



Regional Visit Report

Albany and Mount Barker

9 to 10 February 2016

Facts about children and young people in Albany and Mount Barker¹

Albany

- Around 8,700 children and young people aged 0 to 17 years live in the Albany area.²
- Children and young people are approximately 23 per cent of the entire Albany population.
- According to the 2011 Census Aboriginal children and young people are just over 5 per cent of all Albany children and young people.³
- Between 2011 and 2014 the number of births in the Albany area decreased from 419 to 390.⁴

Mount Barker

- The population of children and young people in the Plantagenet area, which incorporates Mount Barker is around 1,300.⁵
- According to the 2011 Census Aboriginal children and young people are just over 6 per cent of all children and young people in the Plantagenet area.⁶
- The number of births in the Plantagenet area remained steady between 2011 and 2014.⁷

¹ ABS Estimated Resident Population custom report June 2013

² The Statistical Areas Level 2 (SA2) of Albany, McKail-Willyung, Bayonet Head-Lower King, Little Grove-Elleker, and Albany Region.

³ ABS 2011 Census of Population and Housing

⁴ ABS Births 2014

⁵ ABS Estimated Resident Population custom report June 2013

⁶ ABS 2011 Census of Population and Housing

⁷ ABS Births 2014

Who did the Commissioner meet?

A highlight of the Commissioner's visit was meeting his 2016 regional advisory committee for the first time. He spent time talking with the North Albany Senior High School Student Councillors and students from the Rising Albany Yorgas program about how they will contribute to the Commissioner's Engagement in Education project.



Commissioner for Children and Young People Colin Pettit talks with members of his 2016 Advisory Committee from North Albany Senior High School.

Also in Albany the Commissioner met with the principal, staff and students from Mount Lockyer Primary School, and representatives from:

- City of Albany, Mayor and staff
 - The Youth Interagency Network that included representatives from Albany Youth Support Association, Disability Services Commission, Department for Child Protection and Family Support, City of Albany, Department of Education, Relationships Australia and Worklink
 - Southern Aboriginal Corporation
 - Department of Corrective Services
 - Department for Child Protection and Family Support
 - The Great Southern Early Years Network that included representatives from the Communities for Children; Amity Health; Rainbow Coast Neighbourhood Centre; Kidsafe WA; Great Southern Institute of Technology; City of Albany; WA Museum; Parenting WA, Department of Local Government and Communities; Playgroup WA; WA Country Health Service; Department for Child Protection and Family Support; Kids Central Great Southern and Great Southern Employment Development Committee
 - headspace Albany.
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Commissioner for Children and Young People Colin Pettit with Mount Lockyer Primary School students.

The Commissioner also visited Albany PCYC, the Mount Lockyer Child and Parent Centre and Open Access Art Studio to hear about the programs they provide for children and young people and their families.

In Mount Barker the Commissioner visited the Mount Barker Community College, meeting with the principal, senior staff and student councillors.



Commissioner for Children and Young People Colin Pettit with Mount Barker Community College students.

What did the Commissioner hear?

The Commissioner heard that being a regional centre, Albany has many services including government and non-government.

There is a high level of interagency collaboration and coordination that is in part the result of a stable workforce. Service providers have worked together for a long period and their shared knowledge enables flexible and collaborative ways of working.

Things that are working well include:

- Mount Barker Community College's initiatives to bring services to the school site including play cafés and the child health nurse in conjunction with Amity Health and Youth Focus counsellors
- PCYC's Friday night Strike II program for young people 10 to 17 years. A range of activities are provided and young people are offered transport home
- Open Access Art Studio: a drop in arts space for young people aged between 15 and 25
- The 'strong and proud' Aboriginal after-school program for 12 to 16 year-olds with outdoor activities to reconnect to culture (Southern Aboriginal Corporation in partnership with the South Coast Natural Resource Management's Cultural Connections 4 Youth).



Commissioner for Children and Young People Colin Pettit at the new Mount Lockyer Child and Parent Centre with Manager Sandi Burton (Wanslea) and Mount Lockyer Primary School Principal Maxine Augustson.

Although some Albany-based services and programs extend as far as Katanning and Manjimup (for example), children and young people and their families who live outside of Albany have only limited services available. Beyond Albany there are few

family violence services, drug and alcohol support services, alternative education programs and health and mental health services. For many families travel to Albany can be difficult, even from Mount Barker and Denmark.

Other issues impacting on children and young people and raised with the Commissioner include:

- Youth homelessness services are at capacity and there is limited affordable housing (private rental vacancy rates are at 5 per cent), which impacts on the ability of agencies to provide the appropriate support services to families with children and to those experiencing family violence
- There are different service boundaries for every government and non-government agency
- The lack of public transport both within and beyond Albany to enable young people to access employment and recreation activities. More frequent services, more routes and services at relevant times are needed
- Issues around the funding of programs such as: funding is often short term or for pilot programs only; it is competitive rather than collaborative; and there are short lead times for project implementation.
- The gap is not closing for Aboriginal children and young people in the Albany region
- More mental health services are needed for children and young people, particularly for those affected by trauma
- Increased methamphetamine use by people with children is having a significant impact on their health and wellbeing.

What the Commissioner heard from children and young people

The Commissioner heard from the students he met with about how school and education were important to them. They enjoy the fun, safe, environments provided by their schools and the many activities they can do in addition to the curriculum. Students also spoke about friendly, enthusiastic and helpful teachers.

For students at Mount Lockyer Primary School the nature playground and the Ripper Stick program and Ripper Ball were particularly liked.

Students from Mount Barker Community College enjoyed the town's pool and were excited about the improved facilities at the local sporting facility (Sounness Park).

Access to the internet around Mount Barker was a problem for some students, especially given the need to access Connect (the school's intranet) for assignments and they felt there was little to do in Mount Barker when the pool was closed for winter.

Children in Albany liked all the different types of sport available and were looking forward to Albany's new sporting facilities. They felt there were lots of things to do including beaches, riding bikes and scooters, parks, the pool and the PCYC.

When asked what changes were needed, the students said they would like a hangout area for kids older than eight, a water park, toilets in the parks where they play and to have safe crossings over roads and more footpaths.

Commissioner's comments

My visit to Albany and Mount Barker was my first visit to a regional area since my appointment as Commissioner.

I was very pleased to meet with so many service providers and hear of their work with children and young people and their families and some of the issues that are unique to people living in and around Albany.

I was particularly pleased to meet with my 2016 regional Advisory Committee North Albany Senior High School to discuss their important role in my consultation with children and young people about education.

Visiting Mount Barker Community College and Mount Lockyer Primary School to see for myself the varied programs offered by these schools to enhance their students learning and to hear from the students about what they enjoy about their schools was another highlight.

Towards the end of my visit to Albany I was able to meet with the Mayor of the City of Albany to discuss some of the issues I had heard of and let the City of Albany know about the ideas children and young people have about their community.

I would like to thank everyone who met with me for giving me their time.

Colin Pettit

Commissioner for Children and Young People WA
