

Section 2 - Getting your organisation ready

This section contains evidence-based information and research that can be used to gain the organisational or agency-wide commitment required to undertake meaningful engagement with Aboriginal children and young people.

"We need to focus on the youth, they are our future..." 17 year-old Nyikina young person, Kimberley

There are four clear and significant benefits of making an organisational or agency-wide commitment to the participation of Aboriginal children and young people. Any business case seeking resources should clearly outline these benefits.

If your organisation or agency does not have its own business case template, we have developed a sample template to assist. We have also provided other resources you may find helpful.

Business case development tools

- [Business case template – Commissioner for Children and Young People WA](#)
- [Business case template and guide – business.gov.au](#)
- [How to write a business case - Workfront](#)
- [Business case template - Project Management Docs](#)

1. The demographic opportunity

"I think it's good for someone to make sure we kids aren't forgotten about." 9 year-old boy, Mid West

There is an opportunity to break the cycle of disadvantage for Aboriginal children and young people with well-designed and effective programs, creating significant social and economic benefits for the community.

There are approximately 38,000 Aboriginal children and young people in WA. Aboriginal children and young people under the age of 18 years make up a significant part of the total Aboriginal population of WA (38%), compared to 22.5 per cent for the non-Aboriginal population.³

³ Australian Bureau of Statistics 2017, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Population Projections, State/Territory (Series B), viewed 24 August 2017, <<http://stat.data.abs.gov.au/Index.aspx?Queryid=44>>.

With Aboriginal children and young people making up such a significant part of the Aboriginal population in WA and many experiencing poor education, health and wellbeing outcomes, it is critical that we empower young people to take ownership and control of their development in a culturally appropriate manner.

Resources

- [2016 Census Community Profiles, Western Australia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Profile - Australian Bureau of Statistics \(ABS\)](#)
- [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples - ABS](#)
- [Census: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population - ABS](#)
- [Census 2016: what's changed for Indigenous Australians? - The Conversation](#)
- [Census 2016: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population growing - NITV](#)

2. The benefits it provides to their wellbeing

"...[It's] uplifting because it's about taking down how kids sorted out problems and doing something with it. I'm glad to be a part of that and contribute to that 'cause it's good to be heard." 15 year-old girl, Perth

Having the opportunity to participate positively contributes to children and young people's wellbeing. Participation helps develop children and young people's level of responsibility and decision-making skill, improves their relationships and ability to communicate with professionals and peers, and increases their sense of control and self-esteem. Involving children and young people also supports them to actively contribute to their communities and enhances their social inclusion; ultimately supporting them to become more informed and experienced leaders.

Asking Aboriginal children and young people what they want and involving them in decision-making processes ensures the program or service provided for them is relevant to meeting their needs. This makes Aboriginal children and young people more likely to access the service and have a positive experience using the service, which can ultimately lead to better outcomes for their health and wellbeing.

Resources

- Promoting Children's Participation in Democratic Decision-Making - UNICEF
- Empowerment and participation of children tip sheet - Commissioner for Children and Young People Victoria
- Building a Culture of Participation, Involving children and young people in policy, service planning, delivery and evaluation handbook - National Children's Bureau UK
- Benefits of Engagement with Children and Young People - Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People

3. Their right to have a voice

"It's very nice that you are asking all the questions, that you are taking the time to hear what we want to say." 13 year-old girl, Perth

Under the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#), all children and young people have the right to express their views and to have their opinions taken into account in regard to decisions that affect them.⁴ Children and young people want to:

- feel valued, respected, listened to
- feel that their ideas are taken seriously
- be involved in making decisions and influencing matters that affect them.

They say that these things are important for their wellbeing. This is a consistent message from children and young people whenever they are consulted.⁵

⁴ United Nations General Assembly 1989, *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, Article 12, United Nations, Treaty Series.

⁵ Commissioner for Children and Young People WA 2011, *Children and young people speak out about being acknowledged and involved in decisions policy brief*, Commissioner for Children and Young People WA, viewed 21 December 2017, <<https://www.cyp.wa.gov.au/media/1306/policy-brief-wellbeing-research-being-acknowledged-and-involved-in-decisions-participation-may-2011.pdf>> .

4. The value of Aboriginal children and young people's knowledge, insight and expertise

"Listen to all these ideas you're getting to help make good changes for the future."
16 year-old boy, Mid West

When provided with appropriate opportunities, Aboriginal children and young people have proven themselves to have the capacity and desire to provide valuable and unique knowledge, insight and expertise on complex matters.

The Commissioner for Children and Young People has undertaken numerous consultation activities that have involved Aboriginal children and young people commenting on issues including:

- [out-of-home care](#)
- [youth justice](#)
- [alcohol-related harm](#)
- [their culture and factors that impact on their wellbeing, health and education.](#)

Valuable information about Aboriginal children and young people's wellbeing is available to organisations and agencies that are prepared to listen. This must be a core function of all organisations and agencies that develop, procure or provide programs and services to Aboriginal children and young people. This sharing of information, listening and two-way learning lies at the heart of co-design principles.