



Commissioner for Children and Young People
Western Australia



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People Speak Out

August 2015





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.

Where direct quotes from children and young people have been included in this report, the children and young people are identified by age, gender, region of origin and language group, where this information is known. Some children and young people self-identified their language group and it is recognised there can be more than one accepted spelling of a language group.

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Message from the Commissioner

In 2014 I held a major consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people across WA to give them a voice on what is important to them and their hopes for the future.

More than 1,200 Aboriginal children and young people from across Western Australia have contributed to this collective voice, speaking out on their culture, what is important to them, the changes that would improve their lives, what they hope to do in the future and the help they need to get there.

This is the largest single consultation to be completed by the Commissioner's office and is likely the most extensive consultation, in terms of the numbers involved, ever undertaken with Aboriginal children and young people in this state.

The consultation demonstrates that Aboriginal children and young people benefit from the many strengths of their culture and family and community life. Many children and young people identify strongly with their culture and celebrate it.

I am encouraged by the sense of hope and bold visions for the future, along with the many insights into what support is needed along the way.

The consultation also raised concerns about the children and young people who face multiple and complex challenges which adversely impact their health, safety and wellbeing. Some Aboriginal children and young people who took part in the consultation spoke directly about this; some spoke about their concerns for others they know need help.

In addition to this report I have prepared *"Listen To Us": Using the views of WA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people to*

improve policy and service delivery, a detailed report on the consultations and the implications for policy and service delivery, which was tabled in State Parliament in August 2015.

Both reports show there is significant hope for the future; this is a generation who have worthy dreams and the majority have a plan on how to get there. We must carefully consider the views expressed in these reports and respond with meaningful changes to policy and services to ensure all Aboriginal children and young people are provided with the support and opportunity to achieve their potential.

Importantly, this is about hearing what Aboriginal children and young people themselves say – in the words of one 10 year-old girl, "listen to us", echoed by a 16 year-old girl "adults have to start listening to us kids, instead of just telling us what to do all the time" and a 16 year-old boy who told us "listen to all these ideas you're getting to help make good changes for the future".

I encourage all organisations that work with Aboriginal children and communities to do just that – these two reports can and should be used as a starting point to improve services and policies and 'make good change' that better supports their lives and wellbeing.

My thanks to all children and young people who participated, as well as the staff of all organisations who assisted with the consultations, for their efforts to ensure that the voices of Western Australia's Aboriginal children and young people are heard.

JENNI PERKINS

Acting Commissioner for Children and Young People WA



Message from Ambassadors

As Ambassadors for Western Australian children and young people and members of Western Australia's Aboriginal community, we are pleased to promote the voices of our young generation through this Speaking Out publication.

The hopes, dreams and concerns of Aboriginal children and young people throughout WA have been well documented through an extensive consultation by the Commissioner for Children and Young People.

The 1,271 Aboriginal children and young people who took part spoke about the importance of culture, families and communities in supporting their healthy development and sense of identity. They have also highlighted issues experienced by some children, and we must get better at addressing these problems.

We support the release of this publication and hope that everyone across WA takes the time to consider what has been said, and how they can respond.

As Ambassadors we will continue to work with the Commissioner to increase community awareness and understanding of factors which impact Aboriginal children and young people's health and development and, importantly, advocate for change that strengthens their wellbeing.

PROFESSOR COLLEEN HAYWARD AM
MS JUNE OSCAR AO
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR TED WILKES AO
MR DAVID WIRRPANDA
Ambassadors for Children and Young People





Introduction

Since 2007, Aboriginal children and young people have participated in a range of the Commissioner's consultation projects on topics such as wellbeing, mental health and alcohol-related harm.

Additionally, the Commissioner has consulted with Aboriginal children and young people, their families and communities, during many visits to regional and remote communities from Kununurra to Albany and Kalgoorlie, and many towns and cities in between.

To build on this work, the Commissioner decided in 2014 to hold consultations especially for WA Aboriginal children and young people.

The aim of the consultations was to give Aboriginal children and young people the opportunity to be heard at all levels of the community about the matters they see as important.

The consultations asked Aboriginal children and young people about their views on what was good in their lives, where they needed help, their views on culture and their hopes and dreams for the future.

More than 1,200 Aboriginal children and young people took part and two reports have been produced based on what they had to say, their views, ideas and concerns.

- The report, *"Listen To Us" – Using the views of WA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people to improve policy and service delivery*, was tabled in the WA Parliament in August 2015.
- This report, *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People Speak Out*, was prepared for the WA community, particularly the children and young people who took part and the people and organisations who supported the consultations.





About the Commissioner

The Commissioner for Children and Young People is the independent advocate for all under 18 year-olds in WA.

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 to, the interests and needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people.

In her role, 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 the 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 better support children and young people's wellbeing.



Aboriginal children and young people in WA

There are more than 36,000 Aboriginal children and young people in Western Australia, representing 6.7 per cent of all WA children and young people under the age of 18 years.

Children and young people make up 41.5 per cent of the Aboriginal population, almost double the proportion of children and young people in the non-Aboriginal population (22.4 per cent).

Around 60 per cent of Aboriginal children and young people under the age of 19 years live outside the Perth metropolitan area, compared with 22 per cent of non-Aboriginal children and young people.





Methodology

Reference group

A reference group was established to inform the development and implementation of the consultation. Members of the reference group are listed on page 29.

Face-to-face consultations

Recognising the expertise and strong community relationships that many organisations have with Aboriginal children, young people and families across WA, organisations were invited to submit Expressions of Interest to hold consultations on behalf of the Commissioner.

To ensure children and young people enjoyed the process of consultation, organisations were encouraged to propose innovative and creative methodologies.

There were 789 children and young people involved in consultations. The organisations selected to run the consultations are listed on page 30.

The consultations held by these organisations included music (hip hop, rap and Kimberley folk), art and outdoor activities, including visits to culturally significant sites. The Commissioner received artwork, music videos and lyrics created by Aboriginal children and young people that were published on the project's web page and Facebook page.

