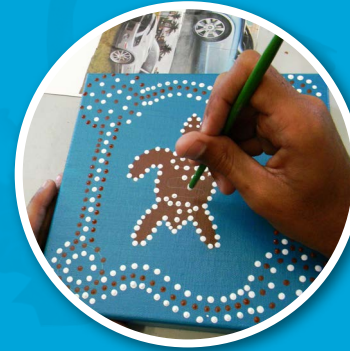




Commissioner for Children and Young People  
Western Australia



Speaking Out About

# Youth Justice

The views of WA children and young people who have had  
contact with Youth Justice Services in WA

December 2016

## Recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People

The Commissioner for Children and Young People WA acknowledges the unique contribution of Aboriginal people's culture and heritage to Western Australian society. For the purposes of this report, the term 'Aboriginal' encompasses Western Australia's diverse language groups and also recognises those of Torres Strait Islander descent. The use of the term 'Aboriginal' in this way is not intended to imply equivalence between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, though similarities do exist.

## Disclaimer

The Department of Corrective Services collaborated with the Commissioner for Children and Young People to facilitate access to young people under the supervision of Youth Justice Services. This report has been prepared by the Commissioner for Children and Young People and is intended to provide the views of the young people and family who participated in the consultations. It does not represent the views of the Department. Any errors of omission or commission are the responsibility of the Commissioner for Children and Young People.

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Young people involved in the youth justice consultation created the artwork in the images used in this publication. Artists provided permission for the Commissioner to use the images.

The cover artwork uses images of the swans urban artwork at Cullacabardee created by White Lion collaborating artists: Rubeun Yorkshire, Aaron Brown, Pauline Bonney and Lawry Halden.

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## Message from the Commissioner for Children and Young People

Each West Australian child or young person must be provided every possible support and opportunity to create a positive and vibrant future.

Children and young people have continually told my office in many consultations that their families are vitally important to their health and wellbeing.

While the vast majority of our children and young people have positive and nurturing childhoods that establish a strong foundation for life, there are others who experience significant challenges and disadvantage which lead them into regular or ongoing contact with the justice system.

Each of these stories is tragic – there is often great trauma and dysfunction in these young people’s lives and, put simply, they have the right to a better life.

It is absolutely essential for the focus of our juvenile justice system to be placed on early intervention and rehabilitation.

For a youth justice service to be effective in addressing the causes of offending behaviour, we must first fully understand from the perspectives of the children and young people involved what lead them to offend, and what they need to create a better future.

This report is the result of a detailed consultation with 92 children and young people who have had contact with the justice system, undertaken with the support of the WA Department of Corrective Services.

What they say about their lives and of their hopes for the future is, at times, unnerving and distressing, but it is also incredibly insightful and inspiring.

There is no simple fix to many of the issues they describe, but that does not excuse us as a society from doing everything we can to help these young people and prevent future generations from experiencing the same disadvantage.

I sincerely thank the Department of Corrective Services and other agencies that supported this project and the young people, their families and carers who took part.



**Colin Pettit**

Commissioner for Children and Young People

## Message from the Commissioner of Corrective Services

As the Commissioner of Corrective Services I have a responsibility to ensure young people in Youth Justice Services are cared for, supported and nurtured both in the community and in custody, and that they leave youth justice services better equipped to live law abiding, productive lifestyles.

*Speaking Out About Youth Justice* is an important report which gives a voice to young people involved with Youth Justice Services to explain in their own words the reasons they offend and the things they believe would help to stop them offending in the future.

The Department of Corrective Services (the Department) worked with the Commissioner for Children and Young People to develop this project. The voices of the young people who access our services and feedback from them will be used to inform our work and ensure our programs are tailored to meet their unique needs.

It is clear from the views expressed by the young people who participated in this consultation that some things we do are working well. It is particularly heartening for me to read positive comments from young people about Youth Justice Services' staff, the relationships they develop with young people, the support they provide, and the work they do to address offending behaviour.

It is also clear from what young people said that there is room for improvement. The Department is implementing new ways of working that put young people at the centre of our services as described in the

*Youth Justice Framework Western Australia 2015—2018*. This approach includes adopting evidence-based practices, and working collaboratively with other government agencies, the non-government sector, Aboriginal people, communities and organisations, and young people and their families. A key project is the transformation of Banksia Hill Detention Centre from a custodial model to a trauma informed model, with a focus on rehabilitation.

I extend my thanks to the Commissioner for Children and Young People and his staff, the organisations and individuals involved in this project, and, most importantly, I thank the young people and their families for sharing their views.

I am confident that by listening to their voices and incorporating this information into the work we do we will achieve better results for young people in the justice system.

**James McMahon** DSC DSM  
Commissioner  
Department of Corrective Services



## About the Commissioner

The Commissioner for Children and Young People is the independent advocate for all children and young people in WA aged less than 18 years.

The role of the Commissioner is described in the *Commissioner for Children and Young People Act 2006*. The Act requires the Commissioner to give priority to, and have special regard for, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people and children and young people who are vulnerable or disadvantaged for any reason.

The Commissioner talks to children and young people and others in the community about what children and young people need to be healthy and reach their potential, and considers research and evidence about children's wellbeing.

From this information the Commissioner works with children and young people, their families and government to improve policies, legislation and services that support children and young people's wellbeing.

In this consultation the Commissioner focused on hearing the views of young people aged 10 to 19 years who have had contact with the youth justice system to better understand the unique challenges and issues they encounter that impact their wellbeing and healthy development to adulthood.



## Executive summary

*“I want a life for myself and I want a job when I get out of [Banksia Hill] cos I’m sick of it. Like, this life we live is not sustainable, if you get what I mean. Like, we can’t keep going the way we go. You can’t keep on doing crime, cos this is the way we end up, in here.”*

17 year-old female

This report is the result of a collaboration between the Commissioner for Children and Young People and the Department of Corrective Services to discover the views of young people under the supervision of the youth justice system to inform the development of youth justice services in Western Australia.

The young people<sup>1</sup> who participated in this consultation, like other young people in contact with the justice system, are a diverse group who each have their own story and individual set of circumstances. They also have a range of views and ideas on what would help them and the other young people they know in a similar situation.

The views provided by 92 young people and 10 family members in the consultation clearly identified the factors that contributed to their involvement in the youth justice system, what they thought could be helpful in developing positive behaviours, and changes to the current youth justice system that would support them to navigate away from

criminal behaviour. Young people also discussed how they access help and make complaints and described their aspirations for the future.

Overwhelmingly, young people described complicated lives comprising multiple challenges that are impossible to isolate. Although each young person’s story was unique, common themes for engaging in criminal behaviour were clear.

All of the young people demonstrated a level of resilience and personal strength. Sometimes this manifested in committing offences to access what they needed to survive. However, their strength is highlighted by their capacity to remain on the whole optimistic about their future despite the significant challenges they face.

Five key themes emerged from participants’ responses to why young people get into trouble (in order of frequency):

- problems with family
- friends who were involved in criminal behaviour
- disengagement from school
- disconnection from the broader community
- personal issues including, crime as a normal habit, drug and alcohol use, cognitive disorders and mental health issues.

<sup>1</sup> For the purpose of this consultation the term ‘young people’ encompasses children aged 10 years old to 19 years old.

All of the participants identified at least one key theme as a reason they had committed offences. A vast majority attributed three or more of these issues to their involvement in criminal behaviour and many participants acknowledged that there were some young people in youth justice who faced a combination of all of these problems in their lives.

Young people and family members provided nuanced explanations concerning what led to their involvement in the youth justice system, reflecting the diversity of individual participants. Family was the most commonly cited reason and this included families being engaged in criminal activity, alcohol, drug and mental health issues, and violence in the home.

Young people and families recognised that offending behaviours could be prevented when they were able to access appropriate supports and services. These included:

- positive role models
- living in safe and stable homes
- participating in education or employment
- being involved in activities and having fun things to do
- support to change behaviour and cope with personal challenges.

Participants highlighted the importance of respectful, trusting and long-term relationships, both with family or other adults, and professionals such as youth justice workers, teachers or police as a key to exploring and sustaining behavioural changes, participating in education and employment, and to building a more positive future. Frequently young people and families acknowledged the difficulties of being caught up in a cycle of offending and said they needed strong boundaries and lots of help to make changes in their lives.

“Kids need more support. Lots of people want to change their life, but it’s really hard, you know?” 16 year-old male

Commonly, young people and families voiced a desire to be consulted about the support services they receive and expressed a need for tailored resources to meet individual needs.

“It depends on their personality, their background, their family. So maybe you need to ask them a lot of questions so that you know them. Get to know them better and they’ll get to know you better. And you’ll find what they need later in life.” 17 year-old female

Overall, young people had a sound knowledge of how to access help. Most commonly young people said they would seek help from family and friends, a trusted worker such as a teacher or youth justice officer, the Kids Helpline or the police.

Some participants had positive experiences of making a complaint while others said they would not bother to make a complaint because they did not believe they would be listened to.

While many young people did not articulate thoughts for their future, most were optimistic about being free from the troubles that led to their involvement in youth justice. Many of the participants in the arts-based activities produced artwork that depicted positive, constructive lives.

The desire for peaceful lives in safe homes was a common theme as was the hope of creating a strong family with their own children. Young people overwhelmingly shared a wish for a life away from crime and youth justice involvement. The imperative is to help them achieve this.



## Introduction

*“Ask them what they want, I guess. Asking them...what you could do for them. You know what I mean? Like, personally.”*

18 year-old male

The majority of children and young people in Western Australia (WA) never have contact with the formal youth justice system. However, the small proportion who do are commonly some of the most disadvantaged and marginalised young people in our society.

The consequence of youth criminal behaviour can be very serious for the individuals involved and the broader community. In order to address this, it is critical to understand the reasons young people engage in criminal activity, such as family breakdown, mental health issues, drug and alcohol misuse, disengagement from school, disconnection from community and culture.

Commenting on the need to address criminal behaviour, WA Chief Justice Wayne Martin stated, “the best way of keeping the community safe is by addressing the causes of crime – drug use, mental illness, homelessness and disadvantage.”<sup>2</sup>

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child promotes children’s right to have a say about issues that affect them and to participate in the design and provision of services that target their needs and specifically support them.

Until now, young people in the youth justice system have not expressly described their lives because they are often inaccessible to standard consultation processes. For this consultation the Commissioner worked in collaboration with the Department of Corrective Services to hear the views of young people in the youth justice system and their families.

This report presents the views of young people and families in their own words, examining the complexity of young people’s lives, their involvement in crime and what is needed to change this behaviour.

Young people were enthusiastic participants in the consultation and provided valuable insights into the reasons they became involved in criminal behaviour and expressed creative and often simple solutions to preventing and reducing their involvement in criminal activity.

<sup>2</sup> Wynne, E 2016, ‘WA Chief Justice Wayne Martin speaks out on state’s incarceration numbers’, ABC News 3 May 2016, [www.abc.net.au/news/2016-05-03/wa-chief-justice-wayne-martin-speaks-out-on-incarceration-rates/7379064](http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-05-03/wa-chief-justice-wayne-martin-speaks-out-on-incarceration-rates/7379064).

# Background

## Overview of youth justice in Western Australia

The youth justice system is the set of processes and practices for managing children and young people aged between 10 to 17 years who have committed, or allegedly committed, an offence.<sup>3</sup> These range from informal contact, such as cautioning and diversion programs, through to more formal contact involving supervision orders or detention. The police, courts and youth justice supervision services all form part of the youth justice system in Western Australia (WA). The vast majority of young people in WA have no contact with the youth justice system.

Youth Justice Services, a division of the Department of Corrective Services, is responsible for the safety, security and rehabilitation of young people under formal youth justice supervision in the community or in detention. Its work is informed by the principles and functions outlined in the *Young Offenders Act 1994*.

In 2014–15 in WA, on an average day:

- 754 young people aged 10 to 17 years were under youth justice supervision.
- Approximately 80 per cent of these young people were supervised in the community and the remainder were in detention.
- The majority of these young people were male and aged 15 to 17 years.<sup>4</sup> The rates of young people in both community based supervision (23 per 10,000) and in detention (6 per 10,000) in WA were both higher than the national average (18 and 3 per 10,000 respectively).<sup>5</sup>

Since 2010–2011 there has been a steady decrease in the number of young people under youth justice supervision both in detention and under community supervision.<sup>6</sup>

Aboriginal young people are substantially over-represented in the WA youth justice system. While only constituting six per cent of the youth population, Aboriginal young people represent approximately 64 per cent of all young people under youth justice supervision in WA.<sup>7</sup> Aboriginal young people are also more likely to have their first contact with the system at a young age, to have multiple contacts, and to experience multiple episodes of supervision.<sup>8</sup>

3 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2016. *Youth justice in Australia 2014-15*. AIHW bulletin no. 133. Cat. no. AUS 198. Canberra: AIHW.

4 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2016. *Western Australia: youth justice supervision in 2014-15*. Youth justice fact sheet No.63. Cat. no. JUV 83. Canberra: AIHW.

