



## Regional Visit Report

York, Pingelly and Narrogin  
10–11 March 2016

### Facts about children and young people in York, Pingelly and Narrogin<sup>1</sup>

#### York

- The population of children and young people (0 to 17 year olds) in York area as at June 2013 was estimated to be 1,073.<sup>2</sup>
- As at the 2011 census, there were 83 Aboriginal children and young people in the York area, representing 7.8 per cent of the total 0 to 17 year-old population of 1,054.<sup>3</sup>
- The birth rate in York has remained steady. In 2011 there were 49 births, and the same number in 2014.<sup>4</sup>

#### Brookton Area (including Pingelly)

- The population of children and young people in the Brookton area (which includes Pingelly) as at June 2013 was estimated at 784.<sup>5</sup>
- As at the 2011 Census, there were 90 Aboriginal children and young people in the Brookton area, representing 11.6 per cent of the 0 to 17 year-old population.<sup>6</sup>
- The birth rate in the Pingelly area remains steady. In 2011 there were 51 births in the Brookton area, while in 2014 there were 62 births.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> ABS Estimated Resident Population custom report June 2013

<sup>2</sup> ABS Estimated Resident Population custom report June 2013

<sup>3</sup> Census Community Profile, York-Beverley

<sup>4</sup> ABS Births 2014

<sup>5</sup> ABS Estimated Resident Population custom report June 2013

<sup>6</sup> Census Community Profile, Brookton

<sup>7</sup> ABS Births 2014

## Narrogin

- The population of children and young people in the Statistical Level 2 area of Narrogin as at June 2013 was estimated at 1,482.<sup>8</sup>
- As at the 2011 Census, there were 185 Aboriginal children and young people in Narrogin, representing 13.1 per cent of the total 0 to 17 year-old population of 1,415.<sup>9</sup>
- The birth rate in the Narrogin area remains steady. In 2011 there were 78 births, while in 2014 there were 73 births.<sup>10</sup>

## Who did the Commissioner meet?

The Commissioner met with a number of schools, agencies, and shires through the upper Wheatbelt area.

In York, the Commissioner met with:

- Representatives from York District High School including the principal, Aboriginal and Islander education officers, school chaplain, teachers, the Year 5/6 class and the Year 10 Leadership Group.
- York Early Years Group that included representatives from York Community Resource Centre, York Early Years Hub, York Family Playgroup, York Toy Library, the Shire of York, Primary Health Care Network and parents.

In Pingelly, the Commissioner met with:

- Shire of Pingelly, including the Shire president and chief executive officer.
- Pingelly Early Years Network that included representatives from the Pingelly Community Resource Centre, Department of Education, Country Health Service and Department of Local Government and Communities.

In Narrogin, the Commissioner met with:

- Representatives from Narrogin Senior High School including the Principal, Vice Principal and Senior Educator, Aboriginal and Islander Education Officer and Year 7 to 12 students, including Hospitality students.
- Representative from Department of Child Protection, Children in Care Team.
- Youth service providers including Avon Youth Community and Family Services, Health Promotion (Country Health Services), Aboriginal Health (Country Health

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<sup>8</sup> ABS Estimated Resident Population custom report June 2013

<sup>9</sup> Census Community Profile, Narrogin

<sup>10</sup> ABS Births 2014

Services), a representative from Narrogin Police and an Aboriginal community member

- Shire of Narrogin including the chief executive officer and service managers.



Commissioner for Children and Young People Colin Pettit with students from York District High School

## What did the Commissioner hear?

The Commissioner heard that some of the challenges associated with delivering services for children and young people in smaller regional centres are managed through a network of a passionate and dedicated workforce, both volunteer and paid. However, at times this dedication is not enough and small regional centres face significant challenges to ensure a future for their children and young people.

There are a number of things that are working well in these regional areas:

- Both York District High School and Narrogin Senior High School offer a range of education programs and opportunities for students that include:
  - Noongar cultural classes at Narrogin SHS
  - specialty programs such as FESA Emergency Services Cadets and the Leadership Program at York DHS
  - alternative pathways for upper school education at Narrogin SHS such as Certificate courses in Hospitality at the purpose built Narrogin Training Trade Centre.
- York Early Years Hub is run by passionate and caring parents in York.
- Pingelly Early Years Network is guided by a strong Action Plan. The Network is supported at the community level by the Pingelly Community Resource Centre and the Department of Health.