Locations

- Both face-to-face consultation and online survey site
- Face-to-face site
- Online survey site

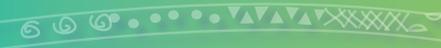
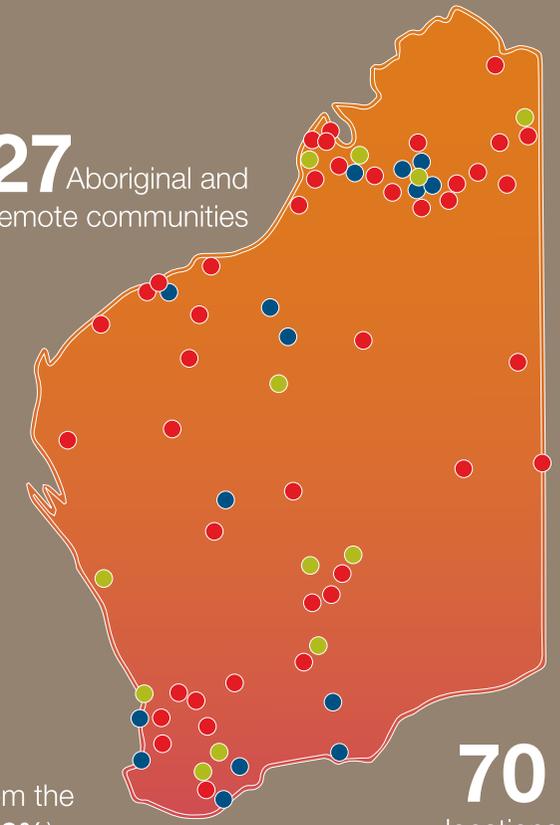
910 participants from regional areas including Kimberley (**19%**) and Goldfields (**14%**)

27 Aboriginal and remote communities

1271 children and young people participated (**789** face-to-face and **482** through the online survey)

361 participants from the metro area (**28%**)

70 locations





Online survey

To enable any WA Aboriginal child or young person to participate in the consultation and have a say, the Commissioner released and widely promoted an online survey.

Staff from the Commissioner's office visited specific towns and communities to ensure the consultation heard from children and young people living in all major regions of the state.

A Facebook page was set up to promote the consultation and the survey, which attracted more than 1,000 likes.

There were 482 children and young people who took part in the online survey.



Consultation example 1

Songs from the land of the Nyul Nyul

In the remote community of Beagle Bay, the land of the Nyul Nyul people, children and young people turned to song to express their feelings on life in their community and their hopes for the future.

The Public Health Advocacy Institute of WA (PHAIWA) partnered with the Commissioner to undertake a consultation in this community on the Dampier Peninsula, north of Broome.

Local musician and ranger Albert Wiggan attended two workshops with students from Sacred Heart School, listening to and reading their responses to the consultation questions and their discussions – some children chose to write their answers on paper, some spoke to their teachers and had their comments written down and others chose to draw pictures.

The thoughts and comments were used by Albert to compose two pieces of music on guitar, setting the children's voices to two inspiring tracks.

On returning to the school, Albert performed the songs and worked with the children to write another verse, which was incorporated into the music and performed.

The inspiring recordings of this consultation can be heard online at www.cyp.wa.gov.au and the lyrics have been reprinted on page 32.



Collation and reporting

The contributions of Aboriginal children and young people from both the face-to-face consultations and the survey were collated and analysed to identify key themes.

A focus throughout the project was to obtain and record direct quotes from Aboriginal children and young people, such as the quotes below, to ensure their voices are the key influence on the findings of the consultations.

“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

“Sometimes all we need is to feel we’re not alone and have help if things don’t go to plan.” 17-year-old girl, Great Southern

“Adults have to start listening more to us kids, instead of just telling us what to do all the time.” 16 year-old girl, Great Southern

“I think it’s good for someone to make sure we kids aren’t forgotten about.” 9 year-old boy, Mid West

“Listen to us.” 10 year-old Noongar / Martu / Wongi / Yamatji girl, Perth

The remainder of this report outlines, using their own words, the views of the 1,271 Aboriginal children and young people who took part in this project.





"I believe that family will always be there when no one else is."

The most important things in life

Children and young people spoke about how their family and friends, education and culture were important in their lives. Many had an understanding that these things contributed to their mental and physical wellbeing.

Social connections with family and friends were a high priority.

"My life is about loving my own family members [so] respect others and love one another, be kind to each other and love your family." 10 year-old Noongar girl, Goldfields-Esperance

"Family, we are a strong family, very close, always there when we need them." 15 year-old girl, Perth

"My family means the most to me in my life. I don't know what I'd do if anything happened to them." 14 year-old girl, Perth

"I want to be close to family, being all together. My Mum is important to me." 10 year-old girl, Perth

"See your family and friends and do what you love doing." 14 year-old Noongar girl, Wheatbelt

"Having friends and putting the bins out." 9 year-old boy, Perth

"Living with my granny and help her clean up if she needs help." 15 year-old Yaruwu boy, Kimberley

"I love to be with my family..." 10 year-old Yindjibarndi / Banyjima child, Pilbara

"Family keeps you safe, we have a culture of sharing." 7 year-old boy, Perth

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

"My brothers and sisters." 13 year-old girl, Goldfields-Esperance

"Living with my mother and looking after my grandmother." 14 year-old Kitja boy, Kimberley

"Being with my family, playing with my toy trains." 5 year-old boy, Great Southern





Along with family, culture was also identified as having an important role in their life.

“Having recognition for my culture and having [our] words heard by our government! [I want] the government to finally respect our culture and what they have done!” 15 year-old Ballardong / Yuat / Tjupan / Whadjuk boy, Perth

“My family and my Aboriginal culture.” 10 year-old Noongar / Martu / Wongi / Yamatji girl, Perth

“I love my family – we get together, go kangaroo hunting and we always dance.” 16 year-old Torres Strait Islander / Noongar youth, Perth

“Culture, because I have a very spiritual connection with Aboriginal culture and it helps me as a person.” 16 year-old Koori boy, Perth



Many saw a clear link between gaining an education and achieving their future goals.

