



16/3078

Regional Visit Report

Broome and Fitzroy Crossing
4 - 8 April 2016

Facts about children and young people in Broome and Fitzroy Crossing¹

Broome

- The population of children and young people (0 to 17 year olds) in the Statistical Level 2 area of Broome as at June 2013 was estimated at 3,832.²

By age groups:

0 to 8 year-olds: 2,078

9 to 14 year-olds: 1,269

15 to 17 year-olds: 485

- As at the 2011 Census, there were 1,080 Aboriginal children and young people in the Broome area, representing 32 per cent of the total 0 to 17 year-old population of 3,347.³
- The birth rate in Broome has remained relatively steady. In 2011 there were 269 births, 269 in 2012, 267 in 2013 and 309 in 2014.⁴
- There are three public primary schools and one public secondary school servicing Broome. Broome North Primary was opened in 2015 and has 147 students from K-6. Broome Primary School has 367 students from K-6. Roebuck Primary School has 502 students from K-6.
- Broome Senior High School has 801 students from Years 7 to 12.⁵

¹ ABS Estimated Resident Population custom report June 2013

² ABS Estimated Resident Population custom report June 2013

³ Census Community Profile, Broome

⁴ ABS Births 2014

⁵ Department of Education 'Find a School' school details report.

Fitzroy Crossing

- The most recent statistics on Fitzroy Crossing specifically are from the 2011 Census.

By age groups:

0 to 8 year-olds: 193

9 to 14 year-olds: 127

15 to 17 year-olds: 43

- The total population 0 to 17 year-olds was 363.⁶
- The birth rate in the Derby-West Kimberley (including Fitzroy Crossing) area fluctuates. In 2011 there were 181 births, 204 in 2012, 165 in 2013 and 145 in 2014.⁷
- Fitzroy Crossing is serviced by one public school, Fitzroy Valley District High School. In 2015 there were 132 primary enrolments and 133 secondary enrolments.⁸

Who did the Commissioner meet?

The Commissioner travelled to Broome and Fitzroy Crossing with the WA Young Person of the Year, Preston Culbong, who attended all of the meetings with the Commissioner.



Commissioner for Children and Young People Colin Pettit with Preston Culbong, the WA Young Person of the Year, at the Fitzroy Valley District High School swimming carnival at Fitzroy Crossing pool.

⁶ Census Community Profile, Fitzroy Crossing Urban Centre/Locality

⁷ ABS Births 2014

⁸ Department of Education 'Find a School' school details report.

In Broome, the Commissioner:

- Attended the Kimberley Aboriginal Children in Care Committee's forum. This two-day forum was led by Aboriginal organisations in partnership with the Department for Child Protection and Family Support, bringing together key stakeholders to discuss the over-representation of Aboriginal children in State care.
- Met with staff from the Broome Youth and Families Hub and the Broome Youth Justice Services.
- Toured the Jalygurr-Guwan Aboriginal Corporation (multifunctional Aboriginal child-care facility) meeting board members, staff and children from the centre.
- Visited Broome Primary School, Broome Senior High School and the Broome PCYC Learning Centre, meeting with staff and students.
- Met with June Oscar, chief executive officer of the Marninwarntikura Women's Resource Centre in Fitzroy Crossing and one of the Commissioner's Ambassadors for Children and Young People; Merle Carter, Chairperson, Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Cultural Centre (KALACC); and Amarillo Oscar and Jadnah Davies, staff of the resource centre.

In Fitzroy Crossing, the Commissioner:

- Met with service providers from WA Police, Fitzroy Valley Health Campus, Nindilingarri Cultural Health Services, Garnduwa Amboorny Wirnan and Marninwarntikura Women's Resource Centre.
- Attended the Fitzroy Valley District High School swimming carnival where young people had prepared a photo board of their comments on alcohol use in Fitzroy and the impact on children and young people.
- Visited Fitzroy Valley District High School and Primary School to meet with staff and students.

What the Commissioner heard from service providers

Youth services

- Services in the Broome area are working collaboratively to provide a more effective service to children and young people.
- Agencies work hard to provide consistency in services to build relationships and trust with at-risk children and young people.

- Overcrowding in housing, family breakdown and alcohol and drug problems remain issues for children and young people, increasing their risk behaviours and reducing capacity to attend or engage at school.
- There is a need for more intensive mentoring programs particularly for a core group of young boys who are particularly at risk and for more intensive work with family groups.

Child care

- There is a big demand for child care to support mums returning to work.
- The pathway for children through child care and into the school system is important to help children feel secure and get the best start in education.
- The Jalygurr-Guwan centre is supporting a number of local staff to obtain qualifications in child care, which is important to building local service capacity to meet the demand.

