



# Here I Am

Stories from young everyday leaders  
in Western Australia



Commissioner for Children and Young People  
Western Australia



## Celebrating 15 years of promoting the rights and voices of children and young people

### 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.

### Content warning

This report explores young people's views on topics such as mental health, bullying and eating disorders, which may be distressing for some people. If you would like to speak to someone, contact Kids Helpline 1800 55 1800 or Lifeline 13 11 14.

### Alternative formats

Alternative versions of this booklet are available. Please contact the Commissioner's office on (08) 6213 2297, country freecall 1800 072 444 or [info@ccyp.wa.gov.au](mailto:info@ccyp.wa.gov.au)

ISBN: 978-0-6489311-9-5



Published February 2023

# From the Commissioner

**Nearly a quarter of Western Australia's population is made up of children and young people under the age of 18 and they contribute enormously to our State.**

Young people have important ideas about what they want to see in their lives, how they wish to be treated and what change is needed. It is my job to help their voices be recognised and heard.

In marking my office's fifteenth anniversary, I wanted to showcase the incredible stories of children and young people who are making a difference in their communities.

In my discussions across the State, I hear many inspiring stories of children and young people who are helping shape their schools, towns and wider communities. Many have shown great courage in the face of adversity, and it is these experiences which have often driven them to want to make the world a better place for others.

This booklet celebrates just a handful of stories of everyday leaders who are making an impact in their communities.

I hope these stories will inspire others to take action towards their goals, no matter how big or small. Whether it be to help others, start something new, or decide to speak up, everyone can play a part.

Thank you to all fifteen children and young people for allowing us to share their personal stories.



**Jacqueline McGowan-Jones**

Commissioner for Children and Young People

# Alkira

## North Metropolitan Perth



**My name is Alkira which is an Aboriginal name for ‘sky’ and I’m from Boorloo, which is Perth.**

A few years ago, I was getting bullied a lot at school. It made me feel really sad inside and not want to go to school. My mum and I started to make some designs and came up with these Indigenous keychains in black, yellow and red. I didn’t want any other Indigenous kids to go through what I went through. So, I decided to make them and then started to hand them out to kids at school, even if I didn’t know them. I wanted them to be proud of their culture. My culture is very special and I think just **how beautiful it is to be Aboriginal.**

Soon, I started doing stalls at footy games and I designed a card to highlight my story behind it. We built a Facebook page to sell them. Now they’re being sold in places like the caves in Margaret River. I’ve also run workshops where I talk about bullying, how it should be stopped and the story of how I got bullied.



At one workshop I did recently down south with Elders, we yarned and shared some stories together and at the end I gave keychains to everyone. **It makes me feel proud knowing that I helped another person feel proud of their culture** and that they are using my keychain in real life. I feel each one I make goes to a person and I wonder who's going to get it? Are they going to share the story so that other people can hear about it? I'm hoping to do more school workshops next year, where children actually make their own keychains.

Making the keychains has led me to be invited to lots of special events, meet amazing people and even be on television. One day I was researching Cathy Freeman at school, as she is my idol, and that same day Mum messaged me to say Cathy Freeman wanted to order 1,000 keychains for her program with kids across Australia. And just recently, I met Jessica Mauboy on stage. I gave her keychains as well.

I started high school this year and the students seem really respectful and kind. I mostly prefer the subjects I can do with my close friends: English, art and horse riding. It's a class my school offers because lots of students here have their own horses. I started horse riding when I was probably three. My favourite thing to do is jumping and hacking and sometimes my mum and I go riding together. When I'm on a horse I feel relaxed and focused.



# Oscar

## South Metropolitan Perth

---

**I live in Lake Coogee with my parents, sisters, brother, dog and five rats. I have autism spectrum disorder, Tourette's, intellectual disability and ADHD, and I find rats calming. They like sitting on my shoulder.**

I have found that keeping active helps me to feel good. We've got a swimming pool and can kick the footy in our backyard. We've also got monkey bars, a trampoline, plus hoverboards, skateboards and scooters. I also go running in a running club one night a week. We usually run five-kilometre trails up and down hills and it feels exciting.

I've also just finished soccer season. I play for an all-abilities soccer team in the highest division. I like to make sure others get a fair go so I try to share the ball around with the younger kids with disabilities. I only started soccer this year so just missed out on playing in the Special Olympics but I want to train hard so I can play in the next one in four years.

