



Commissioner for Children and Young People
Western Australia

Listening to the views of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people Forum

11 November 2015





Commissioner for Children and Young People
Western Australia

Welcome

Jenni Perkins

Acting Commissioner for Children and Young People





Commissioner for Children and Young People
Western Australia

Dr Cheryl Kickett-Tucker





Commissioner for Children and Young People
Western Australia

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Jenni Perkins

Acting Commissioner for Children and Young People





Commissioner for Children and Young People
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Following the dream

Desi Farrell

Year 12 Kiara College Student





Commissioner for Children and Young People
Western Australia

Consultation methodology and findings

Jocasta Sibbel

Senior Policy Officer





“Listen To Us” Background

“Some Aboriginal kids get a fair go, some don’t. What happens to the kids that don’t get a fair go?” 8 year-old boy, Perth

Specific function of Commissioner for Children and Young People to give priority to, and have special regard to, the interests and needs of Aboriginal children and young people

This project was aimed at building on the previous work of the office and to specifically look at what was important to Aboriginal children and young people





Background

36,000 Aboriginal children and young people in WA, representing 6.7% of all WA children and young people

They also represent 41.5% of the Aboriginal population

Around 60% live outside the Perth metropolitan region

The largest single concentration of Aboriginal children and young people in WA is in Perth metropolitan area





Background

On too many wellbeing measures, WA Aboriginal children and young people are doing poorly

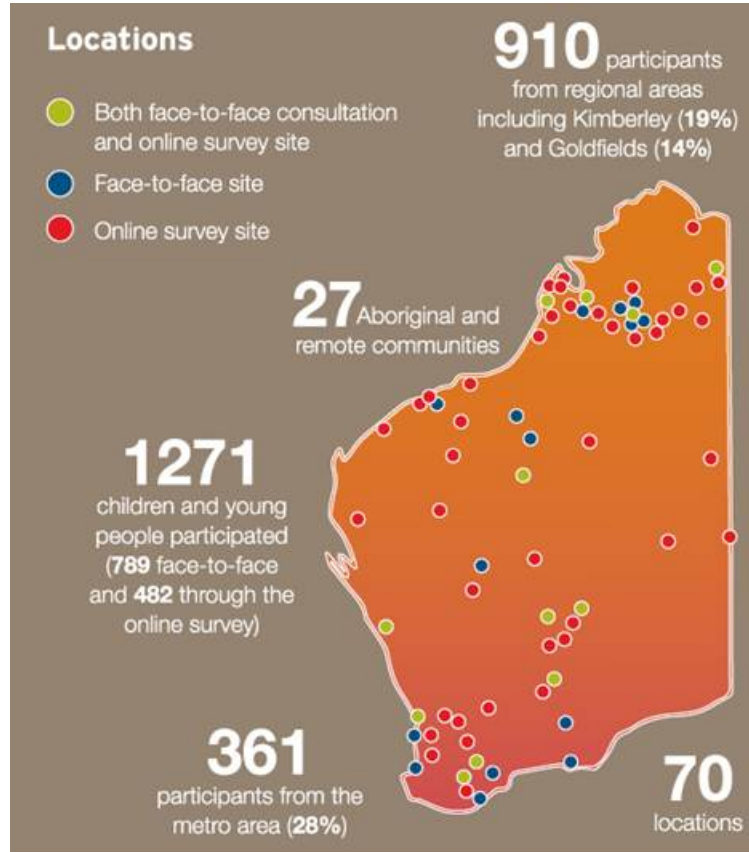
Most recent report to Australian Parliament has highlighted that most national Closing the Gap targets are not on track to be met





Our approach

- Reference group
- 17 partner organisations for face-to-face consults
- Creative methodologies encouraged – music, art and physical activities
- Online survey





Five key themes emerged:

- Family and community
- Culture
- Education and aspirations for the future
- Recreational activities
- Racism and reconciliation





Family

“Family is important because they are there when you need help.” 11 year-old boy, Perth

“My family is the most important thing in my life.” 12 year-old girl, Great Southern