“Education [gives you a] better chance in life. Because without it, you won’t get a job.” 10 year-old Nyikina boy, Kimberley

“Coming to school every day.” 12 year-old Yamatji boy, Gascoyne

“If you don’t go to school you can’t learn stuff to get a job.” 11 year-old boy, Perth

“Going to school to learn and do some work and helping some school teachers to clean the school and classroom. And playing [in] free time [and] eating some lunch.” 16 year-old Pitjantjatjara boy, Goldfields-Esperance

“Going to school, learning about geography and my family in Yandeyarra.” 14 year-old Kariyarra boy, Pilbara

“Education, so you can get a life, teaches us how to write and read.” 10 year-old, Perth

“Going to school, learning Bardi language and practicing our work every day.” Bardi girl younger than 10 years, Kimberley

“My teacher and school is important to me.” 10 year-old boy, Goldfields-Esperance

“The two most important things in my life right now are the people in it and my traineeship. They both have a massive factor on my quality of life and I am so grateful for both.” 16 year-old Torres Strait Islander, Kimberley

“What’s important to me? Finish school. Good job. Go back to [my town], look after my family.” 12 year-old girl, Pilbara





Staying healthy and recreation, particularly sport, were important to many children and young people.

“Sport – because in sports you meet friends that help and support you [in] life.” 10 year-old Nyikina boy, Kimberley

“Love being [with] and spending time with my family and playing sport like basketball and netball.” 15 year-old Noongar girl, Wheatbelt

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

“Make it to the AFL and play for the Eagles.” 13 year-old boy, Goldfields-Esperance

“Keeping fit, to be a footy player.” 10 year-old Wongi boy, Goldfields-Esperance

“Sport is one of my most important things and being a good friend and family member.” 12 year-old Banyjima boy, Pilbara

“The two things that are most important to me are probably sport – playing AFL football and my family.” 14 year-old Yamatji boy, Perth

“The most important things to me are my horses.” 9 year-old girl, Goldfields-Esperance

“Don’t get eaten by crocodiles.” 11 year-old boy, Kimberley



“My culture means everything to me, my family and my elders.”



My culture

Many of the children and young people participating in the consultations had a good understanding of culture and what it means to them. Many identified looking after and respect for country, identity, language, respect for elders and traditional activities as the most important parts of the culture.

Many children and young people said that culture was an important part of their identity and daily lives, and had a positive influence on their self esteem

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

“Culture is everything!” 11 year-old Wongi girl, 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 Jabirr Jabirr girl, Kimberley

“Culture is the only thing that connects back to our ancestors. Culture is very important to keep alive and keep it strong within the community.” 15 year-old Whadjuk / Yuat / Ballardong / Tjupan boy, Perth

“Our culture is so good because it’s the oldest one in the whole world. It is important to me to hang on to the information because I don’t want us to lose our culture, that’s when we lose our way.” 10 year-old Noongar / Martu / Yamatji / Wongi Boy, Perth

“Learning from the old people – culture is part of me.” 14 year-old Jaru boy, Kimberley

“When I’m speaking my language it makes me feel black on the inside.” 16 year-old Ngaanyatjarra girl, Goldfields-Esperance

“Knowing where you come from and who you are. Also knowing about what has happened before you were on the land.” 15 year-old Ballardong girl, Perth

“... being proud of being a young Aboriginal man.” 16 year-old Noongar boy, Wheatbelt

“Learning about our ways that is important to know so I can be who I am. Tjukurrpa [Dreaming] and lore is my sign. I want my goordi [spirit] to be happy.” 16 year-old Ngaanyatjarra girl, Goldfields-Esperance

“Feels good to be Aboriginal. I feel lucky.” 6 year-old boy, Perth

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

“Being black and proud.” 14 year-old boy, Great Southern

“It tells me who I am and makes me feel good. It makes me feel like I belong somewhere.” 13 year-old Yawuru girl, Perth





The broad concept of respect was recognised by many children and young people. While many spoke of the importance of young people respecting elders and Aboriginal culture, they also spoke of other people respecting Aboriginal culture.

“Respecting my elders, learning about my people through my parents. Learning my Aboriginal history through both my parents’ sides.” 11 year-old Noongar boy, Perth

“Learning from the old people, culture is a part of me.” 14 year-old Nyul Nyul girl, Kimberley

“Following the rules, the culture and religion rights. Taking care of young ones and looking after elders.” 10 year-old Noongar / Nunga girl, Perth

“Elders are the most important, speaking our language and going out bush to hunt tirnka (goanna), nganurti (turkey), marlu (kangaroo) and cooking them. Tjukurrpa stories, dream time stories. Dancing and ceremonies.” 12 year-old Ngaanyatjarra girl, Goldfields-Esperance

“Some of my friends call my Mum ‘Aunty’ for respect.” 10 year-old boy, Perth

“Australia needs to be more proud of my culture, it needs to be a part of Australian culture and not just separated.” 17 year-old Jabirr Jabirr girl, Kimberley

“Language, your skin, family, respect.” Wongi boy younger than 10 years old, Goldfields-Esperance

Culture was also strongly linked with a sense of family and sharing activities and knowledge.

“For me [what’s important is] learning about my culture and knowing how I relate to it and being able to spend time learning about my culture with my grandmother and family and [to] be shown the different types of things and responsibilities.” 12 year-old Noongar boy, Goldfields-Esperance

“Lore is a good time, yeah. You can see your brother turn into a man.” 14 year-old boy, Pilbara





“Learning about the way we lived, danced, storytelling and then passing that knowledge on to the younger generations. Knowing my identity and my family’s identity.” 17 year-old Yawuru girl, Perth

“I help my grandmother [with] everything. She [teaches] you about how to dance. We get up in the morning and do beads every day. She teach[es] me how to talk, to talk language. At [the] river she teach[es] me [about] bush tucker. It is important for me to spend time with her. There is no one around to teach us apart from the old ladies.” 14 year-old girl, Kimberley

“Going out bush with the family, being able to listen to elders and pass on their stories, food, and learning traditional ways and values to balance out life in a western society.” 16 year-old Wongi girl, Goldfields-Esperance

“Living out in the bush and learning about your culture makes you feel more great, you can go fishing, hunting, swimming and be with your family.” 13 year-old Torres Strait Islander / Kitja girl, Kimberley

“It’s cool because you get to use boomerangs and spears.” 8 year-old boy, Perth



A connection to the land and connecting with and caring for country was identified as a significant part of culture.