5 Ibid.

6 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2016, *Youth justice in Australia 2014–15*. Bulletin 133. Cat. no. AUS 198. Canberra: AIHW. Table S3b.

7 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2016. *Western Australia: youth justice supervision in 2014-15*. Youth justice fact sheet No.63. Cat. no. JUV 83. Canberra: AIHW.

8 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2012. *Indigenous young people in the juvenile justice system*. AIHW bulletin no. 109. Cat. no. AUS 164. Canberra: AIHW.

## Methodology

This report is the outcome of a consultation with 92 young people and 10 family members involved with the youth justice system, conducted by the Commissioner for Children and Young People in collaboration with the Department of Corrective Services.

### Reference Group

A Reference Group provided advice and feedback on the design and implementation of the consultation. The Reference Group included representatives from Aboriginal organisations, the Youth Justice Board, government agencies, Aboriginal Legal Service of WA, research organisations and community service providers. Members of the Reference Group are listed in Appendix One.

### Ethics

The consultation was approved to proceed following consideration through the Commissioner's independent ethics review process and the Department of Corrective Services.

All young people were required to provide their informed consent and those aged under 18 years were also required to have parental/legal guardian consent to participate in the consultation. Guardian consent could be obtained over the telephone and could be waived under specific circumstances.

The confidentiality of participants was maintained throughout the consultation in accordance with the *Young Offenders Act 1994*. In this report, only young people's age and gender are represented and on a few occasions this information is withheld to protect the confidentiality of the individual young person.

### How young people were identified to participate

The consultation aimed to hear from a diverse range of young people aged between 10 and 19 years who have contact with the youth justice system.

'Young people in youth justice' for the purpose of this consultation refers to young people who were under the supervision of, or had been in the last six months, the Department of Corrective Services' Youth Justice Services. It includes young people under either community based supervision or in detention.

A staff member from the Commissioner for Children and Young People's office, who was on secondment from Youth Justice Services, contacted each metropolitan and regional Youth Justice Service office to invite their involvement in the consultation. Youth Justice Officers in each office were encouraged to invite the young people they work with, and their family members, to participate in an interview. The Commissioner's staff member then visited the offices to conduct interviews with young people and family members who had agreed to participate. Young people and family members were also opportunistically engaged if they were attending a Youth Justice Services office on the day the Commissioner's staff member was present.

The Commissioner's office also sent an expression of interest to non-government organisations operating in the WA youth justice sector to invite them to hold focus groups or interviews with the young people and families they work with.

An intensive art-based consultation was run over three days at Banksia Hill Detention Centre in which young people were encouraged to produce artwork reflecting their wishes for the future. A textile artist facilitated a doll-making workshop, 'Making-Me' that represented young people's future selves.

Other artistic mediums such as painting, drawing and collage were made available and young people were able to keep their finished pieces. All young people provided consent for photos of their artwork to be used in this report. A small number of young people who participated in the arts activity chose to participate in an interview while they were working on their art piece.

## **Consultation tools**

### **Interviews**

Interview questions were designed to prompt discussion of the factors that influence young people initially getting into trouble, the causes of ongoing criminal behaviour, and the challenges and supports they needed to develop positive behaviours (Appendix Two).

Interviews with young people were primarily conducted by a staff member from the Commissioner's office. Some interviews were undertaken by staff members from the participating non-government organisations.

Interviews were conducted individually face-to-face or via telephone and as focus groups of up to four young people.

Each interview and focus group was audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. In the few cases where participants declined audio recording, the interviewer recorded key points from the interview in writing. On average, interviews lasted 20 minutes (range five minutes to 90 minutes).

### **Analysis of the interviews**

The interview and focus group transcripts were coded and analysed using NVivo 11 software (QSR International Pty Ltd 2012). Thematic analysis was used to identify, explore and report on topics from the interview and focus group data.



## About the participants

The 92 young people who participated in the consultation were broadly representative of the profile of young people under supervision of Youth Justice Services in WA.

Participants had a variety of contact with the youth justice system.

Contact with youth justice	Number of participants	Per cent (%)
Community supervision	60	65
Custody*	24	26
Expired orders (within six months)	8	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>100</b>

\* Of the 24 young people in custody, 20 were sentenced and four were unsentenced.

### Location

Young people were consulted across the Perth metropolitan area and in regional areas including Kalgoorlie, Esperance, Port Hedland and Kununurra.

Location	Number of participants	Per cent (%)
Metropolitan area	57	62
Regional area	35	38
<b>Total</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>100</b>

### Gender

Seventy-four participants (80%) were male and eighteen (20%) were female.

### Age

Young people consulted ranged in age from 10 to 19 years.

Age	Number of participants	Per cent (%)
10 – 12 years	4	4
13 – 14 years	28	31
15 – 17 years	45	49
18 – 19 years	15	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>100</b>

### Cultural background

Sixty-six participants (72%) were Aboriginal and seven (8%) were from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

## Family participants

Ten family members also agreed to be interviewed. All family members who participated in the consultation were mothers or grandmothers of the participants, and were aged over 18 years. Seven of the family members interviewed were Aboriginal.

## Views of young people in youth justice

*“People, pretty much society look at us...criminals as dangerous people when we do what we do. You know, but...we only dangerous as a result of how people treat us... monsters are not just monsters like that, monsters get created first.”*

17 year-old male

Five clear themes emerged highlighting the factors that influence young people’s involvement in criminal behaviour:

- family
- friends
- school and employment
- community
- individual problems.

There was great diversity in young people’s descriptions of how these factors impact their behaviour and the choices they make. The way in which these factors are interrelated, such as family alcohol and drug use directly impacting provision of basic needs at home which in turn influences disengagement from school, demonstrates the complexity in the lives of these young people.

The five key themes, and the nuanced sub-themes within each, are explored in order of frequency with which each topic was discussed by participants.

### Family

#### **Issues that lead to offending behaviour**

Almost unanimously, young people and family members identified problems with family and relationships as significant reasons for getting into trouble. As one 17 year-old young woman explained, lifestyle and behaviour are determined by, “life at home and families you grow up with.”

Young people and family members described different ways that their family relationships influenced their own criminal behaviour. In order of frequency, these were:

- family involvement in criminal activity
- drug and alcohol use at home
- family conflict and violence
- lack of support at home.

#### **Family involvement in criminal activity**

Most commonly, young people and family members explained that having family who were also involved in criminal activity made them more likely to get into trouble with the youth justice system.

*“They seen all their olds doing it so they do it...like everyone they know just do crime so like they do too...probably just like follow on with what’s happening around them.”* 16 year-old male

“They seen it all their life, like I did. Their whole family has been through it for years and years and it just gets passed on down and down so yeah. It’s pretty stuffed up, but. When you see it, well you want to try it in the future. And then you get hooked onto it, and then yeah.” 17 year-old male

A few family members and young people explained that experiences with family members who had been in prison influenced their pathway into the youth justice system.

“His stepdad went to prison...manslaughter...That’s why I think he was lashing out mostly, cos I wouldn’t talk to him about it.” Mother

“My uncle, he’s doing four, five years [in an adult jail] now and my other cousin is doing four, five years...pretty long time unna?” 16 year-old male

A few young people and family members described criminal activity occurring together with family.

“I know a lot of people who go out and do [crime] with family.” 17 year-old female

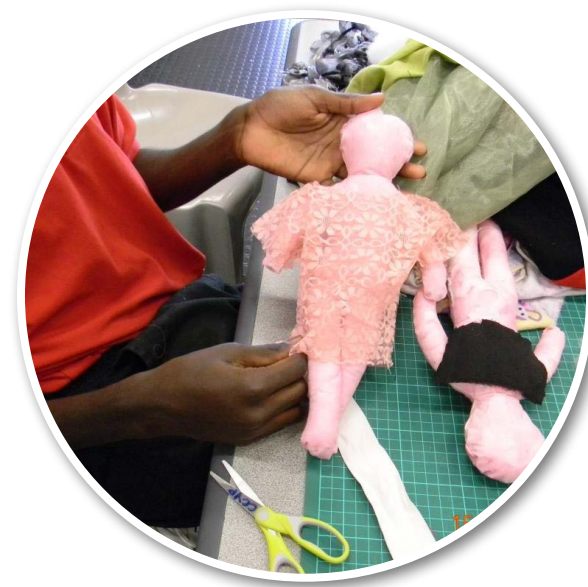
“It’s my little family as well; kids in the courts every week, my big grandson they big kids and they have all these tiny ones...there’s about eight of them and you got the two big ones and the six little ones. And I think the six little ones do more damage than the two bigger ones and they’re so tiny. They have a stool or crate to jump over the fence, that’s how small they are. But to me, I’d say they are being peer pressured.” Grandmother

Some young people described the pressure they felt from family members to be involved in criminal behaviours. This was heightened by a strong sense of belonging and connection to family which made it difficult to refuse their family’s requests and compulsion to participate in criminal activity.

“Let’s say if one of your aunties wanted something...Say I didn’t want to and they were pushing and nudging at me and saying, ‘get it, get it, get it!’ Then yeah, I’d have to get it, definitely.” 17 year-old female

“I just go with them. I need to go to my nanna’s...you never turn ‘em away.” 13 year-old male

“If [family] all at your house and they all doing the same thing, then ya’ know, you go along.” 18 year-old male



## Drug and alcohol use at home

Many young people and family members identified that being exposed to drug and alcohol use at home and the dysfunction this caused influenced them getting into trouble.

“Yeah, especially and if you’re in a house where there’s a lot of drama and a lot of alcohol and drugs and yeah, a lot of things...and that’s what gets them in [Banksia Hill].” 17 year-old female

Some young people said they stopped going to school and got into trouble due to a lack of parental supervision and support when their parents were using drugs and alcohol.

“I stopped going to school when I was in Year 9, I was 13 years old. My mum was on drugs, that’s what got me in trouble. She wasn’t around.” 15 year-old male

For other young people, watching their family use drugs and alcohol encouraged their own use of drugs and alcohol.

“Cos they grow up seeing their parents drink. Then they see the oldest sibling, they drink and, ‘oh yeah, I’m going to be like my sister and brother, they’re drinking. They’re allowed to drink.’ So they thought they could most probably drink too.” 15 year-old female

A few young people identified that family supported their use of substances.

“When I was living at my mum’s it was just too easy to get my weed, like if I didn’t have it, she would give it to me.” 15 year-old male

“It’s the way they bought up...they get drugs from dealers and their family.” 16 year-old male

One young man described his return home from residential drug rehabilitation. He articulated the significant difficulties for a young person without any support being expected to refrain from drug use and stay out of trouble when living in an environment of drug and alcohol use and routine criminal behaviour.

“Well I used to live with my mum...say you are referred to an agency and then they send you to rehab, and you’re clean, but then you still got to go back home where they are drinking and smoking? That’s what I mean, you just can’t go and say, ‘look he’s a kid on the radar, he’s the one that did the crimes, he’s the one you need locking up.’ But when he gets out, the drinking and smoking are still there, egging you on to go steal, go steal a drink or go steal this, come back with a list of things...So you gotta work with the whole family, not just the young people as well, you can’t expect to change them cos it’s the family’s behaviour not just theirs.” 17 year-old male

## Family conflict and violence

Some young people explained that damaged relationships with family caused them to get into trouble.

“The kids want to be a happy family, not just a family who are having arguments every day, they want a family who are just there to love and care for the kids.” 18 year-old female

Some young people explained that they live in violent and unsafe homes and they have no refuge from the intoxicated and violent behaviours of their family, including ‘feuding’ between families.

“We live in a world that’s extremely brutal and s\*\*t...kids are living dangerous, you know...wherever these people are, it’s pretty much dangerous.” 17 year-old male



“[Young people] don’t have a place to go and stay if their mum and dad are fighting or drinking and stuff.” 15 year-old female

“They just live here, cos they had trouble over there, like fighting and that, so they had to move over here...sometimes [the fighting] starts from the kids all the way up to the adults like in the fight.” 13 year-old male

Some young people said if they escaped violent homes, they needed to steal to survive.

“That’s the reason why people steal. They being bashed by a family member so, f\*\*\* it, I’d just go and steal. Go get money. Yeah and you get into trouble.” 16 year-old male

“They just be sleeping on the streets, with nothing. That’s why, you know, they go out and steal and s\*\*t, or that’s why they just do crime in general, for survival.” 17 year-old male

Being involved with family and peers in feuds against other groups was also seen as an exciting, bonding experience for some young people, with the possibility of gaining status.

“Yeah, world wide on the web...if you video a fight and it was good, a lot of people will be talking about it the next day. And it will be all over the world, you know. It could even go on TV...But mostly they like to fight just for the fun of it. Some of them girls mostly fight over boys. Others they fight probably to make a fool out of the person, embarrass them, you know...it’s fist on. Even their family you know, they would still fight their own family.” 17 year-old female

“Fighting. Definitely fighting. There’s a lot of conflict between people. Being a teenager...I think because sometimes they wanna prove to people how cool they can be or who they really are, so they try to get into a fight to prove that they’re cool.” 17 year-old female

For some young women, violent relationships took them away from supportive families and led them into trouble.