- Pingelly's Youth Centre that operates on Friday nights and provides activities for 10 to 18 year olds, which has resulted in a noticeable reduction in property damage and vandalism in and around the town. The Youth Centre is run by a dedicated group of volunteers supported by local police, however, struggles with funding and for sustainability requires a paid coordinator.
- Avon Youth Community and Family Service that offers outreach programs in schools and with local Aboriginal corporations.
- Outstanding work is being done by Aboriginal Health and Health Promotion, part of the Department of Health's Country Health Service, in working with the community to address the social determinants of health, particularly with the grandmother carers of children and young people in Narrogin.
- The Shire of Pingelly has recently successfully secured \$8 million from Lotterywest, the Department of Sport and Recreation and other funding sources to build a Recreation and Cultural Centre in their town because, as the Shire president stated, "the Shire cares" and young people are an important part of their future.

Challenges and issues impacting on children and young people in these areas and raised with the Commissioner include the following:

- Lack of stable and sustainable funding, particularly for coordination of services for children and young people in the region which has an impact on the delivery of integrated services to vulnerable families and to the consistent delivery of promising youth programs.
- Lack of integrated and coordinated services to support families.
- Metropolitan-centric funding models that do not fit with regional experience.
- Impact of transition of Year 7 students to high school, particularly on smaller centres such as Pingelly that does not have a high school and children need to travel to Narrogin to attend high school.
- Difficulties in collaborating across agencies/groups that have differing priorities, funding models and confidentiality requirements.
- Lack of infrastructure for children in the middle years (8 to 12 years) such as playgrounds.
- Homelessness and lack of safe places for children and young people to go, including no facility such as a youth centre for children and young people to go in York and Narrogin.
- Lack of activities for youth, both older youth and the middle years, particularly outside sport.
- The lack of public transport both within regional centres as well as the beyond these centres to the smaller outlying towns.
- Domestic violence is an issue for some families.

- Significant concerns regarding limited post-school opportunities due to lack of local employment and training opportunities in regional centres and cost of TAFE courses for local families.
- A rise in mental health issues in children and young people and the lack of mental health services for children and young people including perinatal mental health services.
- Drug use among some young people.

## **What the Commissioner heard from children and young people**

Students at York Senior High School said they loved their community and felt safe there and, when asked what changes were needed, they said they would like a better playground with a flying fox, more sporting facilities, a better bus service, better and less bumpy roads, as well as safer footpaths to walk to school, more jobs for teenagers and for the town to have a bit more colour.

Students from Narrogin Senior High School spoke positively about their school and about the opportunities provided to them. The younger students spoke about how they like the sense of space at the school and how helpful the teachers were.

When asked about what they enjoyed about the town, the students spoke about the towns sporting facilities as well as the town's pool, and when asked what changes they would like they said they wanted more facilities that were not sport focused, a cinema or music store and more opportunities when they left school that would get them a job or a career.

## **Commissioner's comments**

My visit to York, Pingelly and Narrogin has shown me the depth of dedicated service providers and volunteers in these regional areas and the general positive response of the children and young people I met about living in their communities.

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 hear some of the issues that are unique to people living in and around York, Pingelly and Narrogin.

Visiting York District High School and Narrogin Senior High 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 a highlight of my trip.

I was honoured to be served lunch by hospitality students at Narrogin Senior High School's Hill Top Café and enjoyed a wonderful meal to a standard worthy of any

café in Perth. This café is open to the public every Friday lunch and provides valuable training opportunities to students.

Of particular urgency, which was echoed across a number of service providers in Narrogin, is the need for a youth centre in Narrogin that meets the needs of young people, provides a safe place to hang out and offers fun and engaging activities.

I also met with the Shire of Pingelly and the Shire of Narrogin about the programs they offer. I was particularly impressed with the Shire of Pingelly for their efforts in gaining funding to build a recreation and cultural centre in town and to listening to the views of young people in their town, to plan a future that has at its centre the needs of children and young people.

**Colin Pettit**

**Commissioner for Children and Young People WA**