

Public Libraries Working Group Meeting 14

1:30pm Wednesday 21 July 2021

State Library of Western Australia – Board Room, 3rd Floor
Perth Cultural Centre, Northbridge

ATTENDEES

Nick Sloan	Chief Executive Officer, WALGA (Chair)
Susie Moir	Policy Manager Resilient Communities, WALGA
Margaret Allen	Chief Executive Officer & State Librarian, SLWA
Jenny Archibald	Member, Library Board of Western Australia
Caroline Jones	Vice President, PLWA Representative
John Dixon	Director Digital Transformation and Strategy, Office of Digital Government
Jude Thomas	Local Government Professionals (WA)
Steve McQuade	Manager Public Libraries and Literacy, SLWA (Secretariat)

APOLOGIES

Jodie Holbrook	Director Local Government Policy & Engagement, Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries
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MINUTES

1. Welcome

The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting, particularly Jude Thomas who is attending her first PLWG meeting.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLUTION:

The draft Minutes of the meeting of 17 May 2020 were endorsed unchanged.

3. Actions

3.1 Review actions from previous meeting

The actions from the previous meeting were reviewed.

4. Strategic Matters

4.1 Digital Strategy for the Western Australian Government 2021-2025

- Steve McQuade provided preface as to the launch of the of the Digital Strategy for the Western Australian Government 2021-2025 and its reference to working with local libraries around digital literacy.
- John Dixon provided background on the Digital Strategy and its four strategic priorities: online service delivery, better decision making, safety and security and digital inclusion. Government are taking a strategic approach to working in partnership with community service organisations (libraries/CRC) to support digital inclusion. The blueprint is well progressed with a targeted public consultation undertaken in June to October 2020. Have now taken the findings from that consultation to government and are waiting for direction on how to progress. ODG want agencies to collaborate with community sector organisations and local governments to recommend initiatives for government to pilot.
- Nick Sloane noted the focus of digital inclusion for the group, but also acknowledged the importance of the other pillars, particularly regarding data sharing.
- Margaret Allen noted that learnings were derived from not just SLWA, but other libraries as well, and that other networks can be harnessed to inform initiatives.
- Steve McQuade observed that it is key to keep collaboration going between libraries and ODG as digital inclusion was a strong element of the new Public Libraries Strategy.
- John Dixon indicated that he would be able to provide more information on government agreements and action steps.
- Susie Moir drew attention to the lack of digital and information accessibility for people in remote areas. John Dixon acknowledged that the technology and connectivity needs for councils and areas vary significantly.
- Discussion as to various initiatives that have been cost minimal but also had significant impact.
- Jude Thomas asked about whether the priority of the strategy was to connect people with government services, or to improve general digital literacy. John Dixon answered

that the focus is on connecting with services but that those skills can be transferred to more general digital literacy.

- The PLWG noted the progress of the strategy so far.

Action

- **John Dixon to circulate the What we heard report to the PLWG members once approved by cabinet.**

4.2 Future Strategy Consultation Report

- Steve McQuade provided background and summary of the Future Strategy Consultation report. The feedback from the post consultation survey and PLWA sessions indicated support for four main pillars: digital inclusion, libraries supporting communities, library led learning and demonstrating value and advocacy. Steve McQuade proposed that the PLWG agree on the four arms of the strategy, and also that a consultant lead the development of a draft strategy and undertake targeted community consultation. Caroline Jones noted that the four pillars emerged from the strategy working group and were endorsed during community consultation.
- Steve McQuade noted that the engagement for iThink from broader government was they've highest they've had.
- PLWG endorsed the four pillars noted above as the basis for the new public library strategy.
- Discussion as to selection of a suitable consultant. Caroline Jones noted that the consultant should be effective at making the process collaborative and bringing in the right stakeholders. Susie Moir suggested the possibility of doing phone interviews to ensure targeted interaction with Tier 2 and Tier 3 libraries. Margaret Allen observed that it was possible but depended on scope and budget. Margaret Allen expressed concern for looking for a consultant outside of WA due to COVID uncertainties, especially if the work involved physical travel. Nick Sloan noted that the consultant will need to be comfortable consulting in a more contemporary way (virtually). Nick Sloan clarified that the consultant's brief would be presented to PLWG at the next meeting. Steve McQuade asked if the working group should also start seeking proposals. Margaret Allen proposed circulating the brief.
- Jude Thomas asked for further clarification as to the fourth pillar "Demonstrating value and advocacy". Steve McQuade indicated that the fourth pillar relates to how WA public libraries take a collective approach to demonstrating dollar value and seek funding opportunities. Jude Thomas suggested that an economist would be a valuable member of a consulting team to achieve this.