At school, I like playing footy with my friends at lunch or recess. I am in an Education Support Centre which means we stay in our one class with the same classmates and do different subjects together.

---

I did mainstream school up until Year 6 and I had no support. Unfortunately, as I was diagnosed late, I was very misunderstood at school. There was only one teacher and 30 of us in the class for them to help. I was very bored. I'd just be sitting around playing with my pencil and then I'd get sent out because I wasn't doing my work, but I didn't know what I was meant to be doing. It wasn't that fun at all.

At my current school we have education assistants who help us with doing our work and if we're not feeling right, they talk to us and make us feel good. Now I understand more about other people's disabilities and can help others in my class if I see they're struggling a bit. Like the other day, we were doing beading and I helped my friend who is non-verbal with his beading.

I'm excited for the next few years. I'll be starting work experience doing horticulture at Optus Stadium where I'll be mowing the lawns and tidying everything up.

I'd say to other people who are going through a challenging time:

**Stick to your dreams and just try your hardest to achieve and accomplish**

**them.** Push through everything you're going through and it will get better over time.





# Alexis

## Collie

---

**My mum is my inspiration. She loves helping others and has encouraged me to volunteer and work towards my dreams.**

We live in Collie with my two brothers. There's a lot of nature spots and places where you can go camp. We love kayaking and swimming at a local dam, or just hanging out together for a games night.

I compete in gymnastics. It's something I started when I was eight and now I volunteer as a coach to teach gymnastics to other young people and help them achieve skills. I do that for five and a half hours a week.

I would definitely recommend volunteering. **Choose something you're super passionate about and see if you can get involved** in one way or another because it can lead to such incredible opportunities.

From gymnastics I learned a lot about the qualities that make a good leader. I've been able to use those skills towards volunteering with young people at the local PCYC which is a place where young people can hang out and do recreational activities after school. For example, there's a mountain bike riding program and I help to organise the bikes, helmets, water bottles and just make sure everything's ok when we're out riding.

---





My mum works at the centre which helped me in starting there. Now, a couple of the young people who know my mum and me have begun trying gymnastics because they wanted to see what it's like as a sport.

I think young people can be a bit more open with me because we're so similar in age that it just feels like talking to a friend rather than talking with an adult. I would definitely recommend seeking help if something is causing you issues. Even if you think it makes you feel weak, you're not. **You're strong for seeking help.** I've discovered helping people is something I love to do and in future I hope to become a primary school teacher.

Sometimes the workload gets a lot between my commitments outside school and trying to get schoolwork done to a high standard. So with homework, for example, I might wake up earlier one day to finish it. Even though I'm busy, I do manage to make time for important things.



# Alexandrea

## Kalgoorlie

---

**I am a young Dyirbal woman, I was born in Perth but my mob come from Dyirbal country, in Queensland.**

I grew up in Perth and Kalgoorlie and moved to the Kimberley when I was younger and then moved back to Kalgoorlie in 2019. Living in different places has exposed me to a myriad of experiences and people.

My mum, brother, sister and I now live in Kalgoorlie. My family is a large part of my life and they have supported me through many things. We love to go for adventures out bush and getting out and participating in community events.

Although I grew up in WA, I have gotten to travel back to visit family in Queensland and be surrounded by the beauty of my mob's country, walk where my ancestors walk and make family and cultural connections. I love connecting with my culture through art, song and dance. It flows through many facets of my life. **My culture is inherently a part of who I am as a person.** It's part of my day-to-day activities, how I treat people, my art, my performance, my academics. It's about who I'm connected to and who I'm representing. I am a young Indigenous woman in everything that I do. Protecting and preserving country is at the forefront of my mind and spirit.

---



Even when I cannot participate in my own tribe's cultural practices, I enjoy participating in and learning about others. My sister and I participated in the WA Opera performance in Kalgoorlie, Koolbardi Wer Wardong.

We sang and performed completely in the Noongar language which was a beautiful experience.

Across Australia, individual tribal groups do their art differently. Mum and I made a traditional fighting stick and entered it in a competition at the Kalgoorlie Arts Centre, where it was displayed. My mum carved the stick and I burnt in the design, symbolising the hills and the rivers in the Tablelands, Queensland. I feel such a sense of pride that I'm able to share my culture with people I've never met before, who may or may not perceive the meaning behind it, or who might perceive something deeper, or unique to them, leaving it open for them to interpret and feel something from that. One of the many reasons I love to create art in all its forms.