“I want to be close to family, being all together.” 10 year-old girl, Perth

“My cousins are the most important thing to me.” 10 year-old girl, Goldfields-Esperance

“I believe that family will always be there when no one else is.” 17 year-old, Pilbara



Community

“I love the community because everybody basically knows one another. I have a lot of family and friends that live in the community ... and I love that.” 15 year-old, Perth

“The children [here] are exposed to things that they should not be, such as drugs and alcohol, family abuse, sexual abuse, verbal and physical abuse. They need places where they can go and feel wanted and needed... they need people that care about them...” 17 year-old, Pilbara

“I love that I have heaps of family in this town and that I grew up here and it gives me heaps of memories...” 15 year-old, Wheatbelt

“I love having family and friends around ... it’s a peaceful town.” 12 year-old girl, Great Southern

“I don’t feel safe when I’m walking so I make my sister come with me.” 13 to 15 year-old girl, Perth



Culture

“My culture means everything to me, my family and my elders.” 10 year-old boy, Goldfields-Esperance

“My culture is who I am, it is a part of everything I do. It connects me to my family and makes me unique.” 17 year-old girl, Kimberley

“To me it means that I have something to live up to.” 13 year-old boy, Mid West

“The most important things about culture to me are about keeping it strong throughout our generations [by] keeping the stories and languages alive.” 14 year-old girl, Perth

“We want to learn more about our culture.” 12 year-old girl, Perth



Education and aspirations

“SCHOOL! It’s the only place which will make anything and everything happen.” 15 year-old girl, Perth

“Education is my main thing I worry about in my life because it determines your future.” 14 year-old girl, Wheatbelt

“I need to go to school more.” 8 year-old girl, Perth

“If I was the boss, I would have a bigger school with lots of teachers.” 10 year-old boy, Goldfields-Esperance



Recreational activities

“Sport, I like sport because it keeps me fit and healthy.” 16 year-old boy,
Wheatbelt

“It is a good place to be. It’s got good parks, good shopping centres...” 10
year-old girl, Perth

“I would keep the youth program up and running. I would construct a hostel for the Indigenous youth, I would keep the sporting programs, tournaments running and I would increase the amount of shopping centres, general shops...” 17 year-old boy Goldfields-Esperance

“More sporting things like basketball courts, more playgrounds, more trees [and for] sport not cost a lot of money to play.” 9 year-old girl, Great Southern



Racism and reconciliation

“I have had many racist comments towards me by people in the community and I don’t like it. I think there should be stronger campaigns about racism...” 16 year-old boy, Peel

“My life right now is pretty good apart from the fact that my people are still being put down by people who know nothing about us. This really affects my life as I hear it all the time.” 14 year-old, Perth

“When we go there to shop, people stare at you.” 12-16 year-old boy, Pilbara

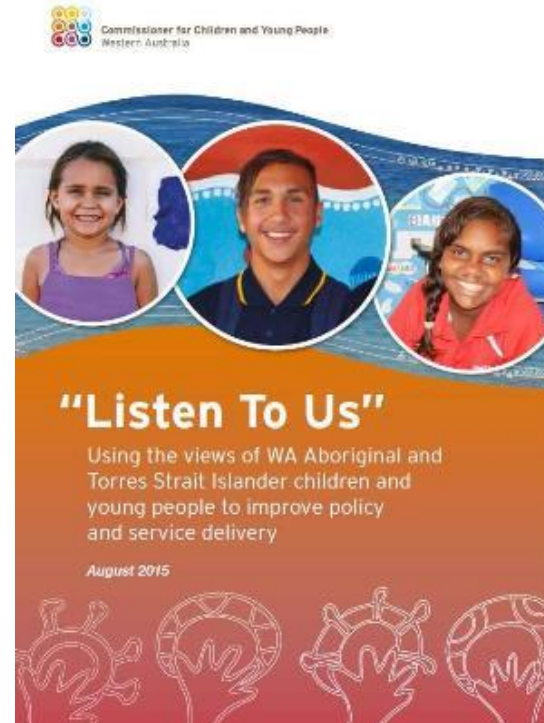
“[At football] we were given a speech about discrimination, Until this point I didn’t know that there were rules against it in football. I have been subject to this many times in the years...” 14 year-old, Perth



