

**MINUTES
EMERGENCY RELIEF AGENCIES FORUM**

**EMERGENCY RELIEF FORUM
MINUTES OF MEETING held on the 6th April 2011
(Meeting held City West Lotteries House, West Perth)**

Item 1 Attendance

Present:

Joy Smith	The Salvation Army Morley
Jenny Lydon	The Salvation Army Perth
Doreen Rossiter	Leeming Hampers
Karen Wright	St Vincent de Paul
Kate White	St Vincent de Paul
Halina Szunejko	WA Association of Polish Women
Uta Conway	FACHSIA
Bridget Little	CARAD
Pauline Edwards	LotteryWest
Bill Cosentino	UCW Creditcare
Joanna Harper	Anglicare WA
Leanne Foden	Anglicare WA
Johanna Notley	Yanchep Emergency Food
Jan Iwanow	St Pat's Community Support Centre
Loreta Williams	St Vincent de Paul
Bernie Fisher	WACOSS
Sharon Patterson	PMH
Julie Abela	The Salvation Army DHQ
Kate Mancini	Charity Link
Yvonne Mulder	HOPE
Greg Hebble	Foodbank
Hamish Dobie	Foodbank
Aditi Varma	WACOSS

Apologies: There were no apologies.

Chair: Jenny Lydon

Minutes: Tamara Kendall (WACOSS)

Item 2 Minutes of the March Forum 2011

Amendments: Attendance List - Halina Szunejko listed twice

Halina would also like to retract her comment listed at the last but one paragraph on Page 2 of the minutes.

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

Moved: Kate White **Seconded:** Doreen Rossiter

Minutes Accepted.

Item 3 Business Arising from the Minutes

None

Item 4 Kate Mancini – Executive Officer, Charity Link

Contact details: T 08 9489 4011 www.charitylink.org.au , charitylink1@charitylink.org.au

Kate introduced herself and described her background as logistics and marketing.

Kate outlined some of the projects provided through Charity Link, including meals at Christmas, toy distribution, providing blankets and sleeping bags, and food hamper provision.

Kate described Charity Link as a collaborative charity with 127 active members. They work in WA only. Kate encourages membership – the more people involved, the better.

Over 8500 blankets have been ordered and will be unloaded in the last week of April. Charity Link will start taking orders for these shortly. This can be accessed by *any Charity Link Member with Sleeping bags also available to Charity Link Members running* an active homelessness program. Charges are 55 cents per item for blankets/sleeping bags – this money goes towards insurance. Kate identified that support for this scheme comes from Lotterywest, Western Power and Bug Busters.

Charity Link Back to School Program: Charity Link supply school bags – there are 400 bags still available (approximate value of \$35 retail each) through the scheme. This project is for primary schools only.

Coats for a Cause – On the 4th June the West Coast Eagles are supporting this project by inviting supporters to donate items of winter clothing at the main gates on that day. Donated items are being sorted and distributed by the Charity Link member, HOPE (Helping Out People Everywhere).

The IT software, website and database at Charity Link are currently being reviewed and updated.

Membership – members are registered not-for-profits, who require support with mass fundraising efforts. Current membership is highly diverse.

Kate mentioned that Charity Link also maintain a 'Part Link' membership group. These members can access the crosschecking service to ensure that 'doubling up' of referrals isn't taking place inadvertently.

With regard to cross-checking of information, no details are held on the young people accessing the Back 2 School program. Teachers make an application on behalf of the young person/student.

Charity Link has supplied the Back 2 School bags to schools in remote locations, for example, Northampton and Broome areas. Charity Link member groups can nominate a school, and the organisation will then approach the school. Kate mentioned that Charity Link is hoping to expand the number of schools they work with next year. Goods are collected by members from the storage facility in Northbridge for distribution. Charity Link will attempt to coordinate distribution to areas to save on freight costs, where possible.

Kate White mentioned that St Vincent de Paul have a back to school scheme through which they supply text books.