When I graduate from Year 12 I hope to study engineering. I am passionate about being a part of this industry because I believe that the people and minds who create and innovate are at the forefront of change in society.

A form of wisdom I would give to someone is, **if you want something enough, always strive to be motivated to take the little steps necessary to achieve it.** Yes, failure is expected along the way but from failure we grow.



# Joshua

## Northam

---

**I live in Northam with my mum, step-dad and three sisters. I enjoy spending my days with my family.**

We've made lots of happy memories just jumping on the trampoline together, having backyard campfires or water fights in summer. In the holidays we love going to Jurien Bay. We stay at a friend's house and get to go to amazing beaches, go sandboarding and even caving.

In my spare time, I like to do environmental projects for fun. For example, I built a working, fully recycled wind turbine using aluminium cans, a small electric motor and some metal scraps. I also just made some 'bio-bricks' which use treated waste products to create bricks you can build with.

One of my favourite hobbies is playing video games. My favourite game at the moment uses physics to try and build spaceships and vehicles that can safely complete missions to travel to different planets in the solar system. I became passionate about gaming as it was the only entertainment I could take to Perth to amuse myself during many hospital admissions for my sister Charlotte. She was born with an undiagnosed syndrome, with a variety of symptoms.

---

These include autism, a seizure disorder, cerebral palsy, intellectual disability and her digestive system doesn't work as it should. Every day we help her with her mobility: getting in and out of the car, dressing, bathing her. We set up a nightly feed that goes into her stomach through a tube because she doesn't eat through her mouth and we have to give her lots of medications. As I'm the eldest, I grew up caring for her as well as looking after my other two siblings.

There's an organisation, SWAN (Syndromes Without A Name), that supports adult carers and I started an offshoot early this year called SWAN Siblings for brothers and sisters of children with extremely rare or undiagnosed diseases. We meet online from across Australia and share a Facebook group. It's great to help and connect with people you can really relate to.

I found through all the circumstances my family went through, I'd learnt a few skills to help me cope. I shared these strategies this year when I gave a TEDx talk to 3,500 people. I talked about how **choosing our attitude towards chores or dealing with hardships makes a massive difference to how well we get through tough situations.**

Regularly checking in with ourselves and keeping a healthy life balance also makes us so much better equipped to deal with hard times. I hope to help others who might also be facing stressful situations to develop ways to thrive despite life's challenges.





# Ajia Albany

---

## I'm planning to publish a book in 2023.

I think all body types should be celebrated, rather than just the narrow type society promotes through fashion and social media. That's why I hosted a body and gender inclusive youth fashion show in Albany town library last year. I live in Albany with my mum, dad and brother.

The show was about expressing yourself and showing your personality so the young people were free to choose what to wear. They put on costumes rather than actual fashion so that made it fun. The message from the show was that **you should feel comfortable in yourself, whoever you are**, and that you are more than just a body, you're a person.

Before putting on the show, I did a project where 65 people wrote anonymously to me to share their experiences with their negative body image or eating disorders. Some wrote that bullying contributed to their body image issues, and others told me about their experience of being the smaller or the larger person in their friendship group, or about different eating disorders. Something I found really sweet was many wanted to share messages of hope to others such as: "You're beautiful. You're strong. You will get through this."

---



I'm putting the messages into my book which aims to educate people about eating disorders and body image issues. I'm currently reaching out to organisations and psychologists to make sure all the information is correct.

I also want to add in some artwork to make it a bit more light-hearted and easier to read because the topic can be heavy.

In doing research, I've found there's increasingly younger people, as young as eight, being hospitalised for eating disorders, or talking about wanting to be thinner, or having more muscle. I think a lot of that comes from social media and editing apps which create an unrealistic idea of how a body should look. Social media allows people to be as bold or horrible as they want in their comments because they're hiding behind a screen.

I think **for those who are afraid of starting something, ask yourself: "What's the worst that can happen?"** The worst is: if you do it, and decide you don't like it, you simply stop. But the best that can happen is that your life is completely changed and you achieve all those things that you've wanted to do.