Listening and taking action

“Listen to all these ideas you’re getting to help make good changes for the future.” 16 year-old boy, Mid West

“Just listen to us.” 10 year-old girl, Perth





Commissioner for Children and Young People
Western Australia

Our local consultation and its impact

Jude Sorenson and Carol Ryder

Community Development Officer, Swan Alliance Communities for Children





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SWAN ALLIANCE Communities for Children

**MISSION
AUSTRALIA**

Ngala
Parenting with Confidence



AnglicareWA

Communities for Children is funded by the Department for Social Services





Why Swan Alliance Communities for Children?

- Who are the Swan Alliance?
- We have strong and trusting relationships with the local Aboriginal community
- We used technology that was confidential, non-threatening and proven to engage children
- Based in the Midland region (in the City of Swan)
- The region has the highest population of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Perth metro
- Rather than bring the kids to us, we went out to them





Who and where

We consulted with 168 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people at:

- Middle Swan Primary School
- Swan View Primary School
- Clayton View Primary School
- Moorditj Noongar Community College
- Lockridge Primary School
- West Beechboro Primary School
- Midland Aboriginal Hip Hop Program
- Binar Sports Midland PCYC





How we began the process

- We began by yarning with local parents
- We needed to ask for their support and seek advice about the consultation process
- They helped us come up with wording for the questions, to make them more locally relevant





WHAT DOES CULTURE (BEING ABORIGINAL OR TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER) MEAN TO YOU?

- A. Going out bush with Family
- B. Yarning with Nannas, Pops, Aunties, Uncles. Listening to their stories and hearing about old ways and being respectful.
- C. Eating Bush Tucker (Bush Food: kangaroo, damper etc)
- D. Something else...





We needed to carefully consider...

- We had to ensure we had strong relationships with the schools we were engaging and our key contacts were Aboriginal and Islander Education Officers (AIEO's)
- We went out to the schools on days and times that suited them
- We brought incentives





How we did it

We used proven technology:
Qwizdom

- Overcomes literacy and numeracy barriers
- Responses are confidential
- Kids love it!





What we needed to be aware of

- We did not want the children involved to feel singled out
- We wanted to make it a fun and inclusive process for participants
- We wanted to use the experience to further build our connections with local schools





What we discovered

Family connections are primary:

- This came through in all of the questions
- Children kept referring back to their family connections as the core of their identity and belonging



“Caring about them [family] means a lot”

- 10 year-old girl, Middle Swan



What we discovered (cont.)

Friend connections are very important:

- For Aboriginal children peer support plays a key role in who they are, their sense of belonging is in all of their connections.

“Being with my crew and knowing my area”

- 12 year-old girl, Midvale





What we discovered (cont.)

Aboriginal children thrive through strong connections:

- At the end of the consultation it was evident children who had strong connections (family, friends and community) also knew who they were and had a clear sense of identity, and drive for the future

“staying with our family”

- 8 year-old girl, Midland



What we discovered (cont.)

Aboriginal children have solid aspirations:

- Children have clear goals for the future, however, circumstances can change very quickly which may result in them not being able to reach those goals and aspirations.

“learn to the best of your ability”

- 13 year-old boy, Lockridge





What we discovered (cont.)

Aboriginal children want to be heard:

- Children we consulted with were clear about the fact they had important things to say and wanted the opportunity to say them, be involved and stay involved

“Come and deadly yarn”

- 11 year-old girl, Lockridge

“Come and yarn boss”

- 13 year-old girl, Beechboro



What we discovered (cont.)

There were strong local connections:

- Many parents and caregivers also expressed a desire to be informed of outcomes from this project
- In each school many of the children were related and supported each other at school (e.g. cousins) and also by extended family (Nans, Pops, Aunties and Uncles)
- This highlights the importance of family, identity and sense of belonging





What we have learned

- Always have fun
- We needed to let the children know they had a choice about their participation
- We needed to really listen and take notice of what they were saying
- Children were very upfront and honest and they expected that of us
- Children wanted feedback (including their families and community)





Where to from here?