“It’s important because you are connected with the land and food.” 10 year-old Noongar / Nyangumarta girl, Pilbara

“Keep the culture going [and] look after country.” 11 year-old Mangala boy, Pilbara

“Knowing how to live with the land and how to carry on traditions.” 16 year-old Noongar youth, Great Southern

“...to get to know about the land I was born on.” 13 year-old Yawuru girl, Kimberley

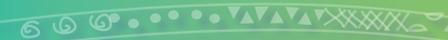
“Culture means going out bush hunting and learning about the bush.” 12 year-old boy, Goldfields-Esperance

“Respecting land and language and teaching the little ones about culture.” 11 year-old Nyangumarta child, Pilbara

“Hunting, shooting, fishing, look after country, bush food, keeping community clean, looking after family.” 14 year-old Walmatjarri boy, Kimberley

“Clean all the stuff here. Put stuff in the bin. Respect your own land.” 11 year-old Yawuru boy, Kimberley

“Not throwing rubbish in the culture.” Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander younger than 10 years old, Pilbara





Stories and traditional languages are known by many children and young people and are seen as a connection to culture.

“Language, ceremony, family traditions and dance makes me feel connected and complete.” 13 year-old Noongar girl, Perth

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

“It’s special to know your language and not to forget it.” 10 year-old girl, Perth

“I always love learning my pop’s stories about the Dreamtime.” 16 year-old girl, Peel

“Ancestors, old people. Sit down in a circle and find them, old people tell you stories about what they’ve done and [about] all the ancestors.” 11 year-old girl, Kimberley

“Culture means learning about our Wongatha language.” 11 year-old girl, Goldfields-Esperance

“Sitting around the campfire, the old people tell us stories about long time ago and [about] the Dreamtime. Sometimes when we’re hunting and we don’t know something, they tell us [the] language name.” 12 year-old girl, Kimberley

“My language is important to me because we got told stories by our grandparents about long time ago and culture shows who I am.” 14 year-old Gooniyandi girl, Kimberley

Consultation example 2

Group circles and art at Noongar significant sites

The culturally and historically significant sites of Two Peoples Bay and the Stirling Ranges were the settings for a series of consultations by the Southern Aboriginal Corporation.

Thirty Noongar children and young people spent time by the coast and in the ranges with mentoring from Elder Aunty Eliza Woods, who also provided the Welcome to Country and closed each of the two days with a group circle where everyone spoke about the day’s events and the future.

The children and young people wrote about their thoughts on living in the Great Southern and their dreams for the future, with many using colourful artwork to illustrate their thoughts.

These artworks, created in a beautiful and meaningful natural setting, are now proudly displayed in the foyer of the Commissioner’s office.



Some children indicated that they did not know very much about their culture, or that it was not an influence in their life.

“I don’t acknowledge my culture.” 11 year-old boy, Perth

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

“Culture means a lot to me but I don’t know as much as I should know. I know a bit of it. I know I’m Martu because my Dad is from up north, around Wiluna. I don’t know how I could learn more. Family I guess, but I don’t know a lot of people around here.” 14 year-old boy, Perth

“Some old people don’t know culture. Some didn’t want to learn it. When they got the right to drink...then they forgot culture and everything...” 16 year-old boy, Pilbara

“For me culture is very important to me. It is something that I want to learn more about because it is something I’m lacking! I haven’t learnt much about the language of my culture, I still have to learn so much about my culture!” 15 year-old Whadjuk, Yuat, Ballardong, Tjupan boy, Perth

“Unfortunately I don’t know much about my Torres Strait background as a majority of it is from the stolen generations and my Nan doesn’t talk about it.” 16 year-old Torres Strait Islander young person, Kimberley





My home

Children and young people in both metropolitan Perth and regional Western Australia discussed how they see their local community and what they like and dislike about their local environment. Some of the following comments should be read in the context of some children currently being in out-of-home care.

Natural features, such as rivers, ocean and bushland featured as positives in many children's responses.

"Two things I love most about where I live is knowing my ancestors were from the same place and used the Ballardong [Swan] River as a resource and my family used Northam as a cultural place." 14 year-old Noongar / Bardi girl, Wheatbelt

"There's heaps of bushland around here and I've got heaps of friends." 10 year-old boy, Perth

"I like the place where I live 'cause it is close to the bush and it's not big so I know my way around." 16 year-old Noongar boy, Wheatbelt

"I like that we have lots of bush at our house and big backyard. Albany isn't that busy and not many places have hills like here." 7 year-old boy, Great Southern

"One of the things I like is that the beaches and bush are right at your back door and you can access them whenever you want without having to travel far." 15 year-old Yamatji girl, Gascoyne

"I like it here because I can go to the creek to swim with my family." 13 year-old boy, Goldfields-Esperance

"Wake up in the morning to the sound of nature instead of noise from cars, trucks, planes, trains." 11 year-old girl, Kimberley

"The river and the beach." 10 year-old Noongar, Pilbara

"We feel very close to nature and land, we don't have city lights." 10 year-old girl, Kimberley





A sense of community was felt by many to be important in their lives.

“I like walking around Leonora and visiting my family.” 10 year-old girl, Goldfields-Esperance

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

“I don’t like where I live. I want to be close to all my family, they live up north by the beach.” 10 year-old girl, Perth

“Hanging out with family and friends and listen to my great grandfather who tells me stories when he was younger.” 12 year-old Nyul Nyul girl, Kimberley

“Family and friends around, school and it’s a peaceful town.” 12 year-old girl, Great Southern

“Small town, can’t get lost, I know most people that live here.” 9 year-old boy, Great Southern

“My family and friends are here and this is where I was born and this [is where] I’m going to grow up.” 13 year-old Yawuru boy, Kimberley



Local amenities and access to activities was highlighted, particularly in regional communities.

