

MINUTES

Held on 4th May 2011 at City West Lotteries House, West Perth

Item 1 Attendance

Present:

Bill Cosentino	UCW Creditcare
Doreen Rossiter	Leeming Hampers
Janne Halma	Jacaranda Community Centre Inc
Bill Toon	The Big Issue
Kate Greenway	The Spiers Centre Inc
James Lin	Centrecare (Mirrabooka)
Lucy Reynolds	Lotterywest
Pauline Edwards	Lotterywest
Hamish Dobie	Foodbank
Iris Bennett	JewishCare
Halina Szunejko	WA Association of Polish Women
Jan Iwanew	St Patrick's Community Support
Johanna Notley	Yanchep Emergency Food Relief
Helen Burgess	Communicare
Mirko Amidzic	Fines Enforcement Registry
Annemarie Algefski	Fines Enforcement Registry

Apologies: There were no apologies.

Chair: Bernie Fisher

Minutes: Tamara Kendall (WACOSS)

Item 2 Minutes of the March Forum 2011

Amendments: To the 4th paragraph of Kate Mancini's presentation (Page 2) – as corrected in italics.

Motion: The April minutes be accepted. (Minutes are sent out and also published on WACOSS website).

Moved: Bill Cosentino **Seconded:** Doreen Rossiter

Minutes Accepted.

Item 3 Business Arising from the Minutes

None

Item 4 Presentation by the Fines Enforcement Registry

Miko and Annemarie gave a PowerPoint presentation and provided the following information:

- When a case is with the Fines Enforcement Registry you can apply for extra time to pay during the process at any time.
- Pending court fines – The person or their advocate should contact the court directly regarding these.

- When providing evidence of income and no means to pay, it is helpful to provide photocopies of evidence if possible.
- If an individual has made payments towards a fine, responsibility for the fine is no longer contestable.
- There are other options to clear fines, including work placements and community service.
- Warrants for imprisonment are automatic after a certain point in the process, however numerous contacts are made before reaching that point.
- A person may elect to serve a prison term in order to wipe approximately \$380 per day off court fines.

Questions:

Is there an easy way for people to find out the current balance of their fines?

Yes, you can request the amount over the phone, however further details of orders etc will not be disclosed. If there are any problems please ask to speak to a supervisor at the Fines Enforcement Registry.

Who makes the decision to send in the Bailiffs or make a work order?

Warrants of Execution are automatic at a point in the process under legislation. If the individual has had a previous work order and didn't comply, it may not be offered again. Essential items would not be seized in the event of a Bailiff being instructed.

Do staff at the Fines Enforcement Registry have any power to write off or lower fines?

The Registrar has discretion. This may be used, for example in cases where medical evidence can be produced or where severe mental health issues can be shown. Of course fines are also written off on the production of a death certificate. Infringement fines do not go to warrants of execution and may be written off after 8 years, if the person still has no means to pay.

If an individual becomes bankrupt do they still have to pay?

Yes, even if bankrupt, a payment schedule needs to be made.

When paying debts through Centrelink people are advised that the minimum payment is \$25 – is this right?

If a person only has a surplus of \$5 or \$10 then the minimum \$25 cannot be enforced. It is best, in these circumstances to complete a Statutory Declaration and include proof of income when requesting a lower payment amount. The FER can then accept that amount and then review it again after 12 months.

Evidence of income needs to show all incidentals, for example, expenditure on medications. Often people underestimate their monthly expenses. Also, if someone is struggling to make a payment on one particular month they can call the FER and let them know. That month's amount can be negotiated and the contact with FER will be recorded on the customer's file so no further action is taken.

Do you have staff that can help support people with paperwork?

No, there are no counter staff available. It may be possible to request support from staff at the Magistrates Court.

Do you mention to people that Financial Counsellors may be able to support people and provide information in these matters?

Not currently but if the ER Forum can arrange information to be sent to Miko and/or Annemarie then this can be passed on to relevant staff. (Kate agreed to send these out)

Are lifestyle factors taken into consideration when calculating surplus income?

Yes, but it depends on the discretion of the staff member making the assessment. For example, smoking costs may be considered, however the cost of financing a new \$40,000 car would probably not be reasonable.

