

Public Libraries Working Group Meeting 15

1:30pm Thursday 28 October 2021

WALGA

ATTENDEES

Nick Sloan	Chief Executive Officer, WA Local Government Association (Chair)
Susie Moir	Policy Manager Resilient Communities, WA Local Government Association
Margaret Allen	Chief Executive Officer & State Librarian, State Library of WA
Jodie Holbrook	Director Local Government Policy & Engagement, Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries
Jenny Archibald	Member, Library Board of Western Australia
Caroline Jones	Vice President, Public Libraries WA
Jude Thomas	Local Government Professionals (WA)
Rob Leicester	Manager Core Programs Industry and Economic Development, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development
Steve McQuade	Manager Public Libraries and Literacy, SLWA (Secretariat)

APOLOGIES

John Dixon	Director Digital Transformation and Strategy, Office of Digital Government
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MINUTES

1. Welcome

The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting, particularly Rob Leicester who was attending his first PLWG meeting.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLUTION:

The draft Minutes of the meeting of 21 July 2021 were endorsed unchanged.

3. Actions

3.1 Review actions from previous meeting

3.1.1 Seek representative from a Tier 2 Local Government

- Nick Sloan stated that the selection process is ongoing.
- Jude Thomas asked if the position is being directly advertised to Tier 2 libraries or openly. Susie Moir answered that the position is being advertised openly.
- Jude Thomas asked if the representative will be able to Zoom into meetings, should they be regionally located. Nick Sloan noted that they would.

3.1.2 Status update on the publication of the State Local Government Partnership Agreement for the Provision of Public Library Services in Western Australia

- Jodie Holbrook stated that the partnership Agreement has been signed and the artwork handed over to SLWA.
- Margaret Allen confirmed that the Agreement should be up on the SLWA website within the next few weeks.

3.1.3 LG feedback to be provided on the Draft Local Level Agreement

- Susie Moir provided an update on the feedback received on the Agreement. The Agreement has been reviewed by LGIS, the WALGA governance team and a PLWA representative and is pending further feedback from LG Professionals. A number of key issues were identified, including:
 - Not reflective of tiered model.
 - Extensive and unclear powers of the library board in managing public libraries.
 - Lack of definition as to the event of default.

- Unsuitability of WALGA state council as arbitrator as it is outside the scope of their state council constitution.
- WALGA also recommended comparing the Agreement to other State Agreements.
- Margaret Allen noted that legislation in other States are very different and other State Agreements may not be suitable for comparison.
- Jodie Holbrook noted that it may be appropriate to change the arbitrator to third party WA Arbitrators Association to reflect the State Agreement.
- Caroline Jones asked what is driving the need for the Agreement. Margaret Allen answered to update the Agreement.
- Jenny Archibald asked for clarification on how seeking State Library Board approval is burdensome for local governments and public libraries. Susie Moir answered that feedback indicated that issues arose from the requirement to seek State Library Board approval to establish Agreements between public libraries and third-party service providers. Steve McQuade indicated that this is only required when seeking a third-party provider to take over the entire running of the library, such as a CRC. Susie Moir suggested that this be clarified, as it had caused concern.
- Nick Sloan noted PLWG's stance to the recommendations identified in the feedback:
 - As cross-jurisdictional models were already contemplated, no action necessary.
 - Recommendation for tailored agreements for Tier 1, 2 and 3 libraries may be satisfied by amending the wording of the Agreement.
 - Request further detail on appropriate third-party arbitrator.
 - Further clarification on definitions of the terms "authorised officer" and "event of default".
- Nick Sloan suggested these amendments be made and the amended Agreement be circulated and agreed upon by PLWG.
- Margaret Allen requested that the Agreement be presented to the December Library Board meeting, prior to distribution to local governments in the new calendar year.
- Intent of PLWG to give effect to the amendments via circular resolution prior to presentation to the Library Board, pending feedback from LG Professionals.

Action

- **The amended Agreement be circulated to the PLWG members for approval, prior to presentation to the Library Board.**

3.1.4 Circulate the What we heard report to the PLWG members once approved by cabinet

- Steve McQuade provided an update on the What we heard report. The report has been configured by cabinet and they are waiting for instructions on publication.
- Report will be circulated to PLWG, pending publication instructions.

3.1.5 PLSWG to develop a consultant's brief for approval by PLWG out of session

- Complete.

3.1.6 PLSWG to seek proposals from consultants willing to develop a draft strategy and undertake community consultation to be presented at the next meeting of PLWG

- Nick Sloan suggested deferring this item to Item 4.1 for more detailed discussion.

3.1.7 Set up a meeting with Alison Oliver to look at the feedback for the regulations and report back to PLWG

- Ongoing.

3.1.8 Update the Terms of Reference to recognise LG Professionals and circulate prior to the next meeting

- PLWG endorsed the changes to the Terms of Reference.

3.1.9 Circulate a couple of proposed dates for the next meeting

- Ongoing.