“We live in the desert. [My town] has everything; a pool, youth centre, police station, clinic, shop, roadhouse. The youth sport and rec officers and two of them are Aboriginal. At school we get a good education and go on trips and have fun.” 16 year-old Ngaanyatjarra girl, Goldfields-Esperance

“PCYC and the youth centre. The little activities they do, every Mondays and Wednesdays and Fridays. On Mondays they have game nights... at the PCYC... and after games they have dodge ball, lots of kids like that... get away from the stealing...

Wednesday they have the same thing again, and Friday they have the disco... and they got the pool. But they put the price up. Used to be \$2, now it’s \$3. The youth centre’s free. And school holidays, they take you camping, fishing, swimming, with a bus all around everywhere. They look after all the kids.” 14 year-old boy, Pilbara

“More activities and centres focused on teenagers.” 16 year-old boy, Mid West

“Have more activities after school for kids, better public transport and more holiday programs.” 12 year-old girl, Kimberley





“We would like to get phone service out here so we could talk to our family and friends that are a long way from here.” 12 year-old Kariyarra girl, Pilbara

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

“Places we get to go, pocket money and going to the movies, roller skating.” 12 year-old boy, Perth

“Perth – it’s a big city, movies.” 15 year-old boy, Perth

“... if I do go play, sometimes we go to the park, but I have to ask my Mum first because sometimes she won’t let us play at the park because of the broken glass and stuff.” 11 year-old girl, Perth



Some children and young people indicated in their responses that personal safety was an issue in their lives.

“I want [to] be in a safe place.” 11 year-old girl, Kimberley

“At least we got somewhere to stay in a house, we safe in house.” 12 year-old girl, Kimberley

“The children of [my town] 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 don’t like going to school because they know that there are people in the school that are just there to work and make money. They can tell when people don’t care about them. They need people that care about them, people that are willing to give them their own time to listen and help and be their friends.” 17 year-old Banyjima girl, Pilbara

“A place to live instead of on the streets.” 8 year-old boy, Perth

“[My town] isn’t safe.” 12 year-old girl, Perth

“This town needs less homeless people and more home people.” 13 year-old Kariyarra boy, Pilbara



If I was the 'boss' of my town, what would I change for the better?

Children and young people were invited to take a 'big picture' approach and think about what changes they would implement if they ran their town. Most identified things that directly impact on their wellbeing, such as good housing, living in a safe environment, community transport and more services, in addition to some fun elements.

The desire for community amenities and more activities for children and young people to have fun meant many had bold visions for their local community.

"If I was the boss, I would get a new and bigger skate park." 10 year-old boy, Goldfields-Esperance

"Free Wi-Fi and a waterpark." 11 year-old girl, Mid West

"Pools, big shopping centre, netball and basketball courts." 11 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 and the employment side of things. I also would try to find a way to make it easier for the Indigenous youth [to find] employment." 17 year-old Wongi boy, Goldfields-Esperance

"I would make a big water playground and I would name it Broome Water Land. I would also make a big centre for people who [have] special needs, ban alcohol and drugs, make bigger and better clothing shops and provide the schools with lots of equipment and school stuff." 14 year-old Bardi / Yawuru boy, Kimberley

"I want more shops." 11 year-old girl, Goldfields-Esperance

"More Aboriginal doctors and nurses." 12 year-old girl, Great Southern

"I would like a museum for Aboriginal culture and art." Girl of unknown age, South West

"If I were the boss of the town I would make sure we have a lot more children's activities weekly and skate parks and those sorts of things so the children will not be at home all day after school doing nothing." 13 year-old Aboriginal boy, Pilbara





“Make kids happy by making playgrounds.” 11 year-old, Pilbara

“Christmas lights and a Christmas tree for the town.” 10 year-old girl, Kimberley

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

Many children and young people expressed a wish for a cohesive community.

“I want everyone to get along with Aboriginal people.” Noongar boy younger than 10, Perth

“I would make it so that everyone is treated the same and people don’t judge us Aboriginals ‘cause we have different coloured skin.” 14 year-old Ngadjju boy, Perth

“I believe that our town could be improved by having more artworks. I believe that art brings people together and if there was to be some Aboriginal art displayed around the town I think it would not only add to the look of the town but also bring some people together (either when working on it or just talking about it around town).” 16 year-old Noongar girl, Great Southern

“Get rid of racist people, have higher penalty rates on crimes like rape, domestic violence.” 17 year-old girl, Peel

“To stop racism.” 12 year-old girl, Perth

“I would like to change the way we treat each other because it’s on us to do what we got to do to survive so treat everyone with fairness and equality.” 17 year-old Koori boy, Perth

“I want a happy town...everyone getting along.” 14 year-old girl, Pilbara

“Stop the fighting, ‘cause we can’t even walk the road without people swearing at us...girls swearing at us.” 14 year-old girl, Pilbara

Consultation example 3

Keeping it real in Freo

The infectious hip hop beat created by Scott (‘Optamus’) Griffiths and children and young people from the Fremantle area tells of life growing up in Perth’s southern suburbs.

The City of Fremantle worked with 25 students from South Fremantle High School and Winterfold Primary School, running hip hop and film workshops to develop their ideas and ultimately create the catchy rap, ‘Keeping It Real’.

After finalising the lyrics, the students had fun on their school campus creating a high-energy film clip, which can be viewed on the Commissioner’s website at www.ccyp.wa.gov.au

The lyrics are available on page 34.



The impact of alcohol and drugs was identified by some.

“We live in a very beautiful place that has lots of opportunities to have a good future but there are lots of people that are still sad and angry about things that have gone wrong to them and all Aboriginal people in the past that is too hard to get over and they turn to drugs and alcohol. Those things need money and support to talk about our needs and heal our hearts before we can all be happy together. I have support and I am lucky but lots of my friends and family will go down the wrong path without healing.” 12 year-old, Kimberley

“I don’t want my mother and father to be taking hard drugs and ganja. I wish I had food. I don’t want to be my family servant. Also I don’t want to be blamed for everything.” 11 year-old Noongar girl, Perth

“Change the whole town. Stop kids from smoking and using drugs... and those people selling drugs...I’d dob the police on them.” 15 year-old girl, Pilbara

“I want my family to stop drinking.” Yamatji girl younger than 10 years old, Goldfields-Esperance

“[Get rid of] drugs that make people sick and make people kill themselves, I would get rid of all the drugs that wreck everything.” 10 year-old Noongar boy, Perth

“I would create a rehabilitation centre in the town with health professionals to help these people overcome their addictions because we all know that God won’t help us all.” 17 year-old Kitja youth, Kimberley

Inadequate or a lack of housing was raised by some children and young people.