“I thought I would be with him forever then he started being violent, hit me and stuff. And I’ve been in and out of hospital...and do you know I’ve had a lot of problems from there.” 18 year-old female

### **Lack of support at home**

A lack of money and absence of basic needs such as food, clothing and housing were commonly identified as reasons for young people getting into trouble. Many young people described stealing as a means of getting money and the things they need.

“People struggle on money...it’s also they struggle with food, so they have to steal food.” 17 year-old female

“Kids they are very disadvantaged because their parents drink and whatever...a lot of Aboriginal families here, parents are drinking...I was a drinker too, I used to be off the planet and everything else, but I pulled my head in. Like kids can go home and there’s no parents there and the parents have gone drinking...I know one kid, the mother keeps going to [another town] and leaving the boy here and he has to, more or less, go to his pop’s house or fend for himself. So the only way he is going to fend for himself, to get a feed, is to break in, steal something or go to the shop and steal something.” Grandmother

Some young people identified that they got into trouble because they lacked support or discipline at home.

“I’ve been going off on my own for, since I can remember, you know? When I was little. So yeah, I’m used to being alone...since I was like, you know, eight or something.” 17 year-old male

“It’s just, [my mother] doesn’t like to control me...if I’m with my mum I’ll get my own way...she likes me to be happy. So if I get angry and wanna do something she’d say, ‘well go and do it then’. You know? She wouldn’t say, ‘No, you can’t do that’.” 16 year-old male

“It’s discipline yeah that’s it! For most black fellas they let their kids stand over them. They don’t go to school every day, kids miss out of school. Most of my family...most of my pops and nans, all my aunty and uncles and that, never went to school much. They just sit at home. No job, no money...all the time they just stealing. It’s real hard for us. You might as well say we are surviving on the streets, that’s how it is for us.” 17 year-old male

A few family members expressed frustration at not having positive male role models in young men’s lives.

“He has been through lore my son, but he has no man, no father to look up to...[his dad is] around but not in a good way – in a bad way... He’s a dad, but he’s not a father. He doesn’t spend the weekend and spend quality time being there for my son.” Mother

A few young people described not being able to live with family and being in transient accommodation as factors linked to them getting into trouble.

“I used to stay in [metro area], but now I’m staying at my aunty’s... my pop, and then nan passed away.” 15 year-old male

“Now I stay with my aunty but I gotta wait until my dad comes home from [regional area].” 13 year-old male

Other young people said they committed crimes to help support their struggling family.

“A lot of family struggle about rent, food, bills, so they try and help their family like stealing and everything...they trying to do the right thing by helping them out but in other ways it’s not good, you know.” 16 year-old male

Being disadvantaged in the communities where they lived and feeling under-privileged compared to other people was also identified as an issue by some.

“[Money] is a big problem. These kids have expensive tastes, so money is a problem. They think they can thief what they want because their parents can’t afford it...They see kids with flash stuff...they can’t afford...so they go and thief it and then they get themselves in trouble.” Mother



## *How issues can be resolved*

Participants identified a range of strategies required to address the issues raised with family including both services and supports to assist young people in crisis and longer term strategies to reduce dysfunction and disadvantage.

### **A safe and stable home or accommodation**

Living in a safe, stable home where young people are provided for, was commonly described as a way to reduce offending behaviours.

“Support, family who cook a lot of meals. Make a safe home. Got everything they need, don’t need to go out stealing for food.” Mother

The provision of alternative places to stay for young people escaping chaotic homes was commonly described as a way to reduce criminal activity.

“[I live in] a juvenile home and they help you out and...they listen to you, do what you want to do, they take you everywhere...I want to stay here...until family come get me.” 13 year-old male

“Cos you get a lot of kids walking around streets every night, don’t know where to go, have no place to sleep. They should make a house for them kids who don’t have a place to go where they can go and stay there if their mum and dad are fighting or drinking and stuff. Like they should put like a little dormitory for kids.” 15 year-old female

For disadvantaged young people and families, the provision of adequate financial support was suggested as a way to reduce the desire to steal.

“I would put more money into the house, so they can do more activities...If they really want to help us, pretty much buy us everything, like help us. Buy us clothes, help us buy us food, you know, stuff like that.” 17 year-old male

“It all comes down to a lack of funds. Grandparents need to have the same funding as foster parents get...I used to have two jobs to pay for everything but I’m too old to work now...I pay a mortgage and school fees and food and there’s never anything left over for the things they want.” Grandmother

Some young people who were struggling to stay sober explained that they needed to find somewhere else to live away from homes where drugs and alcohol were used.

“When I gave up drugs I come out of detox and went to my in-laws, that’s where I was staying and my [partner]was smoking dope still, the whole family was smoking dope. Getting a bit worried that’s why [my youth justice officer] got me my own house in here, got my [partner] to go to detox as well, she gave it up too, yeah.” 16 year-old male

Moving away from families who were involved in crime was identified as necessary in some instances.

“My family was all doing crime, but I got out, moved away from them. It’s hard to move away from them. You just gotta say, ‘no, you’re right, I don’t wanna do it.’ I feel bad saying it to them but I gotta just say to myself, ‘No, I don’t wanna do it no more, just do it yourself. I don’t wanna be your company no more’.” 19 year-old male

## Structure and boundaries

The need for structure and boundaries at home was regularly raised as a way for young people to develop more positive behaviours.

“Parents aren’t looking after your kids. Cos when parents [let]...the kids...do whatever they want, they still not being looked after.”  
12 year-old male

“You gotta use ‘no’ and a lot, because then they will know not to... There should be a yes and no, a balance thing, you know?”  
17 year-old female

“We don’t want rules obviously, but rules are good obviously to put in place, cos when our parents set rules, they do work most of the time.”  
18 year-old male

One young man described how he had successfully stayed out of trouble and managed to complete a Supervised Release Order (SRO) because he made the decision to live with a member of his extended family who provided him with structure and clear boundaries.

“I just needed a positive space, you know, and that’s what I got from my auntie’s house, it was all positive, so yeah, that’s the only reason I made it, because I had the help and the family around that wanted me to do well...I seen how all my older brothers grew up and stuff and I didn’t want that, so I realised that I gotta stop now when I’m young and I can. Yeah, I did have a few little hiccups when I was on curfew, but I sorted it out myself, manned up and sorted it out...Yeah I’ve lived a older life early I guess.” 16 year-old male

## Friends

Relationships with friends was the second most frequently identified factor by participants as contributing to criminal behaviour, with most reporting some influence of other young people on their actions. Many young people did not distinguish between family members and peers and described their relationship with siblings, cousins and friends as extremely important. This was particularly strong for Aboriginal young people but was also the case for non-Aboriginal young people.

### *Issues that lead to offending behaviour*

The majority of young people and family members identified that the attraction of a group of peers involved in criminal behaviours was stronger than more positive influences in their lives.

“I think their friends are the main power...they don’t listen to their parents much but it’s their friends that they hang out all the time with... so if all their friends are getting involved in some bad stuff...everything depends on friends.” 18 year-old male

“Like my mum used to say, ‘If you keep [hanging around negative peers], you going to end up in jail.’ And I was like, ‘Yeah, yeah, whatever...blah, blah...No I won’t’. And you know, one day it happens and you’re like, ‘Holy s\*\*t!’” 17 year-old male

“That’s one of the main things in our culture. They see what the group do and they go with the group. They don’t care. It’s like it’s okay if the group does it. That’s what we go through in our country. They grow up go to the city and stuff. I’m a mother of three teenagers it’s hard in [a regional area]. As parents, we’re still a parent even though those kids [are] like adult, they get all this freedom but we gotta keep ‘em safe you know.” Mother

Young people identified that it was difficult to resist the influence of peers.

“It’s really hard to get away from those friends and, a lot of them are intelligent and smart and they do know what they’re doing, but they’re trying to get away all the time from their bad friends...they’re like, ‘probably he’s all right so I’ll go with him and I’ll do that’ and that.”

18 year-old male

“It’s about friends making them go in the wrong track...even my brothers, they stuff me up for a lot of things... they were stealing and all that.”

12 year-old male

“Peer pressure, you can’t really stop peer pressure because...it’s not always other people pressuring you, sometimes you pressure yourself into doing things that you know you shouldn’t, just to fit into the group...In my opinion, I don’t think there’s a way to stop peer pressure.”

18 year-old male

“Just be loyal to all your brothers and that, you know. It’s basically what it is...that’s like all our older brothers, they’re the seniors and we’re the juniors, like little fellas? Cos they started it when they were younger and now we’re finishing it.”

16 year-old male

Many young people and family members explained that peers used intimidation and bullying to coerce them to participate in criminal activity.

“All my mates are like, ‘don’t be a b\*\*\*h,’ you know, ‘come out with me.’ And it’s like, ‘Ah I’ll come but I’m not doing nothing wrong!’ And then I end up in the back of a police car!”

14 year-old female

“Yeah, it’s a real big thing, because...they push you hard and call you names and stuff, and if you don’t do it, they like put you down, unless you do it.”

18 year-old male

“And telling you you’re a scaredy cat and whatever else because you don’t want to do what they’re doing. And when they’re threatening to hit you and s\*\*t. Because that has happened to him a couple of times.”

Mother

Many young people and families explained that they navigated towards peers from similar backgrounds because they needed to belong to a group that understood and supported them.

“They don’t want to feel any different to anyone else. They just want to be normal...because they’ve got like no one at home, or they don’t want to be lonely...they kind of blindly accept their friends even if they’re doing bad things.”

17 year-old male

“The crowd you hang out with...the crowd is important. Because it’s like, your friends know who you are.”

19 year-old male

Young people and families identified that being involved in criminal behaviour also gave them popularity and respect from their peer group, giving them a powerful sense of identity and belonging.

“If you’re doing crime, you get more popular, you know? You get your name around...if you’d gone out and stolen something, you get mad respect...Like, I was like walking around...the other day and this little [boy] shook my hand! I’m like, I never even met this kid in my life... They come up to me, like, ‘what’s going on bro?’...Oh, so many people know me.”

15 year-old male

“It’s like people want to be on top of the top, ‘Yeah I’m the best dealer’.”

17 year-old male

“That was when you were 10 years old. And I said, ‘Why are you doing this? And you said, ‘It’s not cool to be good mum.’ I looked and I’m like, ‘Wool!’ That was his excuse back then, it’s not cool to be good...[And he was in] a lot of trouble.” Mother

### **How issues can be resolved**

Opportunities to have positive role models and mentors and make new friends were identified as important strategies to prevent and reform criminal behaviour.

#### **Positive role models**

Young people were able to articulate features of role models and mentors that influenced their own behaviour, including inspiration for alternative behaviour, engaging them in other activities, and providing positive encouragement.

“I think they probably get inspired...[by] a role model as well, to be like looking up towards others and looking at how to be when they’re older. Not the same as them, but follow in their footsteps, you know?”  
18 year-old female

“A bit more positive role models...just to help the younger kids get back on track, tell ‘em, sorta like, tell ‘em what the consequences are really. And they need to do stuff with ‘em a lot more – instead of being out on the streets. I think that could take their mind off of stealing, drinking, smoking, and that sort of stuff.” 18 year-old male

“Not just the one [supportive] person...they should get a lot more people coming out and basically encouraging, giving them the encouragement to do what they love and not just what they are brought into because they know the wrong people.” 18 year-old male

The permanency and trustworthiness of good role models was a common theme. Young people and family members identified a number of factors that made role models credible, including the need to be trustworthy, build a relationship with them and have an ongoing presence or connection to them.

“[Role models] have a good job, they have a good house, family, car. And they see that maybe one day they would want something like that.” 17 year-old male

“First they need good people, which they can, 100 per cent, fully trust. Which will always be there, no matter what, whatever time of the day, whatever night or the day.” 17 year-old male

“I like that bloke there...he can relate to where I come from, he’s like pretty cool ya know, I think he had a little bit of a past and he can relate to us kids and points us in the right track, keep us going good...yeah I’ve known him for about two years, good while now.” 17 year-old male

“They have some mentors but they never have male mentors. My grandson needs a male mentor who’s ongoing, who’s in there for the long run. I’m old, I struggle to walk to the front gate. I can’t go and kick a footy in the park with him. He needs someone who will stick with him. Not just like with JJT<sup>9</sup> [Juvenile Justice Team] where there’s someone for four months and then that’s it, you’re on your own.” Grandmother

9 Juvenile Justice Teams are an alternative for young people who have committed offences but who do not have an established pattern of offending, diverting them from the formal court system. Young people can be referred to a Juvenile Justice Team only if they accept responsibility for their actions and if the offence is not scheduled as a serious offence, as determined by the *Young Offenders Act 1994* (WA).

It was particularly important for Aboriginal young people to have cultural role models to spend time with them and demonstrate the 'right way' to live.

