EMERGENCY RELIEF AGENCIES FORUM

MINUTES OF MEETING held on the 7th December, 2011
(Meeting held City West Lotteries House, West Perth)

Item 1 Attendance and Apologies

Present:

Doreen Rossiter	Leeming Hampers
Mira Chalklen	KEMH
Jenny Lydon	Salvation Army Perth
Sandy Walquist	Second Harvest
Phil Swan	Second Harvest
Lynn Portman	Uniting Aid
Zeljka Prodanovic	MSCWA
Bill Cosentino	UCW Creditcare
Anne Maroni	UCW Creditcare
Uta Conway	FAHCSIA
Angela Robertson	City of Melville
Johanna Notley	Yanchep 2 Rocks EFR
Joanna Harper	Anglicare WA
Sharon Patterson	PMH
Yam Bahadur K C	Australian Asian Society
Judith Kenny	Dept for Child Protection
Claire Kartsidimas	CARAD
Halina Szunejko	WA Association of Polish Women
Hamish Dobie	Foodbank
Janne Halma	Jacaranda Community Centre Inc

Apologies:

Lucy Reynolds	Lotterywest
Brian Niedzwiecki	St Vincent de Paul Society
Bronwen Chapman	Southcare Inc.
Iris Bennet	Jewishcare
Joy Smith	The Salvation Army Perth

Chair: Bernie Fisher **Minutes:** Tamara Kendall (WACOSS)

Item 2 Minutes of the November Forum 2011

Minutes Accepted

Item 3 Business Arising from the Minutes

None

Item 4 Emergency Relief Services – Christmas and New Year

There is a moratorium for all utilities from Friday 16th December until Monday 2nd January 2012.

The Education Cost Assistance Scheme will no longer be running, which is unfortunate as it very much needed and always oversubscribed.

Bernie distributed the WA Emergency Relief Agencies Referral Directory 2011. Thanks to the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FAHCSIA) for their financial assistance in this project. Also many thanks to Tamara Kendall at WACOSS who was the backbone of this project, researching the information and designing the directory.

UCW Creditcare
Bill said that they are not doing external Christmas hampers – only for clients. Business as usual now but finish on Friday 23rd Dec and open on 2nd Jan.

Australian Asian Society
Yam advised they haven't yet decided on Christmas closing times.

Salvation Army Perth
Jenny said that there have been 600 applications for hampers just for the Perth Centre. This supply does not include the walk-ins. Currently very low on food. The list is closed but still taking walk-ins. Closed for 2 days holiday.

PMH
Sharon said they will be closed over the public holidays.

Anglicare WA
Joanna advised that they are providing hampers for existing clients within Anglicare services, including some ER services. Extremely busy with logistics and distribution has started. Joanna highlighted that Anglicare are moving toward less crisis response and more preventative work. Closing 23rd – 2nd but ER centres all have different opening times.

Yanchep 2 Rocks EFR
Johanna said that they had decided against hampers this year. The admin area will be closing between 16th December to mid-January.

KEMH
Mira advised they will be closed over Christmas. They will be distributing some hampers to clients from Second Harvest.

City of Melville
Angela advised that all hampers are now gone and people are being referred to church groups. They are closed 19th December to 16th January.

WA Association of Polish Women
Halina said they had no hampers but can still accept referrals for overdue accounts. They are closed over the public holidays. She also provided the Forum members with a book on famous Polish women.

CARAD
Claire said that they do not have Christmas hampers but do ER for clients who have not yet been granted protection visas. They will be closed from the 23rd December to the 11th January.

Foodbank
Hamish said that unfortunately no 'white knight' came in this year to make a large Christmas donation (like the last 2 years). They have taken in another 27,000 kilos of fruit and more products are arriving all the time. Output has been 40% higher this year. They are closed from the evening of Friday 23rd to the 4th January.

FAHCSIA
Uta advised they are closing over the Christmas break. They are In the process of restructure – new desks, computer and phone systems.

She also wanted to raise the issue that she had only received 12 funding acquittals so far. These were due on the 31st October – please could agencies check that theirs have been sent.

Department for Child Protection
Judith announced that there had been over 4000 grants for HUGS in the last quarter. Demand for HUGS funding is huge and is doubling each month. In the New Year there will be an independent review of the process whereby utility companies take HUGS referrals directly.

Judith also shared that she had been receiving some positive reviews of the HEP scheme. She reminded the Forum that Financial Counsellors can tick the box for HEP audits to enable clients to reduce their bills, possibly get new appliances and help with longer term power saving options.

Leeming Hampers
Doreen said they are very busy and will only be closed over the Christmas weekend.

MSCWA
Zeljka said that they will be open in North Perth but that the Mirrabooka office will be closed.

Second Harvest
Phil advised that they are not distributing individual hampers but have distributed supplies through King Edward Hospital. The shops are closed over the basic holiday period. They have purchased a property in the Cockburn/Success area. This appears to be a bit of a 'black hole' for emergency relief services.

Uniting Aid
Lynn said that they are open Tuesday and Friday mornings and only cover the Stirling area. They are able to provide some food but do not have Christmas hampers. They are closed 23rd December to 10th January.

Jacaranda Community Centre
Janne advised that next week will be the last week for appointments but the voluntary and compulsory income management will continue over the holidays. Christmas hampers in partnership with Charity Link are being distributed.

Item 5 Emergency Relief Forum – This Year, Next Year and Beyond

A fun, interactive session facilitated by Michelle Burgermeister, exploring where we have been during 2011and where we want to go in 2012.

The following is a summary of the outcomes:

What is Good About the ER Forum

- People are made to feel welcome and there is a warmth in the room
- It is a positive experience
- It is not formal and there is a trust in the room

- The structure of the ER Forum is good – continue to share the Chairperson role around

What Do You Get Out of the ER Forum

- Information/learning, networking, support, resource, friendship and respite from work
- An acknowledgement and validation of the work we do
- We are able to raise issues for WACOSS, FaHCSIA and DCP to follow up
- It keeps us up to date with developments in ER

Some Suggestions for Improvement

- It would be helpful to share more 'good news' stories and make our successes more public
- More discussions needed around how to move people from crisis to remedial
- Emergency relief - casework vs band aid – let us discuss this more
- Try and get a Department of Housing representative to attend ER Forums as this is an ongoing topic of discussion
- More sharing of information between the ER Forum and the State Emergency Relief Committee (SERC). SERC should take up some of the issues that arise at the Forum

Suggested Speakers

- Dealing with New Zealanders – ER agencies are experiencing an increase in people from NZ seeking assistance
- Someone to discuss migrants on working visas who lose their jobs and are left in limbo
- Presentations on any new programs

Item 6 Christmas Morning Tea

Item 7 Next ER Forum

The next ER Forum will take place on 1st February 2012, at City West Lotteries House, 2 Delhi Street, West Perth.

Chair: TBA

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