“More houses and more food in people’s houses.” 9 year-old boy, Perth

“All the homeless people would have homes and for the Aboriginals to have money. It’s not fair that other people have homes and money.” 10 year-old girl, Perth

“Help people with accommodation to get off the streets so it is safe for them.” 15 year-old girl, Perth

“I would change the houses to make them better for the Aboriginal people by making them clean and newer. I would build a hostel for all the kids to go to when their parents are out of town so the kids can still attend school.” Kariyarra girl younger than 10 years old, Pilbara



The issue of safety was identified across a range of ages.

“Curfew to stop kids just walking around.” 14 year-old girl, Kimberley

“[I would make it] safe for everyone.” 17 year-old girl, Perth

“Safer for everyone around the community, stop crime.” 15 year-old girl, Perth





“I would give the people who live on the streets and have nowhere to go a place to go and feel safe...” 16 year-old Tjupan / Noongar / Wongi girl, Goldfields-Esperance

“I would build more youth centres for young kids and teenagers where they could be their selves and feel safe and not alone. I would give more support to children and show them how to be leaders and role models and stop following the wrong people. To help show them they are doing the wrong [thing] and they will realise how it’s not helping them get anywhere by just doing the wrong [thing].” 12 year-old Noongar girl, Goldfields-Esperance

“I want a police officer in town so we can look after the place and keep kids safe.” 15 year-old Kariyarra youth, Pilbara

“Make more places for kids without homes to go to and live and be loved by others and not abused.” 12 year-old Torres Strait Islander boy, Kimberley

“No hitting, safe homes, no crime.” 8 year-old boy, Perth

“If I was a boss I want people to stop fighting in my community.” 15 year-old Kitja girl, Kimberley

Reducing barriers to education and supporting the transition to employment, particularly in regional parts of Western Australia, was a common wish.

“If I was the boss of the place where I live I would open up our youth centre, I would hurry up and get a bus to come and get the high school kids that live here and need to go to high school. I would make sure that kids get good education.” 12 year-old Wongi girl, Goldfields-Esperance

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

“I’d rebuild the roads, clean the whole town, make a big clean-up day, make a lot of things there that will give jobs, then tell everyone to go get jobs.” 14 year-old boy, Pilbara

“Closely involve the Indigenous elders with the decision making of the local council and integrate their culture into the curriculum of the school.” 17 year-old Kaurareg boy, Mid West

“I would include more opportunities and support for children who want to go to school but can’t afford to buy basic school supplies or have unsupportive families.” 17 year-old girl, Kimberley

“Make schools for black kids ’cause we learn different to Wadjellas [non-Aboriginal people]. We think different, a school where Wadjella kids could come to, so we can share our ways and teach them. My last school never listened to me as a student and what I had to say about things that I knew about. And they never really listened to any of my mum and dad’s ideas or suggestions at that school. It is only one way learning unless you have a really good teacher that gives you respect and wants to hear what you have to say. I’ve only ever had two of those teachers in my nine years at school. I would bring language and culture back first. We need that to be strong to feel important and then we can learn the other stuff. The other stuff will be easier for us to learn once we know our own way. Because we [are] always walking around lost like we missing something. And that’s what I think it is.” 13 year-old Noongar girl, Perth

“We need more youth groups where we can feel safe and confident where we can grow to fulfil our dreams.” 15 year-old boy, Great Southern

“Get a good education and stay in school.”



My life counts!

When asked about how they saw their future and what help they needed to achieve their aspirations, many children and young people identified the importance of education in achieving their goals.

“SCHOOL! It’s the only place which will make anything and everything happen. Don’t take drugs or drink alcohol.” 15 year-old Noongar / Ballardong girl, Perth

“Get a good education and stay in school.” 14 year-old girl, Perth

“I want to go to university when my son is two years old. To help me get there I would probably need a mentor and help to apply for uni because I have no idea how to do that.” 17 year-old Banyjima girl, Pilbara

“Go to school every day.” 9 year-old girl, Perth

“I have very much struggled with Year 11 as there is a lack of support from teachers. However, I’m eager to continue on and complete Year 12 in a university pathway and hopefully continue on to university. I come from a family where future studies into university isn’t as valued and sometimes there can be a lack of encouragement from them as they have not made these achievements themselves. However, I believe that continuous encouragement and praise could boost many Aboriginal kids’ self-esteem as well as more opportunities available to make us more eager to achieve our goals.” 16 year-old Wongi girl, Goldfields-Esperance

“Complete high school and decide what I’m going to be.” 10 year-old, Perth

“You have to learn culture way and school way.” 11 year-old Martu girl, Goldfields-Esperance

“My reading needs to get better, give the drugs up and people to take me looking for a good job – that’s what I would like.” 17 year-old Yamatji / Noongar boy, Gascoyne

Career goals were varied, from professional careers to sports stars.

“I want to be the Prime Minister.” 12 year-old girl, Kimberley

“I want to be a famous hurdler and have a good job. The things that can help me be a famous hurdler is [to] drop my attitude and train really hard but always make sure my education comes first and that is how I can get a good job and become the person I really want to be. Always follow my dreams and have my head up.” 10 year-old Noongar girl, Perth

“Get a job and house. [Work for the] police force because there are shortage of Aboriginal people.” 17 year-old girl, Perth

“I want to have a great job and be earning a lot but to still hold on to Noongar culture.” 11 year-old boy, Peel

“I would like to get married and have children. I want to stay home in Warburton and work as a sport and rec officer.” 16 year-old Ngaanyatjarra girl, Goldfields-Esperance

“To be a happy person.” Teenage girl, Perth



“I want to be a bushman with a station and I want to work in the stockyard with my family. I need elders and people to teach me how to be a stockman.” 14 year-old Kariyarra boy, Pilbara

“I want to be a health person like to help everyone to be healthy and make everyone stop having cancer and stuff.” 8 year-old girl, Great Southern