Next year I'm planning a gap year to travel and work and I hope to finish up the book. After that, I think I want to study psychology.



# Oli

## Geraldton

---

**My family and I came to Geraldton when I was about six. It has a small-town feel in that pretty much everyone knows someone but it's not like an isolated small town. It's connected to everywhere and we've got most things, like shopping, and lots of free entertainment.**

One of my favourite things to do is take my dogs to the dog beach. I also like reading, music, doing judo and going out for a surf at the beach. Although surfing is not so easy to do as much at the moment because I need someone to drive with as I'm on my Learners plates.

There's definitely groups where I feel like I belong and it's just about finding those groups. **It's important to seek out those people that you feel you do belong with**, or if that's not possible, finding something to do that makes you feel comfortable with being alone.

---





At school, I think teachers tend to just leave you to it, especially when you're in the senior years. Most of the time they assume you've done what should be done, and it's up to you to come to them with concerns. **Students really need to be able to speak up** because no one's going to go out of their way to check if you need help.

Speaking up is important. Last year, a guest presenter came to Geraldton from an organisation that supports practices that try to stop someone from being gay, or from living as a different gender. Some people here tried to prevent them from coming to town but couldn't, so they organised a group of people to stand outside the venues to show their support for the LGBTIQ+ community. I took part both times. There were probably close to 100 people there, holding signs and flags. It gave me an idea of how many people there are here who are supportive. The story made it into the newspaper.

I feel positive about the future. I am thinking of doing tertiary study. My first preference is doctor of medicine, and that would be in Perth. Alternatively, if that doesn't work straight away, I'll do a nursing degree as an undergraduate, and I'll be able to stay here for that.



# Samya

## North Metropolitan Perth

---

**English is my fifth language. Before coming to Australia when I was fifteen, I had only ever heard one person speak English.**

I'm from Eritrea, in Africa, and I left there with my mum and four siblings when I was young. We lived in Sudan for five years before the Red Cross helped us to come to Australia in 2020. In Sudan, I only went to school for a few months because it was too expensive.

When we first arrived it was very exciting and I was very happy for a while. Our case manager had arranged somewhere for us to live and we received food and a bank card, but she didn't tell mum how to use it or how to go to the shops. When we'd finished all the food mum tried calling her but she didn't pick up. We were very stressed. So mum rang the only other person she knew, who called a man who spoke our language and he drove her to the shops and showed her what to do.

After a while here, I grew more and more sad. Sometimes, I'd be laughing with my friends and my body would be there but my mind would be in a different place. I even got sick. I slept a lot, I couldn't walk, I couldn't talk to anyone about my feelings. But now I've changed.

---

I talked to my Intensive English teacher, who is like a second mum to us, and told her everything. We have a school psychologist and I talked with them and my heaviness got less and less. I'm still working on it, but I got better.

So I know what it can be like to come from a different country: you feel very sad, emotional, and for a long time you feel lonely. **My advice is to just talk about everything that is hurting you, don't keep it inside your heart.**

Now, when a new student comes to the school, the teacher asks me to show them around and be their buddy. If I see someone new, I love to go talk to them and I'll lend them my iPad if they don't have one. I've even been given a school award for being kind to others.

I did a project in school recently which was lots of fun, where I built a bike. You make two: one for yourself and one to give to another person who can't afford one. I liked the project because it made me happy and was making another person happy. I'm good at creating things, I've made my own clothes since I was about five, so one day I want to work in fashion.

Life is good and I'm grateful to be here.





# Ashlyn Newman

---

**I moved to Newman when I was 10 with my mum and my five siblings. I can still remember my first day at school. I was really nervous until a girl asked if I wanted to come hang out with her and her friends. They were so welcoming. I'm still friends with her to this day.**

There's Clontarf and Shooting Stars programs here, which are programs for Aboriginal boys and girls for sports or after school activities. I'm half Noongar, half Bardi, and from the Ballardong tribe and I'm in the Shooting Stars program. We play netball and it's really fun. We're like a team and we'll sit down in homeroom and just chat or eat together.

**What I felt were my weaknesses are actually my strengths.** At first, I was terrified to do public speaking but slowly, over the years, I grew my confidence. I never actually thought I'd be able to do public speaking but now I love it, because I've done it so many times and I've always had the support I needed to do it. I've been reminded: You're doing great. You're amazing. You're outstanding. You're worth it.