4. Strategic Matters

4.1 Future Strategy Consultants Assessment

- Steve McQuade provided background and progress update on the Future Strategy Consultants Assessment process. A brief was developed with approval from PLWG and sent to five consultants. Four responded and were assessed on four criteria- knowledge and experience, ability to meet timelines, methodology and price. PLSWG recommend:
 - Appointment of I&J Philips Management Services to undertake the development of the WA Public Library Strategy.

- A co-contribution approach to cover the costs of the consultancy with 5-% contribution from State Government and 50% from those members representing WA Local Governments.
- SLWA appoint the consultant on behalf of PLWG.
- Susie Moir asked how PLSWG proposed to divide the other 50% between the local governments. Steve McQuade suggested that those agencies come together and decide this privately.
- Jude Thomas indicated that there was not a large amount of support from LG Professionals to contribute financially to the project, as that organisation is not funded by local governments. They suggested that the Minister for Local Government or Minister for Culture and the Arts be approached as an alternative. They also suggested PLWA levy a sum to local governments on a one-year basis to raise the funds.
- Margaret Allen indicated that the Minister for Culture and the Arts would probably consider their contribution to have come via the State Library. She also noted that approaching the Minister for Local Government could delay the project.
- Caroline Jones indicated that from initial discussions, PLWA had allocated \$5000 as a contribution, with the possibility of that being increased by another \$5000, though that would be in lieu of sponsoring the Kay Poustie Scholarship. There was also some discussion as to seeking other opportunities of financial support.
- Nick Sloan observed that this was not in WALGA's budget allocation and would need to be looked at internally.
- Margaret Allen noted that PLSWG could not engage the consultant until funding is secured.
- Jude Thomas suggested that Tier 1 councils be approached for funding support. Nick Sloan observed that time frame may be an issue.
- Steve McQuade noted that PLSWG had requested the consultant complete the draft strategy by the end of 2021, with the community consultation to be finalised by April 2022.
- Margaret Allen noted that this is an agreed action under the State Level Partnership Agreement.
- PLWG approved the appointment of I&J Philips as the consultant, subject to confirming the funding contributions.
- PLWG approved SLWA to manage the appointment of the consultant.

Action

- **Out of session discussion with the PLWG local government members as to the contributions of the local government groups.**

5. Standing Items

5.1 Tiered Model & Funding

- Margaret Allen gave an update on the tiered model, noting that the 2021 Encouraging Promising Practice and Technology and Digital Inclusion grants for Tier 2 and Tier 3 libraries were undersubscribed. The Library Board are now considering a second round of grants, targeted at technology and internet access for those local governments lacking in those areas. The Board may consider lifting the threshold of the individual grants next year, to encourage bigger projects. The Board are also looking to automate the application process, along with the new Better Beginnings grants.

6. Other Business

6.1 Consultation on CRCs

- Rob Leicester provided background on the ongoing CRC stakeholder consultation process. CRC's provide a large range of services, with 40% also delivering library services. They are currently contracted under a community services contract with DPIRD. Current contracts with CRCs are set to expire in June 2022, so arrangements must be established by the end of March. DPIRD plan to bypass the tender process and do a 5-year contract extension instead, with no wholesale changes to the previous arrangement. The CRCs are now completing a service review, to be completed by the end of October. DPIRD are also undertaking a stakeholder and customer service feedback process. This feedback will be sent to Community Services Procurement Review Committee (CSPRC) for appraisal mid-December.
- Jodie Holbrook asked if CSPRC sits in the Department of Finance and are part of the new State Commissioning Strategy. Rob Leicester noted that they are.
- Jodie Holbrook suggested approaching the Noongar organisations under the South-West Native Title Settlement for feedback.
- Margaret Allen asked about CRCs in Aboriginal communities where CRC service provision has been known to be problematic. Rob Leicester noted that the 10 CRCs in remote communities are on financial assistant agreement grants, not contracts. These CRC's are still providing feedback for the review, but not otherwise affected by this process.

- Margaret Allen observed that for SLWA, collaboration with the CRC was key to achieving better community outcomes but that there is no set framework or principles for collaboration. A framework is also difficult to establish when each CRC is community controlled.
- Rob Leicester asked if all CRCs with a library are sub-contracted through the local government authority, or if some are contracted through an agreement with the Board. Margaret Allen answered that all CRC's are sub-contracted through the local governments.
- Nick Sloan observed that it is important that a framework not prejudice the flexibility for the CRC to serve their individual communities.
- Jodie Holbrook noted that opportunities get missed by not having overarching agreements.
- Margaret Allen asked if PLWG should put in a shared feedback submission, addressing the commonality of shared libraries and CRC's and opportunities around digital literacy.
- Rob Leicester noted that DPIRD are aiming to submit feedback to CSPRC by early December, though the Department are open to having conversation after that date.
- Nick Sloan clarified PLWG will not do a formal submission at this stage, but that it may be useful to look at putting something in over the next few weeks on behalf of the members respective organisations.

7. Key messages to Stakeholders

- Partnership Agreement- will be published shortly.
- Future Strategy Consultants Assessment- PLWG finalising consultancy on basis of local agreement and consultancy.

8. Next Meeting date + meeting schedule

- Tentative date set for the week of the 13th of December.

Action

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

9. The meeting closed at 2:40 pm.