



Commissioner for Children and Young People
Western Australia

Our approach and priorities 2016–2020





About this document

This document outlines the broad focus areas of the Commissioner for Children and Young People Western Australia for 2016 to 2020.

It has been prepared to both inform and engage the community in the work of the Commissioner.

The document outlines:

- the office's aim and values
- the three key platforms that will guide the work of the office from 2016 to 2020.

The core functions of the Commissioner are outlined in the *Commissioner for Children and Young People Act 2006*.

From this document, detailed annual operational plans will be prepared for each financial year, commencing 2016–17.

More information concerning these plans and the work of the Commissioner is available from www.ccyp.wa.gov.au

Commissioner for Children and Young People WA

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Foreword

A strong society values its children and young people by providing safe, supportive, loving and positive environments for all.

This concept is supported by a wealth of research that demonstrates how the experiences we encounter in our early childhood and youth significantly shape the rest of our lives.

Put simply, children and young people must be our highest priority.

To address the challenges and take advantage of the opportunities our rapidly changing world presents we must be vigilant and forward-thinking in our approach to strengthening the wellbeing of all children and young people in Western Australia.

We must focus particular attention on the wellbeing needs of Aboriginal children and young people to overcome the significant disadvantage many of them experience every day, as well as the needs of children and young people who are vulnerable for any reason.

Having been appointed the Commissioner for Children and Young People WA from 2016 to 2020, I plan to build on the work of previous Commissioners and utilise the growing body of evidence that is increasing our understanding of children and young people's wellbeing.

A key element of the *Commissioner for Children and Young People Act 2006* is the requirement for the Commissioner and the office to regard the best interests of children and young people as the paramount consideration.

As Commissioner I am entirely committed to this vital aspect of my role, as well as delivering on the full range of principles and functions outlined in the Act.

This document outlines the broad focus areas for my work for 2016 to 2020.

It has been prepared to both inform and engage the community in the work of my office, as every person and organisation in Western Australia has a role to play in strengthening the wellbeing of our children and young people.

A cornerstone of my work is consulting children and young people and promoting their views to inform agencies' work to improve policy, services and legislation.

Our work will also focus on further developing our collaborative approach to working with government and non-government agencies to build a shared understanding of children and young people's wellbeing needs and the models of service delivery that will better support our youngest citizens.

A further priority will be to provide parents and other family and community members opportunities to engage with the work of the office and have their voices heard in recognition of the vital role they play in the wellbeing of children and young people.

I look forward to working with the community over the next five years to make the best interests of children and young people the paramount consideration for us all.



COLIN PETTIT
Commissioner for Children and Young People WA

I think it's good for someone to make sure we kids aren't forgotten about.

(9 year-old boy from the Mid West)

How we work



Our vision

That all children and young people are heard, are healthy and safe, reach their potential and are welcomed as valued members of the community and in doing so we build a brighter future for the whole community.

Our values

The office of the Commissioner for Children and Young People is committed to be collaborative with all stakeholders and ensure the values are core to all of our actions and work:

*Respectful, Inclusive, Creative,
Positive, Determined and
Independent*

Independence

The Commissioner for Children and Young People WA is an independent statutory officer and reports directly to the Parliament of Western Australia. As an independent office it is important to honour and utilise the strength of our independence in the best interests of children and young people in this State.

The Commissioner is able to table reports in the Parliament,

conduct inquiries and require agencies to provide information on matters relating to children and young people's wellbeing.

The Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee on the Commissioner for Children and Young People WA monitors the work of the Commissioner's office. The Standing Committee comprises an equal number of members from both Houses of Parliament and tables its own reports to Parliament outlining its views and findings on the Commissioner's work.



The way forward

The office of the Commissioner will align the work of the office to three key platforms for 2016–2020.

They include:

1

Promoting the rights, voices and contributions of children and young people

2

Monitoring and advocacy to strengthen the wellbeing of all WA children and young people

3

Prioritising the needs of disadvantaged and vulnerable children and young people

1

Promoting the rights, voices and contributions of children and young people

Being aware of, understanding and acting to uphold the human rights of children and young people are fundamental to recognising and supporting children and young people as valued citizens of the community.

Listening to and valuing the voice of children and young people about what they perceive to be influential in their world is essential for decision makers to create legislation, policy, programs and services that meet their needs. How this is done is as important as hearing what is said. Genuine consultation and meaningful responses will ensure children and young people are actively engaged in the community and contribute positively to a vibrant, healthy society.