---



I've gotten that along the way and it's just helped me a lot. But I feel like some other people might not have had that support to do it. **I've realised that you're able to do whatever you set your mind to.** Now, I'm a school councillor and I do lots of speaking.

I give the Acknowledgement of Country at assemblies in front of the whole school and when I was in Year 9 I was even asked to give the Year 12 graduation speech. I have also done speeches and Acknowledgements to Country for many community events, such as R U OK Day and marches for NAIDOC week. My friends come up to me after and say "I could never do that" but I believe they could. Because I didn't really want to do them to begin with, but now I'm like, "Oh, yeah, definitely. I'll do it."

I try to put my hand up for things at school or do new things. My favourite subject is visual art, so I love painting, sketching and drawing. Last year I took part in a competition for World No Tobacco Day where the local hospital invited kids to draw a poster. I drew one of a dying tree whose branches and leaves had fallen off and it was reaching for a cigarette as it slowly withered away, and it won. I went to see it on display inside the hospital and it was awesome to see the poster that I drew everywhere.



# Elise Karratha

---

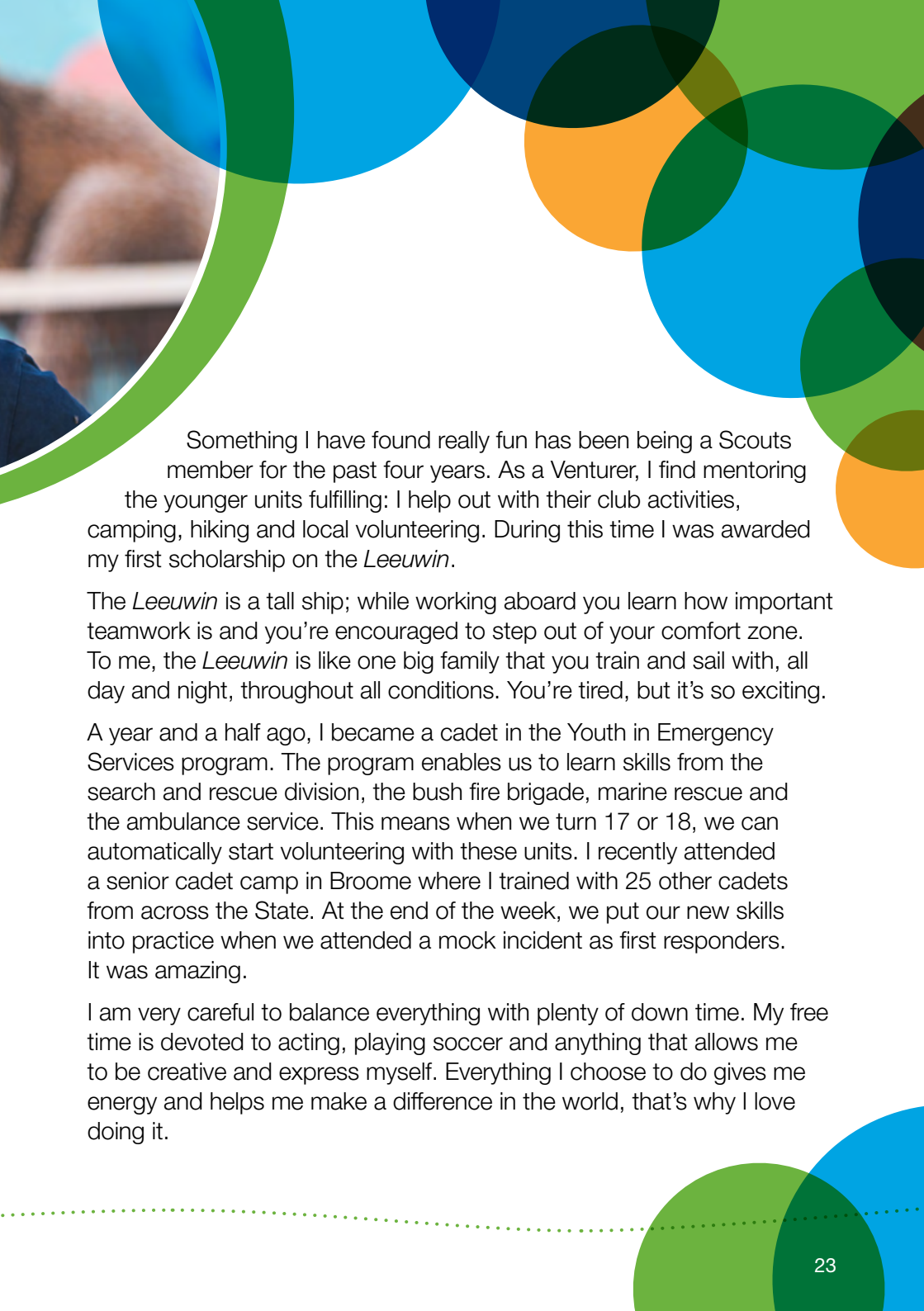
**I love helping others, especially those who feel they don't have a voice. That's my drive, my passion.**