"The [elders] gotta be there for the kids and teach 'em the right ways... It's gotta be example, like you live it and they see that in the people around them...you have got elders, if you've got young people doing something wrong, it's the elders that respond to that, the culture and the lore is really strong...that's one of the big things, making sure that our elders are influencing the younger people in that positive manner... like having that respect for elders." Mother

"People that know what they are talking about too, I hate it when they get someone in to come and talk to us and don't know what they are saying. They need someone who's got experience in that sort of s\*\*t - in the same position... I don't want to sound racist, but white fellas that don't know what's going on in the community and all that kind of stuff. Some wadjellas try to sound like they know what they talking about but they don't. They just make fools out of themselves." 16 year-old male

Being around positive people who are not afraid to be successful was described as a way to inspire productive behaviour among young people.

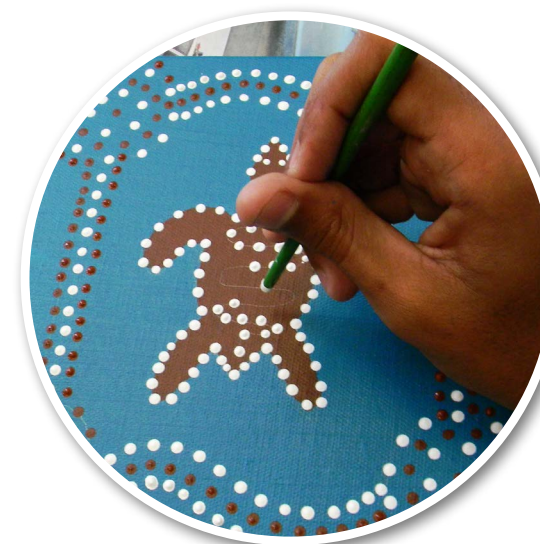
"A lot of kids have potential but they just don't like to show it cos sometimes they can be afraid to show it you know, or even if just embarrassed. But if they around other people doing good then it's good cos, I think they probably get inspired." 18 year-old male

## Making new friends

Commonly young people and family expressed a need to have more constructive friendships but also acknowledged it was difficult to develop and maintain these.

"Need to make new friends...like they've been friends for so long and they're like, 'Oh you know, we're friends and I like hanging out with them,' but then they don't necessarily get up to good things and it's hard after a while to be good, ha, ha, you know." 13 year-old male

"The people that really don't care about you, they want you to do this and want you to do that. They ring up, want you to do stuff that get you back in trouble. You gotta stay away from them people. I was selfish really, cos all I did back then was think about myself and my mates instead of thinking about the people who really cared and who were good for me." 18 year-old male



## School and employment

The majority of young people and family members identified disengagement from school as a factor in criminal behaviour.

Reasons young people provided for their disengagement from school included:

- did not like school because it was boring
- feeling out of place and unwelcome at school
- bullying and discrimination
- a lack of support educationally, socially and financially
- suspension or exclusion from school.

### *Issues that lead to offending behaviour*

#### **Did not like school because it was boring**

School was seen as boring and unstimulating for many young people involved in the youth justice system, and was a reason for not attending school.

“Well for one, I think that everyone thinks that school is boring, and you don’t really want to sit in the class just doing the same thing over and over. It does tend to get boring...there’s not a lot of encouragement for the kids to want to do that, the way they explain it. Well it is pretty boring, so no one else wants to sit around and do that sort of stuff.”

18 year-old male

“They don’t make education interesting anymore...Not enough interaction between teachers and students...not on helping the kids... They’re more concerned about uniform and working than anything else.” Mother

“I always wanted to wag and go and smoke and stuff. So me and me mates used to always run out of the office and get suspended and caught and stuff like that...I was like a little rebel back then.”

16 year-old male

#### **Feeling out of place at school**

Some young people described the school environment as unwelcoming and said they felt out of place there.

“Well [school] is a place for kids, obviously...it is an environment for kids...But my experience has been lonely, you know? People look at me, they don’t even look at me...I’m a ghost, man. I don’t know why... people always inevitably end up hating me for some reason...I get it that I’m not popular...but hey!” 17 year-old male

“I went...for like a month of Year 8...It was really hard, cos it was like a big prison...all fenced off. You have to get a pass to go to the toilet, and all that s\*\*t, yeah.” 15 year-old male

#### **Bullying and discrimination at school**

Some young people described bullying and racial discrimination at school as a reason for not attending. Some of these young people said when they complained to authorities at school, they were not believed and they did not receive help from teachers to prevent ongoing harassment.

“I was getting bullied...I was getting called ‘charcoal chicken’ and ‘you’re not an Aboriginal’...I was constantly telling teachers. One of the reasons why I left school was cos I was getting bullied...I was getting bullied for my dark skin...it was also through my primary school to my high school and I dropped out in Year 9. I didn’t even graduate cos of bulliness. I’m supposed to be in Year 12 today and I still haven’t gone back to school.” 17 year-old female



“I used to get bullied at school, and then one day...I lost it in class, and...things went from bad to worse, and even though I didn’t do anything that bad, I got in trouble for no reason. And it just kept on going, going, and teachers wouldn’t believe me, they just think I’m making up stuff.” 15 year-old male

A few young people said they had endured racist and belittling taunts from teachers.

“Some [teachers] are racist...like some they say, ‘you’re a black idiot’.”  
15 year-old male

Young people and family members said that the school curriculum culturally excluded them.

“Instead of the whole bad history for Aboriginals, what Aboriginal kids want to know is...what they used to be when before the white man come and made it hard for them.” Mother

“Why is the primary school teaching Chinese, Indonesian when we should be teaching Aboriginal?...It would’ve been better if we had the classes of our own history. Cos like...when it comes to culture I know that I want to get right into the details, I just don’t know it!”  
17 year-old female

“I find as a parent...there is the lack of support honestly, because they are frightened to speak up...yeah and I think they need more cultural understanding within the teachers and the education system.” Mother

### **Lack of educational, social and financial support at school**

Some young people experienced a lack of academic and social support which put them at further educational disadvantage.

“Cos we’re not getting the help like everybody else. Like, I feel left out! So why do we bother if the teachers are not gonna helps us?”  
17 year-old female

“Because of the lack of, no support at school...That’s when we don’t want to go to school...They need support...that’s probably why they do what they do, because they’ve got no-one to help them, or they’ve got no-one to trust.” 17 year-old male

“Half the teachers, they don’t want to give those kids that [support] cos it’s too much work to concentrate on them so they let the kids run amok and send them to the office, get rid of them.” Mother

A few young people explained that they did not go to school because they felt shame due to lack of money to buy basic items like lunch, stationery, shoes and uniforms.

“Cos every time I was to go to school, I just sit there. I don’t even got nothing...pens and stuff, you know. I don’t have the resources and that to do it.” 17 year-old male

“They won’t go...if kids are going to school and having kids make fun of them going dirty and dirty clothes.” 15 year-old male

## Suspensions or exclusions from school

Suspensions or expulsions from school were a significant part of the school disengagement experience for many participants.

“Never really went to school...got kicked out Year 7, no, Year 6. I didn't go Year 7. Went Year 8 for the first two weeks, then got expelled.”

15 year-old male

“I've been suspended. Yeah, expelled from my last school, it was a Catholic school. I've been suspended many times in multiple schools, so that's nothin' new.”

17 year-old male

One family member described not being supported to find a suitable alternative for her son when he was expelled from school.

“There's still no support from the system...yeah, the schools, networks, programs, educational. I remember it took so long for [my son] to get engaged in another school...that's why he just fell through the cracks.”

Mother

## The impact of school disengagement on young people's lives

Many young people and family members said that they got into trouble when they were not attending school and subsequently became involved in the youth justice system.

“I'd have to say just like wagging...that's the start on their way to being a criminal...the people that do wag are involved in criminal activities.”

18 year-old male

“I stole my first car at 10...Because I wasn't going to school...Just boredom. And you do stupid stuff if you're bored.”

14 year-old male

“I never went for the rest of Year 8. Then Year 9, I went there for only about a month, then I got locked up. Yeah...so I went back there for about a month in Year 10 [got suspended], then I got locked up again.”

16 year-old male

“I give up school and got in trouble, then the next thing I was hanging with the wrong kids, from that I found smoking dope first then I started doing gear [amphetamine].”

17 year-old female

“My experience with JJT [Juvenile Justice Team] was started cos I give up school and getting in trouble...then end up getting into a relationship, falling pregnant at the age of 15, giving birth at 16... It all comes back to school, cos that's where I was getting bullied.” (details withheld)

## How issues can be resolved

Participants recognised the value of school and education as an important part of preventing and reforming criminal behaviour and had a number of suggestions about how this could be achieved.

“I want them to go to school and have an education, it's just basic knowledge and understanding as long as you know your maths and your English and your school subjects or understand what you can... 'I'm normal, I'm important, I can read, that's what's important'.”

“I feel like just make opportunities to go to school and inform them all about the bad stuff and how to make good choices and bad choices and how to make them involved in good stuff rather than bad stuff.”

18 year-old male

“Probably go back to school, yeah and just go to school and then you won't be in that trap system, going to Banksia.”

16 year-old male

## Improving the school environment

Young people and family members said teachers played an important role in creating positive school experiences, and described characteristics of a good teacher.

“[Good teachers] actually have the time of the day where they are sitting around and have a yarn with the kid you know and get to know them, instead of just like in class and walk around, ‘Hi yeah I’ve seen you in class, get to class.’” 17 year-old female

“The teachers at that school are dardy [cool], they help you like, they talk about what’s been happening, what we’re going to do today, if we’re gunna go somewhere they tell you, you know.” 17 year-old male

“[Teachers] gotta gain trust somewhere...all the kids, like, ‘we’re here to help you, don’t worry about this and that,’ and they get down to it. But you must know what you’re saying and doing first, you must know your own knowledge before you can teach it, and gain trust with the students, so they can trust you then, so they can stay with you and stuff like that.” 17 year-old male

## Support to foster school engagement

Acknowledging the barriers of engaging in mainstream schooling, young people and family members highlighted the benefits of educational programs that are designed for students like them.

“It’s a school for drop outs, like bad kids, they don’t give us real hard work, we have like maybe five or six breaks in-between the whole school. You can have a smoke at school and that’s probably about it... [it helps because]...it calms some of the people down...like there’s only what 20, 30 of us.” 17 year-old male

“Yeah [my CARE<sup>10</sup> school] was alright, we did metal work and wood work and all that...[they had] Aboriginal officers and that out there and they picked you up on the bus and they work with you.” 17 year-old male

“Nah, [the school work] it’s good. Some of it’s hard, like if they know you’re smart they’ll give you hard work, but. All people have different work.” 16 year-old male

Focussed support for schoolwork was identified as a means to address low literacy and numeracy levels from lack of school engagement and that this needed to continue from primary through to secondary school.

“You get some really good primary teachers and then go to high school. Like [my daughter] said, ‘you’re on your own two feet’. You need that [same] support...they should do after school, they used to do it, after school homework.” Mother

A number of intensive academic programs and after-school programs like Lit Up and Follow the Dream were identified as helpful.

“I’m not good at reading and writing so...it would help kids if they have one on one. I did the Lit Up program and it was good. I got my reading and writing improved.” 17 year-old male

“That [Follow the Dream Program] helped me a lot.” 16 year-old male

Practical support such as transport to school and financial assistance was also suggested.

“[We go to school because]...the bus drops us off.” 13 year-old male  
It would help more like if they like picked up children.” 14 year-old male

“What I said about giving money to the students...Yeah, but like a voucher, that can only get food and drinks...just for food basically, I’d do that.” 19 year-old male

<sup>10</sup> Curriculum and Reengagement in Education Schools.

## Assisting with employment

Commonly young people and family members said one of the most effective ways to stay out of the youth justice system was to be employed.

“They need more job opportunities.” 17 year-old male

“They actually need a job...if they are sitting at home, they probably on Centrelink, go get a job of course, obviously!” 18 year-old female

“Yeah, we’re working...it gives us something to do.” 17 year-old male

Young people recognised that they needed to participate in programs that lead to ongoing employment.

“I would give them a chance to figure out what they wanted to do instead of locking them up...They have brains to go and get a job...a course to study.” 18 year-old female

“To get a job you need courses...Keep more active.” 18 year-old male

“More education, more job-seeking places.” 16 year-old male

Some young people acknowledged high fees as a barrier to education and suggested that support for financial hardship would help to achieve employment goals.

“But for me to achieve [employment], I have to go to TAFE and I’d have to pay TAFE fees. How do I pay TAFE fees?” 17 year-old female

Other young people who already attended education and employment programs expressed aspirations for employment.

“I’m at this place now Outcare, trying to look for a job for my family, trying the best thing I can to help them out and myself...trying to get a good job.” 19 year-old male

“This program is the reason why I’m going to the mines and getting the jobs...It’s got a lot of contact, it’s just good to come here to work. It would be better if you got paid for it, but it’s good, good set of people... it’s not boring and it’s not hard...hard labour is good.” 18 year-old male

“Oh yeah, this [Outcare program] saved my life! I’m going to the mines next month because of this place, eh?” 18 year-old male

“Yep they can help with apprentices once you’re finished, they help and they can help you get jobs.” 18 year-old male

Culturally secure programs were described as important in engaging Aboriginal young people and supporting long-term goals.

