MEDIA RELEASE
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The WA State Budget and what it means for Neighbourhood and Community Resource Centres

Jane Chilcott, CEO of Linkwest, the peak body for community-led Neighbourhood and Community Resource Centres in Western Australia, says that the WA State Budget provides a mixed bag for Centres across WA, with stagnant funding, but the potential for the Government to use the existing infrastructure of the sector to deliver on new initiatives.

Community Resource Centres

Linkwest is pleased to see that the $13 million per annum for the CRC program has been continued in the budget for the forward estimates to 30 June 2023. We are, however, concerned that the Perth CPI – which determines the indexation for government human services contracts – is estimated to increase to 2.50% over that period. As the total budget for the program remains unchanged over the forward estimates to 2023, and the individual CRC funding will increase with CPI over that period, there may need to be cuts in other areas of the program such as traineeships and sector support.

We are also seeking clarification as the total budget for the program over the forward estimates as published in the budget papers is $52 million. This contrasts with a number of Government media releases that state that they will be investing $65 Million across regional WA to continue to support Community Resource Centres.

DPIRD funding increased by $131.5 million to support agriculture in WA. We ask the question: will any of this additional funding be used to support the CRC program, and will any of the initiatives be delivered through the CRCs to support the whole of government priority of delivering stronger regional economies.

Neighbourhood Centres

The Empowering Communities program funding is not identified specifically but will be included in the total community services funding. It is interesting to note that Community,
Neighbourhood and Development Services (CNDS) – a program which was due to end on 30th June 2019 – will continue to be funded through to 30 June 2021.

The notes identify that in 2019/20 $1 million is allocated and 2020/2012 $1.4 million is allocated for 15 Centres. It is assumed that this is the funding for the Centres that were unsuccessful in their tenders for the ECP. Currently, these Centres have been advised they will be funded to 2020. Linkwest will seek clarification on this budget item. A further year of funding would be welcomed but a more permanent solution is required for those Centres that work to improve two of the priorities under the Our Priorities – A bright future targets:

- The health and wellbeing of children in the early years, and
- Increase reading skills through early years programs.

Other areas of interest

ServiceWA will be a one stop shop that will change the way government delivers services to the community, providing a single point of contact for 85 everyday services. The reform brings together services currently delivered across 5 agencies, including Departments of Transport, Justice, Communities, Primary Industries and Regional Development, and the WA Police Force. The government will be investing $6.9 million to pilot the program in Bunbury.

Because CRCs are already funded to provide access to state government services in rural, regional and remote WA, Linkwest will be asking what role the government sees for CRCs and some regional NCs in the delivery of ServiceWA. CRCs have demonstrated their ability in this area, and we would hope that they will be utilised and expanded on to deliver this government initiative. Linkwest would like to see that existing community assets such as our Centres are offered the opportunity, with appropriate funding, to deliver this service rather than the creation of new places.

WA Health: we are disappointed that after the Sustainable Health Review has put prevention and health education as a priority there appears to be no funding for this area. Again, our network is ideally placed to support the delivery of prevention and early intervention programs across WA.

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