Karratha is a very transient town. Having friends constantly leave takes its toll on those left behind and it can be a struggle to form new friendships. Not having extended family nearby can also be quite frustrating. I'm fortunate to have a very supportive family; without this, many suffer with their mental health. **So being able to give back and help others is really important to me.**

As a member of the Youth Advisory Group at headspace, which is a community-driven group that aims to create safe spaces for adolescents, I help plan and host events raising awareness of important issues that affect mental health, youth and the LGBTIQ+ community.

I was also recently selected to be part of the first ever WA Student Council. It is a group of students that has been formed to advise on and help shape public school policy. As a voice representing my region, my goal is to seek better mental health support, as it's needed now amongst our youth more than ever.

---



Something I have found really fun has been being a Scouts member for the past four years. As a Venturer, I find mentoring the younger units fulfilling: I help out with their club activities, camping, hiking and local volunteering. During this time I was awarded my first scholarship on the *Leeuwin*.

The *Leeuwin* is a tall ship; while working aboard you learn how important teamwork is and you're encouraged to step out of your comfort zone. To me, the *Leeuwin* is like one big family that you train and sail with, all day and night, throughout all conditions. You're tired, but it's so exciting.

A year and a half ago, I became a cadet in the Youth in Emergency Services program. The program enables us to learn skills from the search and rescue division, the bush fire brigade, marine rescue and the ambulance service. This means when we turn 17 or 18, we can automatically start volunteering with these units. I recently attended a senior cadet camp in Broome where I trained with 25 other cadets from across the State. At the end of the week, we put our new skills into practice when we attended a mock incident as first responders. It was amazing.

I am very careful to balance everything with plenty of down time. My free time is devoted to acting, playing soccer and anything that allows me to be creative and express myself. Everything I choose to do gives me energy and helps me make a difference in the world, that's why I love doing it.



# Joshua

## Mandurah

---

**I was born in Bangladesh and moved to Australia with my family when I was five years old.**

My leadership journey began as I progressed through high school and realised all the issues facing my community. And from then on, as clichéd as it sounds, **I decided to be the change that I wanted to see in my community.**

As a prefect at my school, I mainly focused my efforts on student inclusivity and diversity. This was a priority for me as I have recognised that the student body in private schools like mine is not as diverse as it should be. I have found that you only feel included up to an extent and for the most part, it can be hard to fit in. So this year, to combat this lack of cultural diversity, I organised the school's first-ever NAIDOC Week celebrations. It involved a week of Aboriginal-based learning and showcased just how important culture and diversity are within our communities.

I also came up with the idea of creating an initiative that awards students from diverse backgrounds the opportunity to attend a private school and access a broader range of resources to enhance their leadership and learning opportunities. Participants would be

---



selected not only for their academic potential but also their leadership qualities and community involvement.

I am also part of the City of Mandurah Youth Advisory Group and this year I worked on the consultation and drafting phase of the new City of Mandurah Youth Strategy. I also enjoyed helping organise a summer youth music festival (called 'Beats Under the Bridge') which aims to create a safe and vibrant festival for under 18s. We try to involve local youth bands and musicians, and the turnout has been really positive, with more than 250 young people attending each year.

Earlier this year, I had the opportunity to have a voice in State Parliament on behalf of young people in my community by taking part in the Youth Parliament program. During the program, I, along with a few other young people from across the State, drafted and presented a bill to Parliament about e-waste and the importance of reducing, reusing and recycling all forms of technology. I also delivered brief speeches about the risks of coastal erosion to coastal communities, which is an issue for my local area, and the effects of educational inequality on students in WA. Different schools have different resources and I believe you should have the same opportunities at any school, regardless of how much you're paying for it.