“We did this program in that horse station out of town here. [The facilitator] took us out to the station...and we camped out at the creek and we was bush living and helping the station and then one time I asked the boss for a job and he said, ‘Yep I’ll give it to you a job’. But yeah, he thought I was lying and said, ‘Yeah you gotta keep on asking’. So I kepted on asking him and then all the juvenile justice mob came to my aunty’s house and asked me if I want to work and I said, ‘Yeah!’ So I went along and I trained first, did some training for like two weeks and then yeah, straight to work after two weeks and then three months.” 15 year old male

“[The White Lion] is good...chill back and they don’t tell you what to do all the time you can do whatever you want...they know if you step out of place...I enjoy it...say a prayer in the Aboriginal language, brilliant.” 17 year-old male

## Community

Issues in the broader community were also identified as contributing to criminal behaviour. Aboriginal young people said there was an absence of cultural connections and activities in their communities.

Young people suggested the following community factors contributed to them getting into trouble:

- lack of access to community resources
- living in high crime areas
- discrimination and inequality.

### *Issues that lead to offending behaviour*

#### **Lack of access to community resources**

Young people and families identified being drawn into criminal activities due to limited opportunities to engage in positive activities in the community. For some this was because their community did not have many activities for young people their age or they had difficulty accessing or felt excluded from the activities that did exist.

“There’s no skate parks, there’s nothing, there’s not even a swimming pool...Not enough to do other than hang around the shopping centre and get themselves into trouble.” Mother

“Well they get in trouble, they look for it. When I look at my mates, I say ‘why do you keep stealing?’ And they say, ‘it’s just there’s nothing else to do’ so they keep stealing.” 15 year-old male

“Nothing to do...They got [community youth group] but it only runs to nine o’clock but when it finish kids go up town, hang around, they walk the street.” 14 year-old female

“We just go to the shop every day and stuff like that but we don’t have any other fun stuff. Like we don’t have basketball competitions any week or football, any stuff like that. We don’t have that. We just stay on dope, some young kids.” 15 year-old female

“Bored, nothing to do. There are youth centres and stuff but they’re boring for older kids.” 14 year-old male

Some young people and family members explained that when they accessed programs in the community, the service delivery was inconsistent or low quality.

“Well over the Christmas period this year, we had no community police here; they all went on holiday Christmas time. So a lot of kids got into a lot of trouble, because over the six weeks school holiday it was pretty boring here, there was nothing for people to do...a lot of the kids, breaking and entering and whatever.” Grandmother

“Not enough for young people to do around in certain areas. Not enough sporting clubs that are easily accessible. The youth centre doesn’t have a lot to offer, more problems there than anywhere else.” Mother

A few explained that fun, recreational activities in the community are too expensive or they excluded people under the age of 18.

“If you want to go have some fun or something, there’s nothing much for you, as a group, as youth, for you to go do...It’s all orientated for money, like, say tourism or people over the age of 18 to go drink at bars, go to restaurants, to tourist places, all of them, it’s all for people over the age of 18.” 18 year-old male

“If you really wanna engage of their activities, you have to pay every day...I’m a foster carer for my four grandchildren and it’s even hard for me to pay \$20 a day for them to go to PCYC.” Grandmother

## Living in high crime areas

The areas where young people live were considered by many young people and family members to strongly determine participation in criminal behaviour. Young people often described living in places where drug and alcohol use and crime was common.

“It’s a fact like, kinda depends on where the areas are they live in. Like more rich people end up in nicer areas so that...they’re surrounded by nicer people. If you chuck a bunch of people...all Homeswest housing, you just get a bunch of break-ins and a bunch of drugs.” 18 year-old male

“It’s the worstest area around because of more arguments and fights happen [on the streets]. I see young people with like split like eyes, something like that.” 18 year-old female

“Cos where I lived, the dealer lived down the road a bit. So we’d go there and go back to mine.” 15 year-old male



## Discrimination and inequality

Some young people thought it was unfair that their standard of living was not equal to other people in the community.

“Put it this way, no offence to white people or the Africans or Arabs and the rest of them, hey. They got big rich two-storey houses and we still living in houses all stuffed up, all messy, still living a life like we did about 40,000 years ago...Yeah, they have got better houses and they got more money you know, I don’t get it how we don’t get treated the same as them.” 16 year-old male

Young people and family members explained that criminal activity was a way to have the same things as other people in the community.

“It all comes down to a lack of funds...My grandson doesn’t get anything extra because he’s too young to even get a job. I’ve seen what happens to these kids when they really want something they can’t have; they get sticky fingers at the shops. It becomes a thing that they do because they want what everyone else has and they feel left out if they don’t have it.” Grandmother

Many young people said they had personally experienced racial discrimination in their community.

“White people they will just...they don’t care. They just look at us and say nothing to us. They just walk away and have no respect for us... When we speak our language or anything like that, or when we talk, they just look at us and laugh and copy us and then make fun of us.” 15 year-old female

Discriminatory stereotypes circulated on social media and in the wider community distressed many young people who said that racist typecasts often perpetuated criminal behaviours.

“There’s a lot of stuff on the internet. They see black fellas like this and black fellas like that. So them mob, if they want to say we are like that, or we do this, or we do that. And so most of them boys go and do it.”

16 year-old male

“I was on Facebook a couple of days ago and some white people have a game, where they can kill our Australian animals and us black fellas.”

16 year-old male

“Most people can sit there and laugh and joke but really it’s pretty offensive like...on YouTube, that song ‘I Can’t Feel My Face When I’m With You’, and the song is changed to ‘I Can’t Feel My Face When I Sniff Glue’ and there’s a black fella sniffing there. A...lot of people can sit there and laugh but not unless you actually know the people that sniff glue. Do you know people who sniff glue? It’s only funny if you haven’t been around it.”

17 year-old male

“They judge everyone on one young person’s action, so if one person acts up towards you so they label the whole lot of them.”

16 year-old male

Some young people said they had positive, respectful interactions with individual police officers but there were others who experienced discrimination by police or security guards.

“But that same detective, he was saying stuff, ‘yeah, you going nowhere with your life you Aboriginal son’...But I was laughing at him, I don’t care.”

15 year-old male

“I’m always gonna be getting arrested and s\*\*t just because of my name...Nah, even the cops said like, ‘expect to get pulled over more often, cos you’re in the system’.”

15 year-old male

“[The police] do use quite a lot of excessive force that is unnecessary even with the girls, it’s terrible.”

16 year-old male

Aboriginal young people and families said that a lack of connection to country and culture was also a factor in young people getting into trouble.

“Aboriginal kids got no culture no more.”

14 year-old female

“My own nephew, he been stealing for years...My nephew’s down in Banksia now, and when he come back home I’ll tell him the same thing, ‘stay out of trouble.’ ...I send kids away from my house and say ‘go home now’, then they don’t go back to their house they walk the streets all night, they don’t even come home, ‘Aunty we done “Day Breaker”’ as they call it... they sleep all day until same thing night time. Friday night my main worry. And adults party, you know?...Yeah, culture they need that thing, yeah.”

Mother

“I feel sorry for my mob because they don’t have much things to do back home so they just do like stealing every night...they go country no stealing...[but in town] they always in trouble...they need some activities like youth group picking them up after school, exploring, going bush on the holidays and stuff like that.”

15 year-old female

Young people who had experienced exclusion, discrimination or racism explained criminal behaviour as a reaction to the unjust treatment they received.

“People can’t help you, you can’t rely on people to help you...so you help yourself by doing it in a bad way. If you can’t do it in a good way first, the bad way will always be there. That’s how we look at it. That’s how I look at it.” 17 year-old male

“That’s why they just do crime in general, for survival, or the result... of racism, or family issues... So obviously [a kid’s] gonna get angry, he’s gonna walk around p\*\*\*\*d, he’s gonna walk around angry...And obviously he’s going to walk around the streets drunk, and people going to look at him all weird ways, and – you get where I’m going? He’s gonna start swearing at people, and police gonna start turning up, and he’s gonna start firing hits. Police gonna start, obviously, arresting him, or tase him, you know?” 17 year-old male

“Yeah, of course it is dangerous. People, pretty much society look at us...criminals as dangerous people when we do what we do. You know, but...we only dangerous as a result of how people treat us... monsters are not just monsters like that, monsters get created first. You know, just like Frankenstein s\*\*t.” 17 year-old male

### ***How issues can be resolved***

Having access to recreational activities was clearly articulated as important to keep young people out of trouble. Such activities needed to be more consistently available and relevant to the young people who were otherwise excluded.

“Personally if I had somewhere to go do the stuff I needed to do, I wouldn’t be here [in Banksia Hill] right now.” 18 year-old male

“It’s good, it’s got Wi-Fi, lit up, there’s cameras there, it’s right next to a park, a section’s right next to a park so people can come and watch as well, who don’t skate, and people, old people or young people, you know, male, female, tourists, any nationality come and they can watch.” 18 year-old male

Young people and family members said they need support to overcome barriers such as limited finances and transport access to engage in more activities in the community.

“Probably like if services like would take us on activities and stuff. Probably like going out swimming and stuff.” 14 year-old male

“There should be different kind of programs...for different age groups of kids, girls, boys, old, young, and that sort of stuff... It encourages them to wanna be the one to win, and that sort of stuff.” 18 year-old male

“Helping them more with sports, like buying them, government buying them footy boots, and footys and stuff like that so they can go play footy.” 16 year-old male

Young people often said that they needed to be consulted about programs that are designed for them.

“Some of the ideas that Youth Justice come up with to try and get like, kids off the street at night...are dumb, you know? Completely dumb, like kids are gonna go there, think that they’re all shame and stuff. Like they did this rollerblading, and all this but it was winyarn (bad) ... I reckon like, having a big like competition down at the skate park, they did that and I loved it...get out and get active.” 17 year-old male

“I mean, its different perceptions. Like some people might want more basketball courts, some people might want more skate parks...that’s just like personally for me.” 18 year-old male



Aboriginal young people and family members also identified the need for more opportunities to practice important cultural activities and spend time on country to divert young people from crime.

“They need to practice more culture.” Mother

“He’s 14 now. He’s been through lore so he have big responsibility in our culture. Gardya way different to Aboriginal way.” Mother

“They need to go country...But keep them out there for long time...two, three weeks...a long time to get my head into sense...stop running in the streets...keep out of town for once...out at the block...they swim, go fishing with their parents and stuff...bush is better than town...it’s nice and peaceful...not that much drinking in the bush.” 12 year-old male

“What keeps me outta trouble is staying out from town – go hunting, fishing, swimming. I mean, yeah, that’s keeping me outta trouble... Sometimes I go country sometimes I come back town and it’s trouble, it’s no good.” 15 year-old male

“She used to take kids out to the spring and stuff but that stopped because there was no more funding and no...other activities so that’s why the kids are getting in trouble.” 15 year-old female



## Individual problems

Young people identified a range of personal issues that led them into criminal behaviour, including making poor choices. They appreciated the efforts of individual programs that assisted them, but some young people struggled to access sufficient supports to effectively help them address their issues. These issues were part of a complex array of family problems, school disengagement and lack of community support which in turn impacted their mental health, drug and alcohol use and criminal behaviour.

### Issues that lead to offending behaviour

#### Choices

Some young people in the youth justice system explained that getting into trouble was a choice.

“Wrong decisions, probably...Yeah, no one else’s fault I guess.” 18 year-old male

“Obviously their own actions are their own responsibility...you do the crime, you do the time, eh?” 18 year-old male

#### Drug and alcohol use

The majority of young people and family members identified that drug and alcohol use was a significant factor in them commencing and continuing to be involved in criminal activity.

“They’re caught in that trap...they get into trouble sitting at home bored. Then they start getting into crimes. They start the drugs first, then getting into the crimes, and then still, they got no support.” Mother

“I got into trouble because of drugs...all of us have drug problems in Banksia Hill, we all have a drug problem, we all talk about it and we all think about drugs. Really its drugs, I think.” 17 year-old female

“They stressing out they drugs in his system...one little boy, he down the street, he always got drugs in his system. He gunna stress out and he took it out on the other brother, the little brother.” 13 year-old male

“When you’re young you just tend to drink a lot more and like just get blind...they pretty much get blind drunk, yeah just can’t control your drinks, just over the top and then you do something stupid or they just get aggressive when they have their drink so...they get themselves into fights.” 18 year-old male

“My cousin...he end up taking drugs and he was coming down and he stabbed someone and now he’s doing 25 years to life.” 16 year-old male

“[When arrested] I wasn’t in my right mind. I was in a different mind... I wasn’t there. I thought I was asleep.” 18 year-old female

Young people also described the interaction between drug use and mental health issues.