A community that respects the rights of children and young people and values their views and contributions will:

- create opportunities for children and young people to express their insights and opinions and respond meaningfully to what they have to say
- consult children and young people about decisions that affect them and seriously takes their views into account
- acknowledge and celebrate the contributions that children and young people make to the community
- take action to ensure that children and young people's rights are respected and fulfilled.



Make children feel more important because even little kids need to be listened to.

(12 year-old person)



“Children have the right to say what they think should happen when adults are making decisions that affect them and to have their opinions taken into account.”

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child: Article 12

Over the next five years we will:

- undertake targeted consultations with children and young people and promote their views to decision makers and more broadly in the community
- create or contribute to opportunities to raise the awareness of children's rights in Western Australia
- provide opportunities for children and young people across the State to inform and contribute to the work of the Commissioner's office, including the appointment every year of two advisory committees of children and/or young people
- monitor and report on how agencies encourage and then respond to complaints made by children and young people about issues and services that affect them
- promote and support programs and awards recognising the achievements of children and young people
- promote and encourage government and non-government agencies to involve children and young people in their work and decision making.



2

Monitoring and advocacy to strengthen the wellbeing of all WA children and young people

Children and young people under the age of 18 represent almost one-quarter of the Western Australian population.

Supporting children and young people's healthy development recognises their place as equal citizens in our society and builds a brighter future for our State. The challenges our children and young people face continually evolve and need to be recognised and addressed by evidence-based programs, policy and legislation. Monitoring children and young people's wellbeing and considering the latest research is essential to inform decision making and develop innovative approaches.

A community that cares for the wellbeing of children and young people will:

- effectively monitor wellbeing outcomes and strongly advocate for children and young people so that services and supports are well resourced and tailored to meet their needs
- ensure that children and young people are safe, healthy, cared for and can access opportunities to reach their potential
- respect children and young people's rights, and support them to meet their responsibilities
- support parents, families and communities to have the primary role in safeguarding and promoting the wellbeing of their children and young people.



Education is the main thing I worry about in life because it determines your future.

(14 year-old person)



“Every child has a right to a standard of living adequate for the child’s physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development.”

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child: Article 27

Over the next five years we will:

- investigate the development of a comprehensive triennial survey of children and young people to monitor the issues that impact on their wellbeing from their perspective
- monitor the research and other evidence in relation to key areas that impact on children and young people's wellbeing, including the key areas of education, mental health and safety
- promote and monitor recommendations of published reports by the Commissioner for Children and Young People
- provide leadership, information and resources to guide organisations to develop and enhance their focus on child safety
- examine the level of support and programs that are provided to assist and strengthen families
- promote debate and influence future policy in relation to children and young people's wellbeing
- monitor children and young people's wellbeing and development to ensure appropriate supports are provided in the early years, pre-adolescence and adolescence.



3

Prioritising the needs of disadvantaged and vulnerable children and young people

A strong society is one that ensures its most vulnerable are provided with opportunities to contribute to that society.

Ensuring the State's laws and policies actively support children and young people's wellbeing and respect their role as citizens sets the broader agenda for the community. Assisting agencies to continually improve the opportunities and services for children and young people who present as vulnerable, disadvantaged or face additional inequities is an essential role of the office.

A community that prioritises the needs of vulnerable or disadvantaged children and young people will:

- promote the voice of children and young people who are vulnerable, disadvantaged or marginalised to ensure they receive services relevant to their needs
- monitor laws, policies and practices to ensure the needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups are addressed at every opportunity
- apply evidence-based responses and sufficient resources to address disadvantage
- support children and young people and families in this position without judgement or discrimination
- explore ways to build effective systems to monitor the outcomes for children and young people who are vulnerable or disadvantaged.



I would like to change the way we treat each other because it is on us to do what we've got to do to survive, so treat everyone with fairness and equality.

(17 year-old person)



"Children have the right to live a full life. Governments should ensure that children survive and develop healthily."

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child: Article 6

Over the next five years we will:

- monitor wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal children and young people and work collaboratively with government and the community to reduce disadvantage
- investigate the over-representation of Aboriginal children and young people in youth justice and child protection systems to explore ways to reduce this inequity
- consult children and young people who are vulnerable or disadvantaged and advocate on their behalf
- focus on the need for prevention and early intervention strategies that are effective in preventing poorer outcomes for vulnerable groups of children and young people
- investigate, monitor and advocate for appropriate services for children and young people who are disadvantaged or vulnerable.





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