- The PLWG agreed to task the Public Library Strategy Working Group (PLSWG) to develop and circulate the consultant's brief out of session and seek proposals to be presented to PLWG at their next meeting.
- Discussion as to member representatives of PLWG willingness to contribute funding towards a consultant to draft the new WA public library strategy and undertake community consultation. Steve McQuade indicated that the State Library of WA were prepared to allocate funds for this purpose. Caroline Jones noted that PLWA had also indicated support for contributing to funding. Nick Sloan noted that more information would be required but that in principle funding support would be considered, with financial implications being considered at the next meeting. Jude Thomas noted that as it was her first meeting she was not prepared to commit funds from LG Professionals, but as library professionals do not make up a high membership of LG Professionals they may not be supportive. John Dixon clarified that the government commitment would come through SLWA.
- PLWG committed in principle to jointly fund a consultant to draft the new WA public library strategy and undertake community consultation, noting the position of LG Professionals.
- PLWG endorsed the recommendations of the report.

Action

- **PLSWG to develop a consultant's brief for approval by PLWG out of session.**
- **PLSWG to seek proposals from consultants willing to develop a draft strategy and undertake community consultation.**

5. Standing Items

5.1 Tiered Model & Funding

- Steve McQuade provided a brief update as to the grant process, now that the first full branch round for the 2021-22 financial year has been completed. There was a slight increase in the number of Tier 1 library applications, but a decrease in Tier 2 and 3 applications and the amount was undersubscribed. A midyear round is now being considered to use the remaining funding.
- Discussion about the difficulty of engaging with Tier 2 and Tier 3 libraries. Margaret Allen indicated that a priority for SLWA may be to target libraries with no public access PC.
- Susie Moir asked if discarded physical items from higher funded libraries could be offered to Tier 2 and Tier 3 libraries. Margaret Allen answered that this has been

considered but that the freight and handling costs of shipping the books were often more expensive than the retail cost of the books.

- Caroline Jones noted that application for this grant opportunity did not decrease the libraries book funding.
- Caroline Jones indicated that the feedback from the PLWA sessions indicated strong support for one library management system (One Card), particularly among smaller libraries. Margaret Allen noted that options were still being explored in relation to SLWA's current LMS.

6. Other Business

- Margaret Allen asked about the status of the previously requested feedback regarding updates to the regulations for public libraries that support the Act. Steve McQuade answered that this had gone back to PLWA and that Alison Oliver had intended to set a meeting with Oliver Gatty. Steve McQuade proposed setting a meeting with Alison Oliver to follow-up and report back to the group.
- Jude Thomas clarified that this was part of the endorsed strategy. Margaret Allen noted that it was.
- Nick Sloan asked if any work had been done around this. Margaret Allen noted that some consultation with local governments had taken place last year as to the expectations and wishes for the regulations.
- Steve McQuade noted that LG Professionals was not recognised in the Terms of Reference and proposed updating and circulating those prior to the next meeting.

Action

- **Steve McQuade to set up a meeting with Alison Oliver to look at the feedback for the regulations and report back to PLWG.**
- **Steve McQuade to update the Terms of Reference to recognise LG Professionals and circulate prior to the next meeting.**

7. Key messages to Stakeholders

- The groups represented are ensuring that they collectively address the gaps in accessing the tiered model funding, regarding who is being missed and how to get that information to them.
- PLWG are progressing the Public Library Strategy based around the four identified pillars: digital inclusion, libraries supporting communities, library led learning and demonstrating value and advocacy.

8. Next Meeting date + meeting schedule

- Tentative date set for the week of the 6th of September and November.
- PLWG to continue to work on a bimonthly schedule.

Action

- **Steve McQuade to circulate a couple of proposed dates.**

9. The meeting closed at 2:40 pm.