“You hear a lot of people talk about people who sniff. But they are all still people. They’re sniffing because they want to escape reality.” 16 year-old male

“They...take the drugs to get away from the stressness.” 13 year-old male

“There’s this one young boy, [committed suicide] because he was on some ice.” 18 year-old female

Young people explained that they engaged in offending behaviours in order to support addiction to alcohol and drugs.

“They feed on the drugs so they wonder how they gonna buy it. So they got no money, there’s no Centrelink money at the same time, so they use up all their money on drugs. So they feed on trying to steal, trying to rob people for money.” 17 year-old female

“They steal for drugs. I steal for alcohol.” 14 year-old male

“Someone like me, I steal for drugs.” 17 year-old female

Drug and alcohol use commonly started at an early age.

“Marijuana and stuff...[they start using]...About six or seven years old.” 15 year-old female

“I started smoking dope at seven.” 17 year-old male

Young people described being pressured to use drugs and alcohol with peers.

“Peer pressure...like when you’re just getting out [of Banksia Hill], it’s, ‘Do you wanna cone?’ ‘Nah I don’t want to smoke!’ ‘Nah just have my cone.’ And then after that, you love it and just do it.” 16 year old male

“Oh, say like, your friends want you to go out and drink and you say no they say, ‘Come on bro, come on’, and you get peer pressured into it, so you say yes. And you don’t want to drink but they peer pressure you into it, and then you do something stupid, you know?” 16 year-old male

## Cognitive and behavioural issues

Young people and families discussed cognitive and behavioural issues such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and trauma as reasons for being involved in youth justice.

“They see the dysfunction of their families and they don’t feel normal so they have something to prove, they get all tough. My grandson has ADHD and trauma. He has temper tantrums and beats holes in my doors. I had to call the cops because I didn’t know what else I could do.” Grandmother

“So we need to stop this thing of young kids getting in trouble. Something needs to stop them because it’s hard for them growing up and being a silly person with mental issues and stuff like that.”  
16 year-old female

A few young people discussed Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder as a contributing factor to criminal behaviour.

“It’s a circle of life to us, for me...their mum or dad, smoke drugs... mum’s smoking and drinking when their baby was in their guts and changes their brain...damage their brain, I think. Cos they’re dumb... they can’t control the stealing.” 15 year-old male

## Habitual criminal activity

Young people identified that it became a habit to be involved in criminal behaviour and many recognised that these habitual behaviours were reinforced by the exhilaration they felt when committing crimes.

“Yeah, [doing crime]...It is a drug...Once you start, you can’t stop.”  
17 year-old male

“When you’re around kids who steal, you are like, addicted to it. You won’t stop stealing until...like you get in trouble and then the next day you feel like you want to do it again and again.” 15 year-old female

“Yeah, [doing crime] is very addictive...it’s sorta like...when you steal that item and you get chased from the police it’s like, it’s a new feeling for a lot of young people, which I found that it was a good... I see it as a lot of young kids, they do get bored, and they just wanna get chased for the fun of it, just for the adrenaline.” 18 year-old male

“It’s just such a good adrenaline rush...Doing criminal activity...I don’t reckon you get such a rush from anything else...it’s like its own little drug.” 17 year-old male

“It’s like I have this nervous sort of feeling like, will I get caught? Like when you’re in the house by yourself for a long time.” 14 year-old male

Young people described the benefits gained from criminal activity as another incentive for continuing offending behaviour.

“Yeah, it was just like, I dunno, kinda like get all excited about what you could get out of this place. It’s fun. Especially when you get something out of it...When you don’t have money...You just want to do anything to get money.” 17 year-old male

“Yeah like, my thing was always like I don’t care from stealing things from shops or nothing but I hate stealing from people, like I took a bike from someone’s house so I was feeling bad, but I was having fun on it.” 15 year-old male

The negative consequences of habitual criminal activity were also acknowledged.

“So I’ve done pretty much every crime you can do. After you done it all, it’s boring. It’s not worth it, I’ve seen my mates get locked up, I’ve seen them die, I’ve seen them...on the gear, I’ve seen people like... it’s not worth it...Got no life, got no house, living on the streets, nah it’s not good eh?” 15 year-old male

“Yeah, it can be fun living the life that we live. You don’t have to do anything...until you have commitments, until you end up at my age and I’m the oldest girl here, and I’ve opted to do my full-time, cos I constantly get given bail...if I don’t start doing the things that I need to do, I’m going to end up in women’s prison in the next three months.” 17 year-old female

### ***How issues can be resolved***

Better access to supports and services was seen as essential to addressing criminal behaviours. Breaking the cycle was difficult and young people identified needing ongoing support and opportunities to reengage in positive activities as critical in this process.

Young people appreciated the practical support provided by programs that are designed for young people in youth justice.

“[Staff at White Lion]...they helped me do my Order. They took me there. They took me to the counsellor and all that...urinalysis. Yeah transport. That was really helpful.” 16 year-old male

Supportive, mentoring relationships with workers at these programs was said to be integral to young people’s engagement.

“Get a mentor and get the mentor to have a talk with them and see what goes from there...I need that support from [my mentor] as much as I can, yeah. Yeah, they tell me some good things, they helped me out. Like in my attendance I stopped coming for a while and they kept on talking to me and I got back on, and I need to commit my attendance for a while, so they can help me out with what I want... they just kept on telling me and telling me, got it through my head, ‘got to stick at it’ to get what I want, like my licence and stuff like that. I went to the licencing centre and passed it, yeah.” 19 year-old male

Young people and family members were grateful for the support of dedicated workers and suggested if they could change anything they would have more role models for young people in youth justice.

“I would hire more staff members. So, let’s say I had so many kids who need help, I would get, like, hire more staff members, for each single one of them, one-on-one time with them, more time, would be great.” 17 year-old male

Commonly young people attributed recidivism to a lack of support.

“Yeah, no support...and that’s what I mean! That’s why I’ve been here four times.” 18 year-old male

Young people described being caught in a cycle of offending that requires significant effort to escape.

“I was sort of hanging out and didn’t expect to come into troubleness and it just turns you out and you go into it and you try to get out but you can’t. You gotta turn your life around somehow.” 19 year-old male

A few young people explained that they had adequate supports and services to reduce offending behaviours but lacked motivation to change because they have dropped out of the system.

“The system is really good, like we get given the opportunity to change, we get told constantly about services and we get all the support that we need but we don’t make the decision for ourselves to change, we just don’t want to. That’s just how it is, like we do, we get constantly told if you have this problem go to this person or if you’re worried about mental health go here, if you need help with education, court supports us as well, but we constantly like all of us have dropped out of the support networks cos we just don’t want it.” 17 year-old female

Young people recognised that when they substituted criminal activity with more productive behaviours, their offending stopped.

“I don’t really steal anymore. I stay inside so I don’t go out any more. I normally just sit back on my motorbike at home.” 14 year-old male

A few young people said that caring for other people was a motivating factor to change their behaviour.

“What helped me was my baby. I stay out of trouble for her.” 17 year-old male

Spending time with young people and involving them in plans for their future was considered helpful.

“Maybe like ask them what they want in life, and just like the little things and try and make it happen...Like this kid wants like a job and he can’t get one so he is breaking the law...and you could help him by getting him a job.” 14 year-old male

“Get them some advices about jobs and courses and try and get a good follow up with that.” 19 year-old male

Having independence and being trusted was acknowledged as beneficial to staying out of trouble.

“More independence. I think that’s why I’ve lasted quite a while on the outside this time. Longest I’ve been out since the first time I got locked up. Cos they’ve given me more independence to do my own thing.” 17 year-old male

Being offered a second chance and having the support of consistent and understanding workers helped young people stay out of the youth justice system.

“I stopped using drugs for my kid. She’s four months old. It’s made me grow up. I just want to be there for her, be a better dad than I was before. I learned to just walk away from stuff now. It’s hard but I just made a choice. This has helped me because it keeps me motivated, keeps things off my mind, because I’m busy all the time. It took me two years to get there. I’ve been doing this program on and off for a long time. They give us second chance and third chance to come back. It’s always the same people who work here. Most of the time they are good, sometimes they make me do stuff I don’t want to do, but it helps me.” 17 year-old male

Young people said earning money and being occupied as a result of having a job helped them stay out of trouble.

“Earn your own money so you don’t have to steal it. Gotta kick bad habits.” 17 year-old male

“Having a job because then at least then you are going to pay money so then you are mostly doing the right thing.” 14 year-old male

“It would be good for the young people who have been in detention, when they come out, to help them get jobs.” 17 year-old male

“It’ll make them get encouraged, once they start going to their job and they see what they’re getting paid. Especially if they want to get a house or something. That’ll help them out.” 17 year-old male

Given the opportunity to help others in trouble with youth justice, young people said they would organise more activities out of town in the bush.

“I’d say, ‘what’s wrong with you?’ and they say, ‘stressing out!’ I’d take them bush. They’d say, ‘I can go bush and stress away, go fishing.’... Yeah it’s good going out bush, stress in town is worst cos there’s too much smoking, too much adults letting kids smoke, drinking, fighting.” 13 year-old male

“I want an adult to go around picking up kids, take them to the river, sit on the sand and speak to them about what’s happening. Bring lunch and drinks and stuff and talk to them one by one. Just walk on the sand and speak to them one by one about what’s going on. If you have a problem with your family, just let it out so we can tell other people, so we can get them kids not getting in trouble.” 15 year-old female

### **Accessing services and supports**

Young people described how accessing mental health and drug and alcohol services helped them to overcome difficult times in their lives.

“So, but this year is a better year, he is now medicated and what not. He has ADHD.” Mother

“Get ‘em to see a psychologist/therapist or whatever like three times a week, regularly and then they could help us like, then the psychologist or whatever it is, could like write it down and then, what they’re saying and stuff and...then give it to the person that like treats us...say, ‘this kid has this’ and you be diagnosed.” 14 year-old

“Yeah my friend went to drug and alcohol DAYS, down in Perth...And yeah, he’s been out, he’s completed and now he’s been put in a unit, and he’s stayed clean for the whole time, so yeah.” 17 year-old male

Young people often said they needed more access to mental health services.

“There are not enough services that help kids get away from the trauma of their family history. They have some mentors but they never have male mentors.” Grandmother

Young people described the psychological support provided by Youth Justice Services in custody and in the community as helpful.

“The psychs [in Banksia Hill], they’re good...I don’t really need a psych. Only sometimes when I was doing it hard I needed a psych, you know?” 16 year-old male

“I still see the same psych as when I was in jail, yeah they do help, I didn’t want to see another one, starting all over again, so they gave me the same one. They come every [week]...it’s a bit full on at the start, you get used of it though.” 18 year-old male

## Youth Justice Services: organisations and staff

Young people identified a number of factors relating to Youth Justice Services and the role of staff that they believed would support them to address their criminal behaviour and other issues that were negatively influencing their lives.

### Youth Justice Services

For a few young people, the inflexibility of the youth justice system was a significant challenge and they explained that it was too difficult to meet the required obligations.

“When I was on curfew, I was one minute late. And boy yeah, I walked around the corner, and the cops was sitting there, boy yeah. I got locked up and went straight back to Banksia. I was one minute late! I was coming home! It was one minute! I was one minute home! They didn’t give me time to get into my house.” 17 year-old male

“People break their curfews, they break, some people they just break it for fun, but if you have a curfew and one of your nans or something is sick then what are you supposed to do? You gotta stay back.”  
16 year-old male



A few young people acknowledged that when they habitually got away with criminal activity, they became used to living without consequences. When they were caught for breaking the law, they became angry and often retaliated by doing more crime.

“If you get away with something once, you’ll be like, ‘yeah I done it before, I’ll get away with it this time.’ And then you get caught and you get a bit of like, anger against the police and the people that called the cops on you. So you wanna try and get back at the cops or something, so you do more.” 17 year-old male

A few young people described an all or nothing response to the youth justice system. They reasoned that if they were going to be punished anyway, they should get away with as much as possible.

“Like, if they breach you over curfew or something, that’s just gonna leave more kids...to probably go, ‘nah stuff ya’s, I’m goin’ back jail for something, so I may as well do more crime or something cos I’m going back anyway.’ So, that’s...what I did anyway. Just thought, ‘Stuff it, I’m going back [to Banksia Hill].’” 17 year-old male

A few young people thought they were destined to remain in the justice system because their previous criminal activities prevented them from moving on.

“If I wasn’t so young when I started doing crime, it wouldn’t be too bad...but I was so young, and I f\*\*\*ed up, like...I’m always gonna be getting arrested and s\*\*t just because of my name.” 15 year-old male

Some young people acknowledged that engaging in criminal behaviour was wrong, and recognised the consequences of breaking the law, but still felt unable to change their behaviour.

“Cos when I got out [of Banksia Hill] I was thinking, ‘Nah, I’m not doing anything...can’t afford to stuff this one up’...and then...I can’t help myself...like if I see something I go, ‘Oh yeah, that’d be easy to steal, that’d be easy to do’.” 17 year-old male

Young people recounted being wrongfully charged and expressed feeling unjustly treated by the criminal justice system.