- How do we feedback the findings of the consultation to local children, families and community?
- What do we do with this information at a local level?
- How do we as a community ACT on the findings of the Commissioner's report?



Getting involved in the community

Grace, 12, Midland

I like to do lots of good things. I'm in Year 7 and my most favourite thing to do is sport, especially netball. You can meet people and make new friends playing sport, that's what I like. I also like English because we get to do interesting work and read books, but I do like sport more.

I think school is important because it's good for when you grow up. It gets you a nice job and lets you have a future. I want to be a netballer when I get older.

When I'm not at school I dance in a hip hop crew called the Beat Walkers. We do all sorts of cultural performances for people. I'm excited for NAIDOC Week because we are doing a couple of dances at the local community event. Lots of people come so it's fun to show them our talents and what we've worked on.

Dancing is great. It lets you see other people's points of view and teaches us about how when you work together you can create something amazing.

It's good to inspire other people.

Our four-day dance workshop in Kellerberrin was something special. Our dance crew learnt some dances and skills and also went bush with some elders for a bit to learn about the land.

At home in Midland I live with my mum and three brothers, I'm the second oldest.

I like to practice our Aboriginal culture by singing songs while my mum plays the guitar. That's why we're doing stuff for NAIDOC Week.

My mum says it's important for me to see Indigenous people come together to support reconciliation. I like being involved in something important.

“ My mum says it's important for me to see Indigenous people come together to support reconciliation. ”





Think big,
dream big,
believe big,
and the results
will be big





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Making their voices count

Dr Cheryl Kickett-Tucker

Director Pindi Pindi, National Research Centre for Aboriginal
Children, Families and Community



Beeliar (Perth)-Wadjuk Noongar Mia showing Derbal Yerrigan





Wanju Wanju Nidja Derbal Yerrigan

Wadjuk Noongar Boodja



Bloodlines of the stories have...

- Aboriginal worldview
- Diversity
- Community ownership and involvement
- Culturally secure and inclusive
- Linkages between education, health, mental health and employment outcomes
- Relationships of past to present and future
- Connectedness of kinships
- Honourable and sincere





What kids want from you



- Deep listening
- Respect
- Understanding
- Empathy
- Integrity
- Sincerity
- Action not words
- Control
- Rights
- Economic stability
- Valued





How you can hear, listen and action kids' voices

- a. **RESPECT** - that each party be respectful in the way they conduct themselves and their business in the Aboriginal community and the wider community
- b. **RELATIONSHIPS** - that relationships are developed and maintained which enhance and build the capacity of the Aboriginal community and the wider community





How you can hear, listen and action kids' voices

- c. **RESPONSIBILITY** - that each party is not only responsible for their own party and to the other parties, but that they will also be responsible to the Aboriginal community and the wider community.
- d. **RECIPROCITY** – that each party acknowledges the participation, knowledge and expertise of the community and that this is responded to with a positive action.





What of the kids' needs versus the point of the research in the first place?

- How are you going to **translate** this report to ensure the needs of the kids are recognised and acted upon?
- What are you **willing** to do?
- What changes are needed in the **systems** that govern Aboriginal kids to enable us to do what is really needed to be done?
- Do you have the skills, knowledge, confidence, empathy, integrity...?





THE PERSON
WHO RISKS
NOTHING
DOES
NOTHING





What is really needed to make a change...doing things differently

- Relationships with grass roots people
- Care, comfort and compassion
- Going beyond your role
- Learning from Aboriginal people
- Time is an illusion
- Rocking the boat! Are you ready?



Human progress is
neither automatic nor
inevitable... Every step
toward the goal of
justice requires
sacrifice, suffering, and
struggle; the tireless
exertions and
passionate concern of
dedicated individuals.
Martin Luther King, Jr.

