



Regional Visit Report

Mandurah

31 October 2017

Commissioner's comments

I was pleased to have the opportunity to speak with a range of children and young people, service providers and local government representatives on my recent visit to Mandurah.

Many students spoke about how much they loved living in Mandurah, and that they enjoyed the small and close-knit community, great location, and big events and festivals in their area. They, and other stakeholders, also raised a number of issues that affect children and young people in the community. Some of the concerns echoed what I regularly hear in other regional centres, despite Mandurah being much closer to Perth CBD in comparison to other regional locations.

Mandurah and the wider Peel region have been under the media spotlight and the focus of state and federal government attention during the past couple of years, in particular relating to youth suicide, crime and drug use, leading to a number of initiatives being implemented within the area. It is imperative that any roll-out of new initiatives in the area be closely monitored and evaluated to ensure that they achieve the desired positive outcomes for children and young people and the wider community.

There are clearly many children and young people in Mandurah who are passionate, creative and committed to building a stronger community and achieving positive change for children and young people. I would strongly encourage Mandurah's local service providers, decision makers and community to take the time to meet with, and hear the views, of its young residents, and use their feedback and ideas to direct consultation, planning and service delivery in the area.

Hearing from regional children, young people, and stakeholders is vital in my role as Commissioner, and allows me to understand and represent the diverse views and experiences of children and younger people across our State. I thank all of the students and stakeholders for their time in meeting with me, and for their openness and readiness to discuss their ideas, thoughts and experiences of life in Mandurah.

Colin Pettit

Commissioner for Children and Young People WA

Who did the Commissioner meet with?

In Mandurah the Commissioner met with:

- staff and students at Greenfields Primary School
- staff and students at Coodanup College
- GP Down South and Peel Youth Medical Services
- Passages Resource Centre
- City of Mandurah Chief Executive Officer, Director of People and Communities and Youth Coordinator.



Commissioner Colin Pettit with students from Greenfields Primary School

What the Commissioner heard from children and young people in Mandurah

The Commissioner spoke with a group of primary school-aged children at Greenfields Primary School, and high school students at Coodanup College. The students had many positive things to say about growing up in Mandurah.

The positive aspects of living in Mandurah included:

- the natural environment – including the estuaries, parks and scenery
- that it is a small community where everyone knows each other, people are friendly and you see people you know regularly in the community

- there are a number of activities and events which children and young people enjoy, such as the Mandjar Markets, CrabFest, and the Children's Festival.

Students provided suggestions that could improve Mandurah for children and young people, including:

- improving young people's mental health and reducing youth suicide
- providing more job opportunities and employment pathways for young people
- increasing safety and security within the community and their neighbourhoods to address fighting, disturbances and crime, especially at night
- providing ongoing activities for young people aged between 10 to 15 years, as most of the activities on offer cater for either the younger or older age groups, or are one-off events
- increasing the variety of sports that are on offer for young people, outside of the traditional sports
- increasing the number of libraries
- providing students with opportunities to take part in environmental and conservation activities
- improving support for young people who are disadvantaged or vulnerable
- increasing the number of parks
- reducing homelessness in the community and providing more support for homeless people
- reducing the cost of living for families.

Students also provided feedback about some of the things they enjoyed most about their schools, including:

- support students receive to learn and achieve positive results
- availability of positive, supportive and encouraging teachers
- opportunities and resources available at schools, including different clubs, academies and technology.

What the Commissioner heard from service providers and community members

Youth mental health and suicide

- Many young people accessing services in the region are experiencing mental health issues, including depression, self-harm, anxiety or eating disorders.

- A three-tiered mental health program for young people is being run in the area by GP Down South, including mental health promotion delivered to all Year 10 students across the schools in the area; smaller workshops for young people identified by schools or community groups; and one-on-one interventions.
- The newly planned Peel Youth Medical Services Health Hub will bring together service providers in the one location with a shared model of care.
- A headspace centre will be opened as part of the new Peel Youth Medical Services Health Hub.
- The Rockingham/Mandurah/Kwinana areas have been identified as a suicide prevention trial site as part of the Australian Government's investment into suicide prevention, being led through the Western Australian Primary Health Alliance's Alliance Against Depression.

Youth homelessness

- Youth homelessness and transience is an issue within the area.
- There are limited accommodation options for homeless young people in Mandurah, particularly for those who have complex needs or who have been excluded from the dedicated youth accommodation service.
- A plan for the 'Secure Housing' project has been submitted to the Peel Development Commission to develop an accommodation facility for adults and youth.

General infrastructure, planning and service provision

- There is one youth centre servicing the City of Mandurah.
- There are some gaps in the provision of services for young people, and while investment has been made for the development of the Peel Youth Medical Services Health Hub, this will bring together pre-existing services, rather than providing new services (excluding headspace).
- Rapid growth and planning decisions in some suburbs and areas have resulted in gaps in services and facilities in particular areas, and some schools particularly are being stretched beyond capacity.

Education and employment pathways

- There are limited pathway options for young people into employment and education, particularly from a lack of private business and industry in the area.
- There is concern that the introduction of mandatory drug testing for welfare recipients will impact negatively on young people who are seeking work.

Activities for children and young people

- There are a range of activities for children and young people in the area

spread across a range of locations.

- There has been difficulty in attracting private businesses such as bowling alleys or skating rinks to the area, which has impacted on the availability of these type of activities for children and young people.

Opportunities for children and young people to have a say

- The City of Mandurah operate a Junior Council, which includes the school captains from each of the primary schools in the area.

Portrayal of issues in Mandurah

- There are some concerns about the way Mandurah has been presented in the media and through state and federal government initiatives, including an inaccurate portrayal of crime in the area, which does not match statistics, and the way particular statistics (e.g. youth suicide and drug use) have been reported.



Commissioner Colin Pettit with students from Coodanup College

Facts about children and young people in Mandurah¹

- The total population of the City of Mandurah is 80,813.
- Children and young people aged 0 to 19 years make up about 24 per cent of the population.

¹ http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2016/quicks tat/LGA55110?opendocument

- Of the total population, 1,718 or 2.1 per cent of people in Mandurah are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (ATSI).²
- There are 847 ATSI children and young people aged 0 to 19 years in Mandurah, representing 49 per cent of the total ATSI population in the City of Mandurah, and close to five per cent of all children and young people in the area.

Media

- [Greenfields Primary School boasts top results during commissioner for children and young people Colin Pettit's visit](#) - Mandurah Mail, 31 October, 2017
- [Children have their say](#) - Mandurah Coastal Times, 8 November 2017

² http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2016/communityprofile/LGA55110?opendocument