“Couple of times I’ve been caught, I copped it. But times I haven’t done it and been charged...like, I got arrested last night for someone saying I stole a bike...I was like, ‘bro that wasn’t me, I don’t even know how to get there’...if they got you on suspicion they can charge you for it...it’s not worth fighting the charges. Easier to go to court and get the community service. I’ve been done...two, three times that I never done.” 15 year-old male

Some families expressed feeling overwhelmed by the system and highlighted the need for a more streamlined provision of service.

“You know how (my son) is involved with justice system, so you have Corrective Services or whatever generally for education, housing and DCP, that’s a bit confusing but there’s like 20 different people every day. Well maybe there could be a service that’s involved in that area, where they can get one person to deal with that family and their issues, have one person allocated to that family because it does get overwhelming and communication can be done by that one person because it does get overwhelming.” Mother

## Experiences of community-based orders

Some young people and families identified that the structure provided by a community-based order supported them to stay out of trouble.

“Orders, I guess...the freedom that we used to have was, kinda, pretty bad criminal activity, like doing drugs and stuff like that, they stop us from doing that with, um, urinalysis, it’s kind of a good thing though.” 17 year-old male

“The support and the reporting as well, cos you’re not doing your own thing all the time, you have to do stuff that you have to, so you don’t have too much time on your hands and then like after you report, you’re like oh yeah I’ll just finish this up and I’m not going to go out and get into trouble again.” 18 year-old male

“[My curfew]...it’s 8:00pm to 5:00am. It just stops...cos most crime is committed at night, so if they make sure people are, like, they’re home...I have to. Or else I’ll go back jail.” 18 year-old male

Conversely, some young people described the stress of completing an order and expressed a need for more chances.

“They just need to give people a second chance or a third chance. Everyone’s not perfect. I know I’m not perfect. You’re not going to complete the Order you know. It’s like if we just chucked them an Order. You know, bang! You’ve got an Order. You’ve got to report everyday...before they gave me two orders I had to ring up three times a week and I had to go in there three times a week. Like, I had to ring them up and go straight into report every three days, I was thinking what the f\*\*\*...it was too much you know, then they want you to do all these things, they expect you to do all on your own.” 16 year-old male



“They need less pressure. It’s hard enough when you’re on an order then you’re stressed and everything and think, ‘oh no I’m gunna stuff up’.” 18 year-old male

### Experiences of being in detention

Some young people who had regularly returned to custody or had family members who were there described the experience of Banksia Hill as easy, and even enjoyable.

“Some of [the youth custodial officers], most of them are good to me, cos they know my older brother and my older brother had a lot of respect in there...Yeah, they really like me because my older brother and all my older cousins was in there, and all my older cousins and brother, they had all the jail’s respect in there.” 16 year-old male

“Well compared to any other place...you do it pretty easy in there. It’s not like you do it hard when you’re in Banksia.” 17 year-old male

“Right now Banksia is just like a boarding school, it’s like a hostel... it’s like a camp with your mates to meet, that’s what it is – a meet up spot. You should get a boot camp in there you know, strict too. I mean lenient but strict...cos right now that’s a meet up spot for, oh yeah cos, ‘meet up with me when you get out and we’ll go do this and that’, just a meet-up centre that’s what Banksia is.” 17 year-old female

“[Banksia Hill] helps...It gives you time to think...yeah I love my school here.” 16 year-old male

In contrast, a few young people acknowledged the consequences of incarceration on extended family. One young man expressed losing an older family member to jail and recognised that his own younger siblings were also suffering from his incarceration.

“Yeah [jail] takes them away from family, like most of my family...my uncle hasn’t been with my aunty for 16, 17 years. And he’s always been in jail, and then out, and all this. It’s hard for all of us. Even my little brother and sister, like I’ve been away for five, six years now and they are starting to miss me and it’s hurting me inside. Now I know how my uncle is feeling when he’s taken away from his kids.” 16 year-old male

Other young people identified the need to address the cycle of recidivism that is often strengthened by periods in detention.

“[When young people are locked up] for a long period of time it’ll make them come out and want to do it again. I reckon that if they keep locking them up and let’s just say they’ve been in here for quite a while, they’re gunna get used to it. They’re gunna keep coming back in because they like it.” 17 year-old female

“I remember there was this one bloke in Banksia and he was going on about how he was planning all these crimes before he got out again, so I think it’s just being surrounded by everyone, lot of criminals in one little compound I guess...if they’re locking lot of people up...young kids...go into jail and hear all these stories about how these people stole all this stuff and that, they go, ‘oh that sounds really fun’.” 17 year-old male

“It’s just cos we were all locked up for...well they did more time than me, but I was just in there for like eight months straight, but it was just like so weird when I first ran into ‘em [in the community] it was like so different to seeing them in all that Banksia clothing and under all that supervision. Now we just kinda do what we want...Get to open our own door.” 17 year-old male

### **Suggestions to improve services**

Suggestions to improve the existing system included a more youth-focused approach to working with young people.

“I’ll make a rule like staff members must be professional, not fake professional, they must always like protect the kids no matter what. I’ll properly train all my workers and that, and each week, or each month or each fortnight, I’ll organise a big thing with all the high bosses like myself, and all...the lower guys and all the kids as well. We all come along and have like a big...party but not a proper party, you know? Dancing with the CEO there.” 17 year-old male

Aboriginal young people in custody recommended more opportunities for culturally relevant education and rehabilitation.

“I would make Banksia different so like every kid that comes in probably gets more like cultural, like Aboriginal education.” 16 year-old male

Young people also suggested alternatives to detention.

“I would do something like Banksia but programs. Like music programs, sport programs. I would actually find out individually what they were really interested in, what they really like doing, or what’s their hobby. Yeah, something different you know.” 17 year-old female

“In a way, I do think that the system is still a bit unbalanced, unstable... they do get caught, they do get put on orders, and they do breach, which they do go to lockup, they come out and do the same thing over and over...there’s not that much kids that do get into trouble and learn their lesson...Being locked up...is mainly a badder influence than being on the street and stealing and stuff, like us boys we have been locked up we have, like we seen everything.” 18 year-old male

### ***Relationships with justice professionals***

Having the support of respectful workers was a common theme that young people identified helped them to make better choices.

“If people feel respected, then you feel like, you get the feeling like some people really want to help you and then there’s other people who don’t give a s\*\*t about you.” 18 year-old male

“Good people just know how to get on the kids’ level, help them...but don’t pretend that you’re trying to get along with them, just do get along with them, you know? You don’t pretend it. [It’s] just respect.” 17 year-old male

“Sit down with them and ask them what it is they are struggling with and if they need any help and whatever help, they could work on that. And people with a bad drug habit, there is a lot of people, it’s hard to just stop straight away...if it was up to me, I would sit down and talk to them about it and see what the reason is behind it all and if there is a reason whatever, we could just go on from then, it’s not that hard.” 18 year-old male

Young people explained that respectful behaviour was demonstrated when workers were genuinely interested in their welfare, asked questions, listened to their opinion and implemented their suggestions for change.

“Ask them what they want, I guess. Asking them what...you could do for them.” 18 year-old male

“They need to listen more, instead of just talking they should just listen, they should sit down and listen before they talk.” 16 year-old male

Having workers who set high expectations and trusted them was considered important in helping young people stay out of trouble.

“Because they putting their trust in you...They are saying to you that they can see that you can do the right thing and so you try to do it I suppose...Help them to try and figure their life out...Help them to take a step forward instead of back.” 16 year-old male

“Yeah, when [adults] trust them [kids do the right thing] because you don't want to let them down or they won't do it for you ever again.” 17 year-old male

### Relationships with police

Young people explained that if they were treated with respect by police, they were more likely to reciprocate positive behaviour and stay out of trouble.

“I find most cops are younger and more chilled back and more understanding you know? If they listen to you and they talk like proper, you know? If I know that they give me respect, so I show them respect back.” 15 year-old female

Predominantly, young people and family members described distrustful relationships with police and gave suggestions on how police could engage with young people and divert them from offending behaviour.

“They [police] should be helping young children and stuff. Like helping them stay out of trouble, speak to them about what's happening in their lives and stuff, not just picking them up, arresting them and stuff... Instead of sitting in the police station and saying nothing they should go out driving around in the car, checking if the kids are okay, speak to them and make them go back home early instead of just staying in town.” 17 year-old male



Some young people had positive experiences with police and were supported to stay out of trouble with the support of youth crime intervention officers.

“[The youth crime intervention officer] is moorditj (good)...He just cares. He sees where we’re coming from. He sees how hard it is. He sees how life can be. He has eyes to see where we are coming from, like family issues and what not. So he has helped us out. Doing everything yeah...When he was working in one of the police stations they wouldn’t give me bail but he talked to the boss and said, ‘give him bail, I know he will stay within his curfew’ and they were like, ‘no he won’t, no he won’t!’ and I did it.” 16 year-old male

### Relationships with youth justice officers

While there were a few comments from young people concerning youth justice officers (YGOs) reinforcing low expectations of them, they were commonly seen as positive influences in young people’s lives. Some young people said that youth justice officers were influential in changing their offending behaviours and preventing them from progressing further through the youth justice system.

“Yeah, [my youth justice officer] is pretty good, yeah...she’s helped me through all this...if it hadn’t been for her I’d been locked up...she pulls me up and tells me, ‘you gotta stop.’...I told her every time I think I’m slipping you know, so she says, ‘come in,’ have a meeting with her, talk to her, and then yeah, it’ll be fine...So helping me recognise that my mates aren’t my mates, they’re all fake...Oh not my brother boys, but some mates are fake, you know, quite a lot of them...she’s a good lady...Yeah, I can trust her.” 16 year-old male

“My YJO’s...really good, he’s not always on my back and he trusts me...he cares about me, he doesn’t want me to be locked up. He doesn’t want to be too strict, like tell me what to do all the time, ‘you can’t do this, you have to do that,’ but he expects me to be honest, you know. I like it. I think that’s healthy cos there’s no pressure, you know. When you have people that’s like right there, really commanding stuff and you can’t turn away from them, you know, you feel like angry and s\*\*t. But when they talkin’ good to you, you feel like, respected.”  
18 year-old male

“Well, I was [on an order] three, four other times before...being sad, hating myself, wearing like ratty clothes, rocking up kind of like not in a very good mentality, but then when I kinda like spoke to [my youth justice officer]...someone who bothered to listen, someone who wanted to help me out or make me feel like I was...not just some other criminal, I guess...She puts up with my s\*\*t. I was uncontactable for two to three weeks, she’s still here...she gave me a chance.”  
18 year-old male



## Relationships with staff at Banksia Hill

Young people who had experienced detention talked about workers at Banksia Hill who had supported them.

“There’s officers in [Banksia Hill] I really get along with...they just like know how to talk with us boys...you get to know them a bit better, they like mates in here instead of trying to treat you like a prisoner and that.”  
17 year-old male

“Some [youth custodial officers] they are always happy...they play fight and stuff, muck around, faithful, they play cards with us, mess around and play ping pong with us.” 16 year-old male

“All the officers, most of the officers are pretty good, some of them are anyways.” 16 year-old male

The majority spoke positively about their treatment in Banksia Hill, however some suggested there should be more opportunities to learn from mistakes and a stronger commitment from staff to help young people improve their behaviour.

“Some officers I trust and there’s some I don’t really like...it’s like they just come to work to do their job and then just want to go home...[but] there are officers that come here act like that, show us what’s good and that...say if we are swearing around and using bad words that we shouldn’t be using, like some officers they will have a go at you straight out and they’ll code you straight out they just tell you not to do that. But other ones they’ll give you chances so you learn, you know? At least give us a chance to pull ourselves in line you know...you learn from your mistakes.” 16 year-old male

Aboriginal young people, who represent the majority of young people in custody, suggested a need for more Aboriginal staff to provide culturally appropriate support.

“I’d say if there were more Noongar people working [at Banksia Hill] then the kids would have more fun and speak more...it’s more better for us to just have Aboriginal peoples here, like staff, not just like them staff...They should welcome us in...they have got a lot of stress and it’s hard for them looking at white people here every day so it’s better for them to have Indigenous people...when I first came in I had no friends here and I thought I was going to get a welcome in Perth. I’m not being racist but Noongar people should be welcoming us in here like, telling us about Banksia cos this is Noongar land cos if we had a prison up north our family or our people in there we would welcome there, more spirituality. They should have Aboriginal people in here cos like some of them Aboriginal boys and girls, they are not feeling right cos they get picked on every day and I can see it in their face, every kid in here, they’ve got something going on. I think they need more help.”  
15 year-old female

## Accessing help and making complaints

Asked about accessing help and making complaints, young people’s responses varied. Only a few young people were unaware of where to go to for help. Young people listed the following as resources they would access for help: family, friends, a trusted worker such as a youth justice officer, teacher or youth worker, the police, and a telephone contact service such as the Kids Help Line.

