

CO-OPERATIVE CARE WAGIN – BEGINNINGS

January 2025

Co-operative Care Wagin exists so that people with health and social needs live cared for in an accepting community.



For the history buffs and those who gave us hope to dream this dream, this is our story. Our intention is to improve the health and social outcomes of Wagin residents. There has been significant help along the way. This is how it came about.

A QUIET VISION: it starts with a spark When, in 2014-21, my parents, strong healthy and independent into their 80s, began to need more attention they had no idea of the health system, services available to them, or how even to call an ambulance if they needed one. I learned they were not the only ones. Surely, I thought, in our small rural community we could do this better. In 2021 the Uniting Church launched CommuniTEA Hub, a weekly meeting of 55+ age group for coffee, cake and conversation – a successful setting where stories shared highlighted the needs for better care access.

COMMUNITY BUILDERS: igniting the spark Having a 50-year friendship with and deep respect for Peter Kenyon and his BANK of IDEAS work in building community capacity around our country, I found myself enrolling, with four other enthusiasts from Wagin, in the RuralAid-funded Community Builders program that was launched in Wagin for the southern wheatbelt area of WA in July 2022. CHB, who love grain growing towns, help fund the six-month program that 10 communities participated in. It culminated, for Wagin, in a Community Action Plan, written in July 2023, that identified seven priority projects, one of which was keeping our town residents in town as they age. The vision was articulated AND written! A steering group of seven was formed and worked for the idea to consolidate.

A CO-OPERATIVE APPROACH: not transactional but relational care CBH, Australia's largest co-operative, ran a series of workshops, again in the southern wheatbelt, in March 2024, presenting the suitability of a co-operative structure for service delivery. As well as enjoying CWA scones, Londa and I were captured by the seven principles of co-operatives and had a mind-shift from a commercial approach to a locally empowered, member-owned organisation. It was an easy shift as Wagin has a successful 107-year-old co-operative store in town.

CARE TOGETHER: professional help Enter Care Together (CT), an activity of Australia's Business Council of Co-operatives and Mutuals (BCCM) who, with funding (available from July 2023 to June 2025) from the Department of Health and Aging, accepted our application to be one of ten pilot projects, the only one in WA, for innovative approaches to improve health services in rural, regional and remote settings. CT has provided business, legal, and financial consultation to help us form a co-operative that is by Wagin people for Wagin people. Of key assistance to the Steering Committee, as project lead, has been Peter Westoby, a practitioner in community development and an enthusiast for the co-operative model. Community workshops have been held. Key stakeholders have been identified. Mutual Value Measurement has been adopted. The dream has taken on form, growing in dynamic and purposeful ways.

BUSINESS REGISTRATION: legal entity After a formation meeting in December, approving a constitution and voting for application to become a registered not-for-profit business, on 20th January, 2025 (International Year of Co-operatives!) Co-operative Care Wagin Ltd was registered. We celebrated!

For Co-operative Care Wagin Inc.

Wendy Pederick

Connection + Attention + Reach + Empowerment

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