# Nur Fatimah

## Christmas Island

---

**My grandma's grandma was born here on Christmas Island. My dad was one of the last generations to be allowed to be born at the hospital here. Nowadays you have to fly down to Perth and then come back up with the baby, like my mum did with me.**

It's safe here; we don't even lock our doors. Everyone knows each other. There's so much nature and wildlife, which I like. We've got some mountains but, everywhere you go, you can see water. If you go in the rainforest there's water caves and waterfalls. My family goes camping and we look for limes and bush chillies together. We've also got a nice boat and do a lot of fishing.

One thing that's good about having a small school is that teachers can really focus on you. In my English class, there's only four people. However, this also means that we have to do a lot of our classes online. For example, I'm the only person doing chemistry in my class, so I have to do it with a teacher online. It's hard doing experiments on your own, and sometimes you need someone to aid you, especially with physical things that can be potentially a bit reactive!

---



My mum was born in Malaysia and Malay is my first language. Most of my classmates are of non-European descent too: they're Malay, Chinese and Indian. We often talk to each other in Malay and sometimes we are reminded by the teacher to speak in English!

My friends and I sometimes go in our cars to drive to beaches, and spend the day swimming, or go to the Grotto, which is a water cave. There's a really nice beach with a waterfall that's an hour and a half walk to get to. We also participate in beach clean-ups. There's one particular beach where a lot of rubbish gets stuck because of the currents coming from Indonesia. One time we finished cleaning it and the very next day it was filled with the same amount of rubbish!

There are some struggles related to our remoteness, like shipping. A ship comes every three months. I once received my school textbook six weeks late because the ship was late, which was a bit stressful. Things are very expensive here due to freight costs.

My advice for other young people is, don't plan to the point that you feel like everything's pushed together and that you're putting pressure on yourself. In a sense, **let everything flow, go with the flow.**

# Harvey

## Derby

---




**I was born in Derby and have lived here all my life, with my mum, dad and two brothers. Sometimes our dad takes us running or we walk down to the jetty together. It's a pretty small town. Everybody knows each other.**

Living remotely is good because the shire has a lot of control and it's made up of people from here, but it's also bad because they can only do so much. They look after the small roads and stuff but they don't really have much say on bigger projects or issues, such as crime. We have to speak a lot louder than other places to get change to happen. We're doing a lot to create change but it isn't really feasible without help from the State government.

I think school plays a massive role in everybody's life because if you don't have an education, there's nothing for you to do in your future. It helps to have good teachers who put effort into making sure students are enjoying what they're teaching, rather than just trying to get it in our heads.

---



Our school was built 60 years ago. When I was in Year 3 we had this old toilet block that was disgusting – it was dirty; the tiles were old and broken; a toilet seat lid was missing. I wouldn't use them and would wait to come home instead. One day, I heard a senator was coming to the school to look at refurbishing the toilets but I thought, that's not enough! So, I wrote him a letter saying we needed to demolish them. I ended up meeting him and showing him around the school. Later, the Minister for Education came and met with some student councillors and me. She said she'd do something about the toilet block and help get some more funding.

They're doing major construction now on new classrooms and facilities, including new toilets, for \$21 million. The teachers are excited; they couldn't change anything in the old classrooms because of asbestos in the walls.

It'll be finished in three years, when I'll be in Year 11. I feel really proud that something I did contributed to the future of my entire school. The principal, a couple of parents and the school council really helped and provided a lot of support. They took on the challenge and kept pushing to get everything done. **I've learned you don't just have to do it by yourself.** If you do it by yourself, it's not going to be easy, but if you have a group of people who are willing to help then it's going to be so much easier.



# Michael

## South Metropolitan Perth

---

**Australia is a lovely country to live in. There's so much space. Sand, sea and sun, as they say, but sometimes the heat's a bit much! I moved to Perth when I was nine, with my mum, dad and brother. My mum's family is from Corfu, off the coast of Greece, and my dad's family is English.**

It's taken me some time to gel with Australian culture. I started to fit in a bit more with the community, started going to a local church, getting involved in things and that's helped me to cement myself here. You make connections at school too and I've had phenomenal opportunities because I got into the drama program, and we have industry-standard theatres here. The senior productions I've been able to do have been amazing. Drama isn't just about having confidence and doing public speaking; you build empathy and interpersonal skills and it's also just good fun.