“I really want to get a job but there are no jobs for people in the community. I want to do cleaning on a mine or something but I will have to leave my home and community to get work. I need help to get a job close to my community so I don’t have to move away from home by myself.” 16 year-old Kariyarra girl, Pilbara

“I want to make it to the AFL not just for me but also for my family, to make them proud of my achievements and I’d also like to get a good job to help me get [to] where I want to be.” 17 year-old Noongar boy, Wheatbelt

“A policewoman, nice car, play netball and be like Bianca Franklin.” 12 year-old girl, Perth

“AFL – if that won’t work, mining.” 15 year-old boy, Mid West

“To become a doctor.” 9 year-old girl, Goldfields-Esperance

“In the shearing sheds like dad.” 10 year-old boy, Perth

“I want to get a job at DCP (Department for Child Protection and Family Support). I know DCP because I’m in it, so I understand what it means.” 9 year-old girl, Perth

“I want to go to Japan, to Europe and China.” 11 year-old girl, Kimberley

“I’d love to just be happy, meet new people, enjoy my job and earn money and have a nice home, family and a brighter future.” 17 year-old girl, Perth

In visualising their future hopes and dreams, many children and young people recognised that they would need support to help them get there.



“I need to stay at school and the teachers can help me.” 12 year-old boy, Goldfields-Esperance

“I’d need to learn how to set up a company so I can learn how to do experiments and make cures.” 8 year-old boy, Perth

“Support from my family and mentors to help me get my AFL dream because I’m halfway there and I can’t stop now.” 15 year-old Unggarangi / Bardi boy, Kimberley

“I need help to get everything in my life straight.” 10 year-old boy, Perth



“You need the moral support of a great, successful role model – someone that has been in the exact situation you are in but they have moved forward and succeeded.” 17 year-old Koori boy, Perth

“You need support and love from your family and friends, and you need to push yourself to be the best.” 16 year-old Noongar boy, Wheatbelt

“My parents can help.” 10 year-old girl, Goldfields-Esperance

“Provide me with all the resources, but getting into drugs would stop me.” 11 year-old boy, Perth

“I would like to go to boarding school, we need a person to help us and show us the right way.” 16 year-old Ngaanyatjarra girl, Goldfields-Esperance

“I need good role models and elders to help me with culture and Noongar/Yamatji language.” 15 year-old Noongar / Yamatji boy, Perth

“Set goals.” 13 year-old girl, Goldfields-Esperance

“Education, discipline, health and fitness.” 16 year-old boy, Mid West

“Need help from teachers, homework centres, mentors, family and most of all a lot of role models that are showing a lot of young kids like me that’s they can be somebody.” 12 year-old, Perth

“Everyone’s support and people to come together and stop making everything about politics, money and greed. Start making it about culture, family, friends and being all together.” 14 year-old Yawuru boy, Kimberley

“Keep going to school every day and keep practicing. It’s all up to me.” 14 year-old boy, Perth

“I know in school I’m not doing the best right now. I probably need some people to help me out with some extra things, like a tutor or something. It’s one of the biggest things I’m struggling with right now. I definitely know that if I don’t get stuck into my school work, I’m not going to go anywhere.” 14 year-old girl

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

“My family will help me with my education.” 11 year-old girl, Goldfields-Esperance

“One step at a time.” 10 year-old girl, Goldfields-Esperance

Consultation example 4

Voices of the Ngaanyatjarra

In the remote Central Desert, the children and young people of Warburton used the Commissioner’s online survey to have their say in the consultation.

A staff member from the Commissioner’s office sought permission from the Ngaanyatjarra Council to enter the community and worked with local community members to assist with the visit, meeting students at the local schools and running group sessions for the children to complete the online survey via computers and iPads.

The students enjoyed the yarning process and the opportunity to add their voices to this consultation.





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- Mr Peter Mitchell, Chief Executive Officer, Men's Outreach Services and Alive and Kicking Goals
- Mr Lachlan Cooke, Chief Executive Officer, ICEA Foundation; with Ms Isovaine Huddleston and Mr Sam Petera, young people
- Ms Michelle Webb, PHD Candidate, Curtin Health Innovation Research Institute, Curtin University
- Ms Michelle White, Manager Aboriginal Programs & PR and Media, Community Arts Network Western Australia
- Ms Connie Yarran, Youth Arts Officer, Community Arts Network Western Australia
- Ms Yolande Yarran, Arts and Cultural Development Officer, Community Arts Network Western Australia
- Mr Les Mack, Project Manager, Graham (Polly) Farmer Foundation; with Ms Che Smith-Harring, young person
- Ms Josie Janz-Dawson, Deadly Sista Girlz Program Manager, The Wirrpanda Foundation
- Ms Susan Michoff, Manager of Community Wellbeing, Shire of East Pilbara
- Ms Luisa Latai, Coordinator of Youth Services, Shire of East Pilbara
- Ms Jane Wheller, Youth & Community Development Officer, Town of Port Hedland; with Ms Felicia Ryder, young person
- Ms Nicole Hanna, Principal, East Kalgoorlie Primary School
- Ms Bernadette Delaney, Deputy Principal, East Kalgoorlie Primary School
- Ms Tanya Tucker, Teacher, East Kalgoorlie Primary School
- Mr Rory Whitelaw, Director Policy and Reform, Department of Aboriginal Affairs; with Mr Jayden Councillor, young person.



