MEDIA RELEASE
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EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES PROGRAM – LAST MINUTE TURNAROUND PROVES NEED TO OVERHAUL THE PROCESS PEAK INDUSTRY BODY SAYS

Linkwest, the peak body for Neighbourhood and Community Resource Centres in WA, says the State Government’s Empowering Communities Tender announcement on Friday, proves the urgent need for the entire process of funding these grass-roots, community based services to be overhauled.

Jane Chilcott, CEO of Linkwest, says that while they are thrilled that the final outcome is that all the member Centres who applied received either new contract funding or an extension to their current contract, the entire tender process, along with the handling of the announcement has caused all sorts of unnecessary grief for a number of Centres, which have been operating under immense strain and uncertainty for a couple of years.

“At the time of the tender announcement, 13 Linkwest member Centres were contacted by the Department of Communities and told they were unsuccessful in their application,” says Jane Chilcott. “Later the same day they were contacted again, with the astounding news that they would instead receive contract extensions on their current funding levels until 30 June 2020.

“On the face of it, this last-minute change is great news, and it is for those Centres who were facing possible closure due to defunding. However it does raise questions for those centres which were successful in their applications but on lower than current funding levels. If they had been unsuccessful, these Centres would now be better funded, at least until June 2020.”

Linkwest has not yet received the full breakdown of the funding allocations, including the regional vs metropolitan split, however, from communication with members across the state, including some who tendered in regions that had not previously been funded – such as the Wheatbelt – it appears that despite a number of tenders submitted, no contracts have been awarded.

“We are unsure what caused the last-minute turn-around in the announcement on Friday, but we are sure that it signifies the urgent need for the importance of grass-roots community place-based services to be enshrined in policy, and freed from the need to prove their worth over and over.

“We believe strongly that the small, local, place-based Centre model is best. Our centres have been successfully delivering positive outcomes to Western Australian communities for over 30 years and stand side-by-side with schools as an essential part of social and physical infrastructure.” she said.

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BACKGROUND: Linkwest

Nedlands-based Linkwest is a small not-for-profit organisation that is largely funded by the State Government’s Department of Communities and the Department for Primary Industry and Regional Development. Linkwest is the peak body for neighbourhood and community resource centres in Western Australia. It offers targeted and relevant training, resources, advocacy and support to those working in small community-managed not-for-profit organisations.

Linkwest, with a staff of seven, offers crucial support to more than 150 member organisations, including over 100 regional and remote Centres. More than 27,000 Western Australians currently use these centres each week. The centres provide a friendly, welcoming place where local people can meet to learn, gain new skills, make friends and feel part of their community. They also provide a safe, affordable space for playgroups, community and support groups to gather.

Former Premier of Western Australia, Professor Carmen Lawrence, is Linkwest’s official patron. She has been a patron for the past eight years.

The history behind the organisation goes back to 1978 – for many years it was known as Learning Centre Link, until it was renamed Linkwest in 2011.

SOCIAL AND WEBSITE:

www.linkwest.asn.au
www.facebook.com/Linkwest