I got into debating in Year 9 when the school first started doing it and did it throughout Year 10. I was third speaker, so my job was to counter all the arguments of the opposition, so I'd have to think on my feet

---

whilst trying to sound structured, eloquent and use rhetoric. We only lost once the whole time we competed. My teammates were great – they would always set me up perfectly and I would support them, and we're so close-knit now.

I'm too old to compete anymore so I've been mentoring my own team which involves testing the speeches and giving feedback on when they've made a mistake or done really well. We prepare before and after school every Monday and Friday. As there weren't enough teachers to judge the district competition, they asked me and a teammate to help, so I have adjudicated five competitions this year. It's been great as I've seen people from new schools start off not really confident, and then grow in their confidence and speaking abilities, and our team was the same way.

A key to happiness I've discovered, is to **try and build yourself in several areas, such as school, work, family and friends**, and try to do your best in each. If you're focused too much on one thing, and get stressed or worried about it, you can lose touch with positive aspects of everything else. If you have a range of things you become good at, it also means you can find success in different ways. For example, I like writing, so I entered a global essay writing competition this year run by the John Locke Institute in Oxford and was pleasantly surprised to receive a high commendation for my essay on theology.





# Dakoda

## Narrogin

---

**I kind of had the best of both worlds growing up. I lived in Perth up until the age of 13 and went to a really diverse primary school where we had lots of different cultures and backgrounds. Then I moved down to Narrogin, two hours south-east.**

If anyone asked me, I'd definitely choose living in the country. You have that freedom to ride motorbikes, walk around town or go play basketball at eight o'clock at night with your friends. It's just awesome. The vibe in the country is high. Nature is on your doorstep. You just feel connected and uplifted by it.

Sports here are just awesome. There's so much talent. Like tonight, there's basketball on and you can just go down and watch a game and you'll see boys dunking. It's crazy. Basketball, netball, footy and hockey; they are the four main sports here. It's a real passion that everyone shares in the community.

I'm Aboriginal on Mum's side and I'm Maori on Dad's side. So family is really important to me. My great grandmother has been the backbone of our family. She passed away a couple of years ago but she's always

---





in our hearts and she's passed down her values to my nan and my mum. Growing up with them has been amazing and **I've adopted their strength and resilience.** My mum and my auntie are key advocates in the community when it comes to educating and telling people when something's not okay. We've had so many Indigenous role models and leaders who have stepped up and spoken up about problems, like racism, and shared that education, which is really good. Everyone wants to make things better for our youth.

Storytelling is a big part of Aboriginal culture. I'm in Shooting Stars which is like a sisterhood; they are powerful women coming together sharing their stories. I love it. You feel confident as soon as you walk through the door. Only a couple of years back I was the young one who didn't know what to do but I had leaders and role models all around me, showing me the way. Knowing I will be leaving school next year, I asked myself: what can I do for all the kids? **How can I leave a good legacy and motivate the next generation?**

I did a couple of programs where I coached five to 10-year-olds in netball for 10 weeks. This year, I'm doing the same age group with basketball. Through these experiences I found I really like working with kids and now want to become a primary school teacher.



Thank you  
to all the  
young people  
who shared  
their stories

Thank you for  
your assistance

City of Mandurah

Collie PCYC

**MADALAH**

NAIDOC Perth

**OUTMidWest**

Youth Affairs Council of WA

All schools attended by the young people



**Connect with  
the Commissioner**



[twitter.com/ccypwa](https://twitter.com/ccypwa)



[facebook.com/ccypwa](https://facebook.com/ccypwa)



[instagram.com/ccypwa](https://instagram.com/ccypwa)



[LinkedIn](#)



**Commissioner for Children and Young People**  
Western Australia

Level 1, Albert Facey House  
469 Wellington Street  
PERTH WA 6000

Telephone: (08) 6213 2297  
Country freecall: 1800 072 444  
Email: [info@ccyp.wa.gov.au](mailto:info@ccyp.wa.gov.au)  
**[ccyp.wa.gov.au](http://ccyp.wa.gov.au)**