There is new legislation to be introduced to ensure fines 'follow' people across State borders. This also means that people with licence suspensions will not be able to register motor vehicles or licences in WA if a suspension was issued in another State, or visa-versa.

People should always update their change of address details with Department of Transport, otherwise they may not receive notices in the mail alerting them to licence suspensions.

License suspensions are lifted if time to pay is given and the person begins making payments on the fine. It is important to advise people that the fine does not have to be paid off before suspension is lifted.

Contact details for the Fines Enforcement Registry - Phone:1300 650 235 or 9235 0235
Postal Address - Fines Enforcement Registry, Department of the Attorney General, GPO Box X2293, PERTH WA 6847.

Item 6 Agency Information

Lotterywest

Lucy advised that the grant round for ER is now officially open. The closing date has changed to the 18th July – please get applications in as soon as possible. No late applications will be accepted. Letters have gone out to agencies.

Leeming Food Hampers and the WA Association of Polish Women noted that they had not yet received letters. Application forms are all online now, and although they look different, they are actually collecting the same information as previous printed applications.

The amount to be allocated is the same as last year's round – nearly \$3.6 million. The new online system should increase efficiency in the future, as documents such as the Certificate of Incorporation can be scanned and kept on the system and electronic signatures are now accepted. Forms can be printed off and sent in by post if required.

Lucy invited people experiencing any difficulties with the system to make contact with Lotterywest. A confirmation letter will be sent out upon receipt of applications.

UCW Creditcare

Bill announced that there is still money available until June through the financial management project for vulnerable people. Sole parents/young families living in the cities of Swan, Stirling, Joondalup, and Wanneroo can be assisted. Contact Tina on 9206 6200 for more information.

JewishCare

Iris is a new Social Worker with the agency. JewishCare is a small NGO providing emergency accommodation for Jewish migrants and other Jewish people seeking short term accommodation. More information is available on their website.

St Patrick's Community Support

Jan said that they are still very busy. A new health clinic is being run two days a week at Medina. For more information contact St Pat's in Fremantle.

Yanchep Emergency Food Relief

Business as usual. Johanna reminded the Forum that their service is unable to support people from outside the Yanchep/Two Rocks area. People ring the local community centre and are passed on to their service.

WA Association of Polish Women

Halina mentioned that the organisation still has approximately \$1000 left to spend by the end of June.

Centrecare

James said that his work is around saving tenancies and private rented accommodation. Help is available with arrears. He takes self-referrals or via other agencies.

Foodbank

Hamish announced that they have large amounts of food in stock at the moment – including rice, pasta and canned fruit. Their school breakfast program is exceeding expectations, with 317 schools supplied last year. Foodbank has already supplied 325 this year and aiming for 370. The Kalgoorlie branch is about four weeks from opening.

The Spiers Centre

Kate said they were very busy and advised of their new website www.thespierscentre.com.au They now have a new Income Management service for people from the Cities of Wanneroo and Joondalup, with incentives for voluntary referrals.

Leeming Food Hampers

Doreen said they are very busy but that their new premises (a shared double garage) was even better than anticipated.

Jacaranda Community Centre

Jane described their service as being 'frantically busy' but trying to utilise a case work model with ER. There are building alterations taking place at the same time. AlintaCare is still going, with another round next week. There has been an increase in requests for support for CALD families on one income.

Other projects include an Indigenous Arts program and they are trying to get the Belmont Men's Shed off the ground. They also work with clients from the courts, juvenile justice and the Department of Housing on an outreach basis.

Communicare

Helen introduced herself as the Senior Manager of Family Services with Communicare, a service which aims to improve outcomes for children and families. Helen mentioned some of the services and projects running at Communicare, including a CALD sports program, providing income management and improvement of parks.

Item 7 Utilities update

Bernie advised that Horizon Power Assist has run out of funds for this financial year.

Item 8 WACOSS ER Update

Bernie reminded everyone that the ER Conference will be taking place on the 17th and 18th May, at Riverview Church in Burswood. Subsidies are still available to assist with registration, travel and accommodation (applications can be made via the WACOSS website).

There will be no ER Forum meeting in June, due to the conference.

The next meeting will be in July and hopefully include a presentation by CARAD and the Migrant Resource Centre.

The next ER Forum will take place on 6th July 2011 at City West Lotteries House, 2 Delhi Street, West Perth.

Chair: Sharon Patterson

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