Kate identified 'information sharing' as a significant issue – Charity Link will endeavour to point people in the right direction whether they are members or not. Kate gave an example of the Ruah publication 'Getting by...Getting ahead' as a really useful resource.

Jenny thanked Kate for her presentation and encouraged Forum members to contact Kate for further information about Charity Link membership.

Foodbank - Gerg Hebble & Hamish Dobie

Jenny welcomed Greg and Hamish. Greg noted that Foodbank has been absent from the ER Forums for some time, but wants to make sure that they are now more involved and to explore opportunities for collaboration.

Foodbank was established as a not-for-profit in 1994. The organisation is a bridge between food manufacturers and community groups. They also provide services directly to grandparents raising grandchildren, and Foster Carers. They are opening a distribution centre in Kalgoorlie, and will then have six centres in total. They have a handling fee of approximately 80-90 cents a kilo for products. They also operate a school breakfast project in 317 schools (1.8 million breakfasts) which also involves the teaching of food nutrition.

Greg acknowledged that communication processes need improvement in being able to let agencies know what is available through Foodbank.

Most products have no limits on supply, however items in short supply are limited in order to ensure equity. Greg mentioned that they are getting more fresh milk in with long date times and Hamish said that they are expecting a bulk order of snap-frozen vegetables over the next month.

In response to a question Greg said that they are expecting 89 pallets of canned products in the next few weeks. They adjust their prices accordingly if supermarket prices drop on items such as rice/pasta/flour.

Foodbank is in the process of building a warehouse at the Perth International Airport (funding through Lotterywest). They envision that when complete, some of this space could possibly be shared with other not-for-profits.

Hamish mentioned that the purpose-built branch in Kalgoorlie will be opening soon, and if anyone has contacts in the area, to make them aware of the service. Uta said she could give him a list of funded ER providers in Kalgoorlie.

Item 5 Morning tea

The occasion of Halina Szunejko's induction into the inaugural hall of fame as one of WA's most courageous and inspiring women was celebrated with a cake.

Item 6 Utilities update

Aditi, WACOSS Policy Officer, provided an update about the new Synergy Hardship Policy. It has not yet been launched as they are awaiting approval by the ERA. WACOSS has been involved to advise on the policy and expect it to be launched later this month.

One of the concerns with the previous document was that it may have been inaccessible to CALD and migrant communities –this feedback has been incorporated and the document now includes a language guide. Additionally the previous definition of 'financial hardship' was

problematic – not always a one-off event but something that can be experienced for a long period of time. Some people may be forced to forego eating to pay electricity bills. Also to be included is a comprehensive rebate table. It is likely that there will be a formal launch of the policy, to which ER agencies will be invited.

There will be a Easter Moratoriums

Synergy - 20th and 21st of April and the 27th and 28th April

Alinta - 20th April to the 2nd May (inclusive)

Water Corp - 19th April to the 29th April (inclusive)

Bernie advised that there had been a run on the Horizon Power Assist funds and the application maximum limit has had to be reduced from \$500 to \$100 so there is sufficient funding for the rest of the financial year.

Item 7 WACOSS ER Update

Bernie attended to the ACOSS Conference in Melbourne There where some very interesting presenters and presentations and he recommended people access the ACOSS website to have a look at some of these presentations.

He reminded everyone that the ER Conference is approaching fast - 17th and 18th May. There are still subsidies available via a grant from Lotterywest. Registration for the conference and for subsidies can be done through the WACOSS website.

WACOSS is being funded by FaHCSIA to produce an updated version of the ER Directory. Emails have gone out to those listed in the current ER database to request agencies update their details. WACOSS will also be contacting agencies by phone to gather the information needed.

Item 8 Agency Information

Salvation Army Perth

Jenny said that they are currently very busy. Case Management work is being carried out in addition to one-off ER client work.

Jenny shared information about a recent case regarding a young client who had hit a power pole with his car and received an itemised bill for \$20,000. After Jenny advocated on the client's behalf, the bill was reduced by \$10,000. She encouraged services to advocate for their clients in these situations.

