WaterCorp 16 Dec 2010 – 4 January 2011

Waiting on Synergy and Horizon Power moratoriums.

Hampers

The Salvation Army in Northbridge has closed its hamper list. They will however take a small number of walk-ins during December.

Anglicare – Hamper list is closed.

St Patricks' Community Support Centre - Hamper list is open (single persons only).

St Vincent de Paul - Hamper list is open.

Openings/Closures:

Big Issue – Open throughout public holidays

ST Vincent De Paul – Closed 25 Dec – 04 Jan

CARAD - Closed 23 Dec – 11 Jan

St Vincent de Paul - Closed 25 Dec – 04 Jan

Yanchep Emergency Food - Closed 20 Dec – 16 Jan

St Patricks Community Support Centre – Open 365 days per year

Creditcare - Closed 24 Dec – 04 Jan

The Salvation Army Perth - Closed 24 Dec – 04 Jan

FC Hotline of WA - Closed 25 Dec – 04 Jan

The Australian Asian Assoc of WA - Closed 25 Dec – 04 Jan

ADRA - Closed 15 Dec – 11 Jan

WACOSS - Closed 25 Dec – 04 Jan

Item 6 Christmas Morning Tea

Thank you to Jenny Lydon from The Salvation Army Perth and her crew for providing our wonderful Christmas morning tea!

Item 7 Next Forum Meeting

The next ER Forum will take place on 2nd February 2011 at City West Lotteries House, 2 Delhi Street, West Perth.

Chair: TBA

Enquiries: Bernie Fisher at WACOSS 9420 7222 or bernie@wacoss.org.au