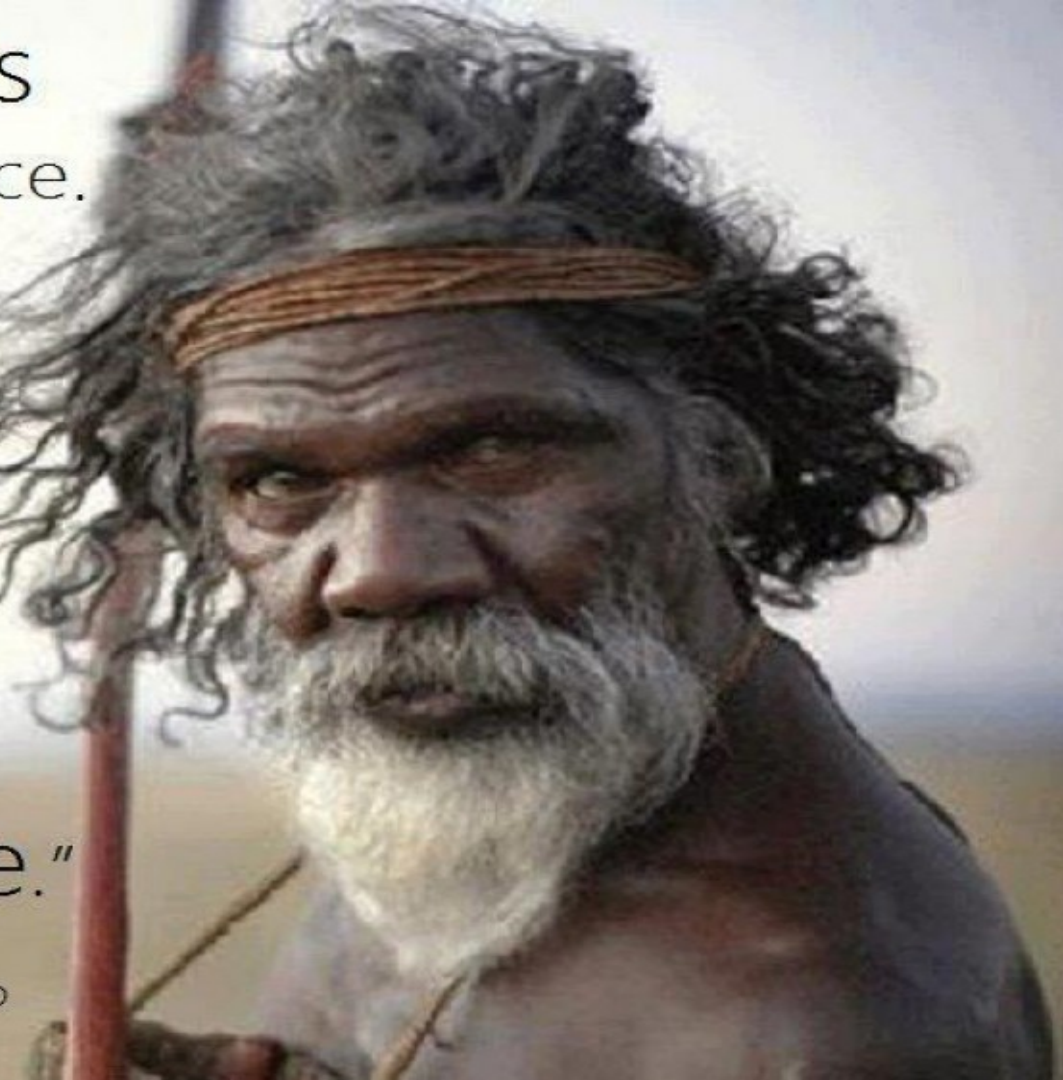


"We are all visitors
to this time, this place.

We are just
passing through.

Our purpose
here is to observe,
to learn, to grow,
to love... and then
we return home."

- Australian Aboriginal Proverb





"If you've got no love in your heart, you've got nothing... No dreaming, no story, nothing... "

***MAGARRI, Australia,
the movie***



Boorda





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Discussion





Thank you for attending.

Keep in touch with the Commissioner:



@CCYPWA

Web www.ccyp.wa.gov.au

6213 2297