Child Protection

- There is a need for earlier intervention with families and more intensive support to reduce the number of Aboriginal children coming into the care of the State.
- Better mechanisms are needed for engaging the Aboriginal community in decisions about child protection issues at both an individual child level and a policy and practice level.
- Family empowerment, healing programs and trauma-informed work is also critical.
- Facilitating a strong connection to culture and country is critical and handing on the knowledge and responsibility to the younger generation to keep culture strong is vital.

Impact of alcohol

- Alcohol abuse remains a significant issue that impacts significantly on the wellbeing and safety of children and young people.
- The alcohol restrictions (in Fitzroy) have achieved significant improvements in community safety but more is needed to address 'sly grogging' and to support families to make changes, improve parenting skills and promote healing.
- The research into Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) in the Fitzroy Valley has been important in improving recognition of the disability caused by drinking in pregnancy and the support needed for children, young people and adults who are affected.
- Employment options for young people affected by FASD are needed to give these young people a positive future.
- Need for long-term investment in strategies to address the problems.

What the Commissioner heard from children and young people

Broome

Children and young people in Broome talked about the positive aspects of living in Broome specifically mentioning the number of sporting opportunities for children within Broome. Although they acknowledged some were costly, most were available to all younger children in the town. They were also happy with the number of parks available, the swimming facilities and the types of shopping in the town. In particular, all children and young people expressed their confidence in the level of education they received within the schools and identified the positive commitment of their teachers towards them.

The challenges that all children and young people identified was the lack of engaging programs beyond schools for the youth in the town. They cited the need for more ovals and targeted programs for their age group that were well funded so everyone could get involved. They saw this as a key strategy to reduce the likelihood of them getting into trouble within the community. It was also acknowledged that the initiative by the Shire of Broome to commence a youth council was a positive step and they had a number of ideas to improving Broome for youth in the town that they were preparing to submit.

They said that they would like more activity in parks and the swimming pool that catered for older young people. Water slides and themes were raised with better facilities in parks and ovals.

Fitzroy Crossing

The Commissioner was specifically interested in what children and young people had to say about alcohol and how it affected their lives.

Children and young people in Fitzroy Crossing told the Commissioner that the best things about where they lived were: the river, the opportunity to go swimming and fishing, being out in the country and sport, particularly basketball. They also liked the breakfast club at school and being at school in general.

They were concerned about adults being drunk as this had a lot of problems for kids including them being hungry, missing school or being too tired to learn if they did go, violence and fighting in families, being scared and frightened, and the rubbish and litter such as glass in the river. They were also worried about the number of adults who smoked and about problems with the toilets that were not working at school.

They had a number of ideas for making Fitzroy a better place to live including more activities such as playgrounds, cinemas, more clothes shops, a bike park, water slides and different sports (other than basketball). Better transport from outlying communities and a bigger school with more kids were also suggested.

Commissioner's comments

I was very impressed with the level of commitment and collaboration by all the services providers I met and spoke with, to provide better outcomes for children and young people in both Broome and the Fitzroy Valley.

I was particularly impressed to hear about the significant increases over recent years in the number of Aboriginal young people completing Year 12.

Relationships between agencies and the willingness to collaborate to provide effective services were also strong, with many undertaking joint work and sharing information to support children and young people.

Children and young people were also very positive in general about their communities. Their enthusiasm and energy, often travelling long distances to attend school and other activities, was very inspiring.

Clearly there remain significant challenges and particularly the over-representation of Aboriginal children and young people in the child protection and youth justice systems, and the impact of alcohol abuse, remain of serious concern.

There were a number of outstanding Aboriginal-led initiatives that I believe have made significant advances in providing models for addressing these issues. Work in the Fitzroy Valley to address FASD, the Beagle Bay Family Empowerment project, and the Kimberley Empowerment Healing and Leadership Program were some examples of this, and I was very encouraged to hear about this and other work underway.

The commitment of the Department for Child Protection and Family Support, other non-Indigenous service providers and the work of the Regional Services Reform Unit to work in partnership with the Aboriginal community to address these challenges was also very positive to see.

The need for a sustained, long-term approach that coordinates strategies and is clearly based on achieving outcomes is vital. Working in partnership with the strong leaders, both young and old, in the Aboriginal community to develop and implement these strategies will make a real difference to improving the health and wellbeing of people across the Kimberley. Investment in our children and young people to break the cycle of disadvantage and create positive futures with a strong connection to their Aboriginal culture is much needed and I look forward to continuing to work with the Kimberley community to make this happen.

Colin Pettit

Commissioner for Children and Young People WA