



Commissioner for Children and Young People  
Western Australia

**All enquiries**

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Our reference: 16/8628

Dr David Russell-Weisz  
Director General  
Department of Health  
PO Box 8172  
Perth Business Centre  
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Dear Dr Russell-Weisz

**Western Australian Youth Health Policy**

I am writing to provide my support for the continued development of the Western Australian (WA) Youth Health Policy.

As the WA Commissioner for Children and Young People, I have a statutory role to advocate for and promote policies, laws, programs and services that enhance the wellbeing of all children and young people in WA. My functions are set out broadly under section 19 of the *Commissioner for Children and Young People Act 2006*.

Youth health has been a priority area of work for my office. In 2014, we reviewed research around good practice in youth health, consulted more than 1,000 young people about their experiences of health services, and held extensive discussions with health professionals and other stakeholders about their views and priorities. My office then released a *Position Statement on Youth Health* which identified a number of priority areas for reform to WA health policies and services. These priority areas included:

- strengthening the focus on young people in health policies and services
- encouraging youth-friendly practices by health professionals
- empowering young people and their families with education and information
- developing quality evidence to guide future work.

The position statement was accompanied by the publication, *Speaking Out About Youth Health*, which captures the views of the young people consulted.

I am aware a previous Director General of Health endorsed development of a WA Youth Health Policy in June 2012, following the March 2012 Clinical Senate Meeting Report on youth sexual health. Since this time there have been several unsuccessful attempts to develop this policy.

Most recently, the WA Child and Youth Health Networks convened a working group to develop the policy. Several meetings of the working group have been held in 2016 and a member of my staff has attended these. I have been advised that the working group meetings have been postponed in order to review how the policy will fit into the Department of Health's new role as system manager.

A number of people have raised with me their concerns about this most recent deferment of the development of the WA Youth Health Policy and I have serious concerns that deferring the development of the policy again will result in continued inaction in the important area of youth health in WA.

The WA Youth Health Policy is an essential tool to address the priorities and identified gaps in youth specific health services and the lack of coordination in the delivery of available youth health services in WA.

I appreciate the current environment of fiscal restraint however I urge you to commit ongoing resourcing to ensure the development and implementation of the WA Youth Health Policy that will be an important part of ensuring efficient and effective service delivery to the young people across the State.

I would be pleased to discuss this matter further with you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'COLIN PETTIT', with a stylized, cursive flourish at the end.

COLIN PETTIT

Commissioner for Children and Young People

21 September 2016