Most young people could identify where they could go for help.

“I tell mum everything.” 14 year-old male

“Your parents, teachers, counsellor, youth justice, heaps of people.”  
14 year-old male

“You got a loud enough voice, anyone’s gonna listen to you.”  
15 year-old male

“I’ve seen [the Kids Helpline] advertised on TV, you know you’ve just reminded me, I wouldn’t have thought of that until you said that Miss. Good you said that Miss.” 17 year-old female

The need to trust someone before raising issues was also important to some young people.

“I don’t know, like me, I’m a kind of shy person at first, if I’d have the chance I’d probably talk to myself for a bit and then I would need to have trust and stuff before I talk to youth justice officer yeah no problem with that. I’d talk to him about anything now I just don’t look at him as a Youth Justice Officer but as a good friend you know?”  
18 year-old male

Others said they would personally support other young people who needed help.

“The first step is Crisis Care, yeah it’s like any time I’ve had any type of problem Crisis Care, just tell them your problem and it’s a free number 1800 and it’s free, all of us know this number. If not, I’m always willing to like tell kids and stuff like try and help them.” 16 year-old male

“I’ve seen a lot of kids opening up to me and telling me about what they had in their lives and I felt sad for some kids...I ask them what’s going on with them and stuff like that...if they was getting you know, molested and stuff like that, just go and speak to someone and just you know bring it up, don’t bottle it up because if you keep on letting it build up you will do something to yourself and you’ll feel sick to yourself and stuff like that.” 15 year-old female

Some young people had experience of making a complaint.

“Before when I did a complaint at Banksia I was asking for a complaint list and writ everything down and I got that and gave it to the superintendent and they looked at it and they got me it.” 17 year-old male

Other young people said they would not bother to make a complaint because they did not think they would be listened to or that any action would be taken.

“To tell you the truth, you don’t think anyone is going to listen to you anyway.” 15 year-old male

“If you make a complaint form, it pretty much goes from you, to the shredder.” 17 year-old male

Young people who did not have their grievances followed up in the past said the complaints system needs to be more responsive and robust.

“It felt like, cos I made a complaint in Banksia, about being mistreated and stuff, at least if it does get heard at least hear something back kinda thing?” 17 year-old male

## Desire for a positive future

When asked about how they wanted their future to look, young people expressed a desire to overcome the challenges they were currently experiencing. Most commonly, hopes for the future included being engaged in a constructive pathway, finishing school and getting a job.

Many young people expressed their wish for a future that embraced positive alternatives to offending behaviour and incarceration.

“I want a life for myself and I want a job when I get out of [Banksia Hill] cos I’m sick of it. Like, this life we live is not sustainable, if you get what I mean. Like, we can’t keep going the way we go. You can’t keep on doing crime, cos this is the way we end up, in here...we’re all young still and got time. I have a lot of time.” 17 year-old female

“I just gotta pull through this last week and try and set myself up with an apprenticeship somewhere, probably an electrician or engineering anything really. Do something that will help me, keep me clean to set me up for a future instead of being in trouble all the time...just stick with the support that I got now, positive peers, parents...My brother he’s got a lot going for him he has a family and stuff and he’s offered to take me in to help me have a better future and so I appreciate that.” 18 year-old male

“I want to have a clean record...I am willing to get into the makeup industry and do special effects...And I need a job. If I don’t have a job, I’ve got no money and no money, no food, no food duh! Die.” 14 year-old female

“Hopefully I’ll be wearing the Eagles jumper so yeah. I’m doing the pre-season down at [place] hope all goes good. I reckon I could make it, I’ve just gotta give it 100 per cent.” 16 year-old male

“I want to work in hospitality and I also want to help others. Maybe do volunteering, no payment. Yeah like, sick kids, help sick kids. I would like to work in a café. I started my barista’s course in here yesterday. In the long term, like 10 years’ time, I was thinking that if I was to make a business like, you know that Starlight place? Yeah, I loved that place when I was little, I loved that place. And I was thinking that I could make a business like that and have sick kids coming in there and have free coffees. So yeah, I reckon it could bring me joy. I was hoping that would be my future.” 16 year-old female

“I might get a job and that...I might go back to school when I get out and finish year 12...I just wanna be a good dad to my baby and get a job as a diesel mechanic. I don’t wanna come back here [in Banksia Hill] that’s for sure!” 16 year-old male

“Yeah at the moment it’s looking pretty bright...I’ve got my son who turns one in a week...yeah, he’s just started walking. I’ve got to finish up my order and then I’ll be right.” 16 year-old male

“I’d like to own my own house, I’d like four cars, few motorbikes, have a lot of money. I want to be a diesel mechanic, I wanna get somewhere in life. I wanna be successful, succeed...I gonna wait until I get my own house and stuff before...cos I want to travel and stuff...Go to beautiful places like Bora Bora, Fiji, all them places, with all the nice lovely water, Hawaii, yeah, places like that, lovely places where you can swim, lovely little hotels on the water and stuff...Yeah, so as soon as you get out of bed you can go straight for a swim.” 16 year-old male

“For my future I would like to have my own Homeswest house with my daughter, two bedroom and with job experience in the community, but for me to do that I have to go get custody. I have my L’s and I only need to pay \$100 for it.” 17 year-old female

Getting an education was identified as an important part of achieving their ambitions for a positive future.

“I want to go to schooling and never come back here. Keep my attendance up. I’ll do doctor, nurse, whatever. I live here and the city.”  
14 year-old female

“I realised a couple of weeks ago, a month ago, that I’m heading off into bad directions, so right now I’m [indistinct], so right now I’m just studying at uni, catching the train there rather than driving, so life is good right now.” 18 year-old male

“Being a mechanic, with a house, I want a son, with my own business, plus dope-arse cars and motors...Commodores, ...that’s why I’m doing engineering like now for 20 weeks, and I’m doing another 20 weeks course of mechanics.” 15 year-old male

Having strong connections to country and culture was important for Aboriginal young people.

“I wanna stay out bush. It’s better than the town, in town the kids stress out and want to fight you...I wanna get into my job and when I’m older I want to get my own station so I can hire my own people, hire them and give them all a job with me on my country...Who is my country? I don’t really know, but my dad’s side is [Kimberley] way – my nanna’s country and pop. [West Kimberley] is like my dad’s mum. My mum she’s from inland. She’s born in [Pilbara]...My family’s from that side. Top and inland country. Yeah, we got heaps!” 15 year-old male





## Demographic differences in themes

*“Not only for Aboriginals, the lower class people too, cos there is lot of wadjella, white kids that are not Aboriginal and they just as winyarn (bad) as an Aboriginal kid and cos there is nothing really for the kids like that. They need to get them up and lift them out of the rut, unna?”*

Mother

The consultation generated strong themes about the factors that influence young people’s participation in criminal behaviour. The themes identified generally applied to all the participants with individual nuances. These nuances highlight the need to understand each individual young person’s environment, motivations, supports and strengths. Some issues specific to Aboriginal young people, in relation to the impact of connection to culture, are identified throughout the report.

There appeared to be an association between the extent of young people’s contact with the youth justice system and the number of key themes they identified as influencing their youth justice involvement.

Young people referred to a Juvenile Justice Team<sup>11</sup> commonly identified with only one or two of the key themes leading to youth justice involvement. Generally these young people had some support from families or role models, were engaged in education or a vocational pathway and were able to describe future aspirations.

Young people on a community based-order commonly identified with three or more of the key themes as influencing their youth justice involvement. They often identified that there was a lack of available or appropriate supports and services to divert them from crime and into more positive behaviours. Those who were engaged in educational programs leading to jobs, were more commonly able to describe their plans for the future and could identify positive support people in their lives.

The majority of the young people interviewed in Banksia Hill, 83 per cent of whom had been involved in youth justice for more than two years, identified at least four of the key themes as influencing their involvement in crime, highlighting the high level of disadvantage and limited support available to them.



<sup>11</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2016. Young people in child protection and under youth justice supervision 2013–14. Data linkage series no. 21. Cat. no. CSI 22. Canberra: AIHW.

## Conclusion

The youth justice consultation provided an opportunity for some of Western Australia's most marginalised young people and their families to speak out about their lives, what they think they need to reduce the likelihood of repeating youth justice involvement and how they can create a more positive future for themselves.

Young Aboriginal people are significantly over-represented in the youth justice system and face poorer living standards and wellbeing compared to other Australians with lower rates of access to supports and services. However, the same disadvantage, poorer outcomes and inequality of resources could be said of most young people in the youth justice system, regardless of cultural backgrounds, and particularly for those who progress to sentences involving community based orders or detention.

Young people involved in youth justice may share the same basic needs but they are diverse individuals with varied experiences, necessities, interests and attitudes. This complex mix of personal circumstances and access to resources profoundly affects their ability to maintain wellbeing and to overcome barriers in order to function productively in the wider community. It is essential for service providers to listen to the needs of individual young people and provide targeted, flexible support that can enhance their wellbeing and as a consequence, create safer communities.

Through the consultation Aboriginal young people described how their home environment, experience of family breakdown and dysfunction, pressure from peers, and school disengagement had contributed to their

criminal behaviour. They expressed their wish for stronger cultural role models, culturally secure programs and services, and opportunities to reconnect with country and culture, and clearly articulated how these could prevent and reduce their involvement in criminal activity.

The consultation demonstrated that many young people in youth justice want the same rights and provisions as every other young person in the community and need: to live in a safe and supportive home; attend a school where they feel they belong; participate in fun activities in the community; and have access to supports and services to address personal issues such as mental health and cognitive disorders.

Despite the significant challenges they face, many of the participants in this consultation could identify good experiences with workers, programs and services that have helped them. Many also had very positive aspirations for their future and a real desire to move away from criminal activity and change their lives for the better. Positive support from family, mentors and peers, education, and opportunities for meaningful employment were central to achieving these changes.

This report presents the voices of young people in youth justice in their own words. By listening to their voices we can develop a more effective response to preventing and reforming young people's involvement in criminal behaviour and create a safer community that capitalises on these young people's skills and desire for a positive future.

## Acknowledgements

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- Centrecare Youth Diversion Service
- East Kimberley Regional Youth Justice Services
- Goldfields Regional Youth Justice Services
- Hope Community Services Inc.
- Kununurra District High School
- Life Without Barriers
- Midland Learning Academy
- North Metropolitan Youth Justice Services
- Outcare – Live Works Program
- Pilbara Regional Youth Justice Services
- Save the Children Kununurra
- South East Metropolitan Youth Justice Services
- Southern Youth Justice Services
- South West Metropolitan Youth Justice Services
- WA Police – Youth Crime intervention Officers
- Whitelion – Balga Detached Youth Work Project
- Youth Involvement Council HQ

## Appendix One - Reference group members

- Professor Clarissa Ball, Youth Justice Board Member, Director, Institute of Advanced Studies, University of Western Australia
- Eddie Brown, Moorditj Ngoorndiak Mentor, Wirrpanda Foundation
- Marie Davies, Director Family and Community, Noongar Institute of WA
- Julie Dixon, Director Policy – Family Support and Reporting, Department for Child Protection and Family Support
- Mark Gilbert, Superintendent, Divisional Officer for the Community Engagement Division, Western Australian Police
- Caron Irwin, Assistant Commissioner, Youth Diversion and Rehabilitation, Department of Corrective Services
- Juan Fernando Larranaga, State Manager Programs, Save the Children Australia
- Jacqueline McGowan-Jones, Executive Director of Aboriginal Education, Department of Education
- Paul McMullan, Chief Executive Officer, Outcare Incorporated
- Steve Watson, A/Principal, School of Special Education Needs – Behaviour and Engagement, Department of Education
- Victoria Williams, Senior Policy Officer, Aboriginal Legal Service
- Dr Mandy Wilson, Research Fellow, National Drug Research Institute
- Laura Jackman, Senior Policy Officer, Commissioner for Children and Young People
- Trish Heath, Director Policy and Research, Commissioner for Children and Young People

## Appendix Two - Consultation interview guide

### Background information *(So we know we have included young people from a range of backgrounds)*

How old are you? \_\_\_\_\_

Are you:  Male  Female  Other \_\_\_\_\_

Cultural background:  Aboriginal  Torres Strait Islander  Both  Other \_\_\_\_\_

What suburb or town do you live in the most? \_\_\_\_\_

Are you:

on bail  with a Juvenile Justice Team  on a community order  in custody  no longer involved with Youth Justice (within past six months)

History:

This is the first time I have been involved with Youth Justice  I have been involved with Youth Justice before

How old were you when you started getting into trouble? \_\_\_\_\_

### Tell us what you think!

1. Why do you think young people get into trouble?
2. Why do young people keep getting into trouble? (What things make it hard for young people to stay out of trouble?)
3. What helps young people to stay out of trouble?
4. If you were the boss of Youth Justice, what changes would you make to help young people stay out of trouble?
5. If a young person was really unhappy or they were worried about something, who could they go to for help?
6. How would you like your future to look?



**Commissioner for Children and Young People**  
Western Australia