Jenny passed along information on behalf of Joy Smith (Salvation Army Morley) – the Watoto Ugandan Children's Choir will be performing a live concert on Tuesday 17th of May, at 7pm. The event is at the Salvation Army Morley, 565 Walter Road East, Morley 6062. Admission is free. More information about the choir is available at www.watoto.com

St Pat's Community Support Centre

As of Monday St Pat's will be providing ER services to youth from the Stan Reilly Centre next to Fremantle Hospital. For contact information please call St Pat's on 94304159. Services are provided to people 21yrs of age and older, in the South-West Met region.

Anglicare WA

Leanne and Joanna said that they are in the last stages of the vulnerable groups project – the funds will be gone by the end of the financial year. Evaluations have begun, to measure how long clients with brokerage funds are in the system and outcomes of case management with the families. ER is also very busy.

FAHCSIA

Uta said she has no news until after the May budget.

Salvation Army DHQ

Julie said that ER is busy as usual. Julie discussed the Doorways Model (of case management) and that it has not yet been implemented in WA, although services are rolling out based on this model.

Joanna (Anglicare) pointed out that part of the process is up-skilling staff, and much discussion and work needs to be done before a case management model can be implemented properly. These models will be showcased at the ER Conference.

UCW Creditcare

Bill said that they are running a case management service with support from FaHCSIA.

Lotterywest

Pauline mentioned the new online application form for the next ER grant funding round (\$3.6 million of funding). They are expecting an advert to go out in the paper on April 16th, and the form will go live from the 16th April until the 20th June. If anyone is experiencing any problems with the application process contact the Business Services Team.

CARAD

Bridget reported that they are very busy with people in detention, asylum seekers in the community, and also providing general support to people from migrant backgrounds, for example with homework and help with English language.

Yanchep Emergency Food

Johanna advised that as a small organisation they only provide food for people in the area. They have noticed reduced requests from outside the area but the local requests had not dropped.

HOPE

Yvonne said she would bring flyers regarding changes to services to the next Forum meeting. She said housing and rent problems are the major issues. Yvonne also remarked at the fantastic outcomes she has witnessed in people purely due to obtaining stable accommodation.

Leeming Hampers

Doreen said that Leeming Hampers has now moved to new, but smaller, premises.

WA Association of Polish Women

Halina said that her organisation is very small and therefore necessarily operates a 'band-aid approach'. They take referrals and offer one-off support – this can include assisting with up to \$100 once a year.

St Vincent de Paul

Loretta mentioned that she supports approximately 100 volunteers who do home visits. She agreed that lack of appropriate housing is a major issue for their service as well. Karen Wright introduced herself as the new SVDP Financial Counsellor in Woodbridge since January.

PMH

Sharon is seeking feedback from the Forum regarding a recent trend she has noticed at PMH in people from CALD communities experiencing real problems with high rents.

Joanna (Anglicare) agreed that there may be a number of contributing factors, for example language issues, high rate of private rental accommodation and large debts. Joanna said it seemed that sometimes everyday budgeting skills were missing.

Bridget said that people on humanitarian visas were eligible for up to six months of resettlement support. However if people land on another visa and then apply for humanitarian protection they may not be eligible. Therefore how people come to be in WA dictates the services they are eligible for.

She also noted that people may get lost in this system during resettlement to other areas. With bridging visas some people may have work/Medicare rights and others do not. There can be a long wait between an application for a protection visa while checks are done and a decision is made and longer still if the case then goes to a review tribunal.

Karen (St Vincent de Paul) suggested that sometimes people are pressured to send money back to support family in other countries which puts a great deal of pressure on the family. It was agreed that most migrant families do this which adds to the pressure.

It was suggested that a presentation on this issue at the Forum would be useful. Suggestions for speakers include the Migrant Resource Centre, CARAD, and Communicare.

Item 9 Chairpersons for the next Forum 2011

Sharon agreed to be the next chair.

The next ER Forum will take place on 4th May 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