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- Wanslea Family Services – Albany, Mt Barker, Gnowangerup and Tambellup
- Gnuraren Aboriginal Corporation – Busselton
- Public Health Advocacy Institute of WA, Curtin University – Beagle Bay
- Yulella Aboriginal Corporation – Meekatharra
- City of Mandurah – Mandurah
- Geraldton Streetwork Aboriginal Corporation – Geraldton
- City of Fremantle – Fremantle
- Shire of East Pilbara – Newman, Marble Bar and Nullagine
- Kulbardi Aboriginal Centre, Murdoch University – Roebourne and Fremantle
- Swan Alliance Communities for Children – Perth
- Edith Cowan University – Perth

- Derby Aboriginal Health Service – Derby
- Save The Children Australia – Kununurra
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- Adam Desmond, Binar Basketball Club, Midland
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Appendix One – Song Lyrics

Beagle Bay Workshop Song Lyrics – Song 1

Written and performed by Albert Wiggan

Verse (1)

If I were the boss of this town
This is what I'd do
Build a brand new shop
Some more playgrounds and a very big
swimming pool

Verse (2)

I'd build more houses, and get more jobs
For all my friends and family
'Cause our culture and a good education
Is what's important to me

Verse (3)

So what's so great about where we live
And where will I be in the future
Hunting and living off the land makes us strong
Healthy food means healthy culture

(Chorus)

We love blue skies,
Clouds fly, the bush and beautiful waters
Lots of free time and sunshine

Hanging round with my sisters and brothers
Playing sport every day, in our home called
Beagle Bay
So stay at school and obey the rules
And help us all to get there... one day

Verse (4)

If I was the boss of this town
This is what I'd do
Get a big youth centre for all the kids
And grow our own fruit and veggies too

Verse (5)

Build a big airport, to teach everyone
About our beautiful land
It makes me so happy
Is what I want you to understand

Verse (6)

A living freshwater paradise
Our old people gave to me
No troubles in their eyes
Is the kind of future I want to see

Chorus!!!

Bridge

I wanna be a footballer
I want to be a doctor
I wanna study in a university
I want to be an Olympic boxer
I wanna be Kimberley boy,
I wanna be Kimberley girl
I wanna be a pilot and drive a plane
All over this great big world

So here's our message, Commissioner
Hope it's loud and clear
As young boys and girls we all need a voice
And make big choices with no fear





Beagle Bay Workshop Song Lyrics – Song 2

Written and performed by Albert Wiggan

(Verse)

I want to go fishing with all our families
Collecting bush tucker hanging from our trees
Because our country is just so wild and free
That's why my culture is so special to me

But we can never forget the past
Because our dreamtime will always last
Now it's time to think of the future
And where I wanna be
When I get older

(Chorus)

If I was a boss of my little town
I'd show all the good things that I found
In a place called Beagle Bay
Where the land took care of us every day

No more gunja and no more grog
Looking after our family is our job
Go to school and get a good education
Work harder for the next generation

(Verse)

When I grow up I'm gonna be a doctor
I'm gonna drive a real fast car, even own my
own helicopter
I may be a basketball star, or a regular
bus driver
Might see other places, or be a deep sea diver

But don't forget about who you are
And don't forget about where you come from
The most important thing in life
Is to keep yourself and your family strong

(Chorus)

If I was a boss of my little town
I'd show all the good things that I found
In a place called Beagle Bay
Where the land took care of us every day

No more Gunja and no more grog
Looking after our family is our job
Go to school and get a good education
Work harder for the next generation
So how are we going to get there?

(Verse)

Stay healthy and active too
Play some ball and AFL with you
Stop the junk food, no more Coke
Eating fruit and veges is no joke

Help from our family and friends
More role models to be a star
Go to Broome for my graduation
I really want to go that far
We're going to practice our skills every day
And have some fun to find our way

(Chorus)

If I was a boss of my little town
I'd show all the good things that I found
In a place called Beagle Bay
Where the land took care of us every day

No more gunja and no more grog
Looking after our family is our job
Go to school and get a good education
Work harder for the next generation



Geraldton Street Work consultation rap – a message to the community

Written by Aaron 'Lilstatix' Burns and Aboriginal young people from Geraldton, 2014.

Chorus

What are the most important things in life to you
What does your culture mean to you
What's great about where you live
If you were boss of this town what you want here kids
Where do you want to be in the future
What help do you need to get there
What help do you need to get there

These are the things you gotta think about
Change our lives
We got good hearts

Let's rise...

What's most important things to me, my 4 kids and teachin' 'em right
from wrong

Because there life's, are my biz, my culture means a lot to me 'cause it tells
you who I am, an Aborigine, Yamatji, Noongar man

I stand tall with my colour, hunt and gather marlu meat with my brothers
'cause there ain't no others

And what's great about where I live, hittin' the beach in the summer,
fishin' off the rocks, catch a feed for the famz, yes tucker, and if I was
boss of this town I'd change a few things, incorporate our culture in our
CLASSES, learn our language for STARTERS

Black and white, no more HEARTLESS ACTS

Teach 'em the facts, just like that, one blood, one tribe, lets change the
stats, and in the future I wish I'd own my house, two cars, a dog and a cat
and a job that I am used ta, even though I am black and if I need help I'd
ask my famz, look for positive options, so I can make tracks in the sand.

And to the Commissioner I really hope THAT you're a good LISTENER
'cause our actionz and our wordz keep missing ya and we fishing for a
change so plz plz MISS COMMISSIONER be a really good listener...





‘Keeping It Real’ – City of Fremantle consultation

Written by Scott (‘Optamus’) Griffiths and Aboriginal children from the Fremantle area, 2014

Chorus

(We say yeah)

Beaky Bronx, Hammy Hill, Hilton you know we keep it real

(We say yeah)

Beaky Bronx, Hammy Hill, Hilton

We gots to chill

We gots to chill

W w we gots to chill

You know we keep it real

First verse

True as nan we love to hang

with all my doll sings that’s our thang

No ones winyarn I’m tellin ya dard

We get together for a helluva yarn

We’re the Moorditj Mob down Freo Ways

Been here for years since back in the day

.....That’s us

to all my people and my cuz...

Chorus

Yeah yeah yeah

Second verse

My cultures strong through my nan

Pass down to her since time began

But you got to understand

That sometimes I need a hand

Sam was at our school

And now we don’t have that tool

We need support in my course

From one of us we need to be taught

Chorus

Family Culture Education we gotta build a strong foundation

Family Culture Education we gotta build a strong foundation

Family Culture Education we gotta build a strong foundation

Family Culture Education we gotta build a strong foundation

Commissioner hear the statement

This place needs changing

This place needs changing

For this generation

Chorus



Commissioner for Children and Young People
Western Australia



Not all children and young people in this publication took part in this consultation. They are all Western Australian children and young people who have provided permission for the Commissioner to use the images.

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