



Commissioner for Children and Young People  
Western Australia

# My Place in WA

WA children and young people  
speak out about their living  
environment



### Acknowledgement of Country

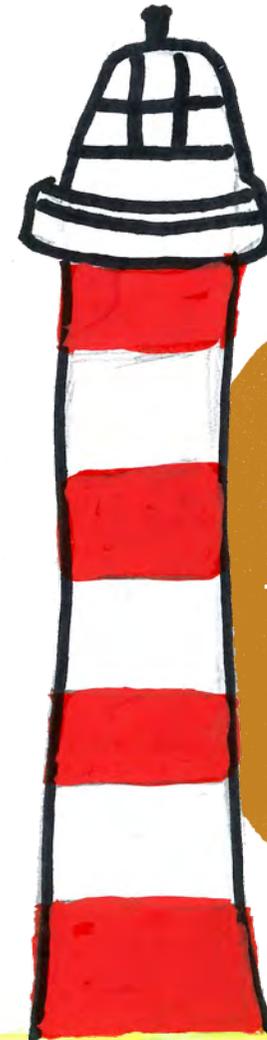
We acknowledge and give our respect to all Traditional Owners and custodians across this vast state, their Elders past and present, and commit to supporting the wellbeing of the youth of today, who will be the Elders of tomorrow.

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

Artwork and words by Geraldton student

**"I chose the lighthouse, the beach and the Aboriginal Australian flag because the lighthouse watches over our fishermen and is nice architecture in Geraldton. The beaches are a fun and nice place to hang out when it is a hot sunny day and has all our sea life in our beautiful ocean. The flag represents all the cultures in Geraldton and all the different people."**

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# Message from the Commissioner

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**There has been evidence for many years that shows that children and young people's environment has a profound impact on their health and wellbeing.**

With many of us spending more time close to home in the past two years due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the importance of services and amenities in our local area and the value of our local community has been brought to the fore.

Thousands of children and young people across the state have shared their views on issues relevant to their wellbeing during my term as Commissioner, and they consistently tell me that the environment in which they live – their home, school, local community – has an influence on their day-to-day life.

While children and young people have distinct needs and experiences to those of adults, their needs can be overlooked by decision-makers.

Over the past year I have asked children and young people to share with me their thoughts about where they live through a statewide artwork consultation, community planning workshop, the Change Champions group and my online DigiMe platform. Hundreds of children and young people shared what they like and dislike about their local environment and how it could change for the better.

This is a small sample of their fantastic contributions.

*Merredin College students at the community planning workshop*



What is clear is that children and young people have great ideas about how their environment can be improved to be more child and youth friendly, and they want to be included in the conversation about the design of their local communities.

Creating safe, nurturing environments with resources, support and opportunities to enable all children and young people to reach their potential is a collective responsibility. Government, the non-government sector and the WA community must work together to achieve this.

Children and young people make up almost a quarter of WA's population and it is important we listen to them and involve them in decision making.

Thank you to all the children and young people who shared their views, insights and ideas.

**Colin Pettit**

# About the Commissioner

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**The Commissioner for Children and Young People is the independent advocate for all children and young people in WA aged less than 18 years.**

The role of the Commissioner is described in the *Commissioner for Children and Young People Act 2006*. The Act requires the Commissioner to give priority to, and have special regard for, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, and children and young people who are vulnerable or disadvantaged for any reason.

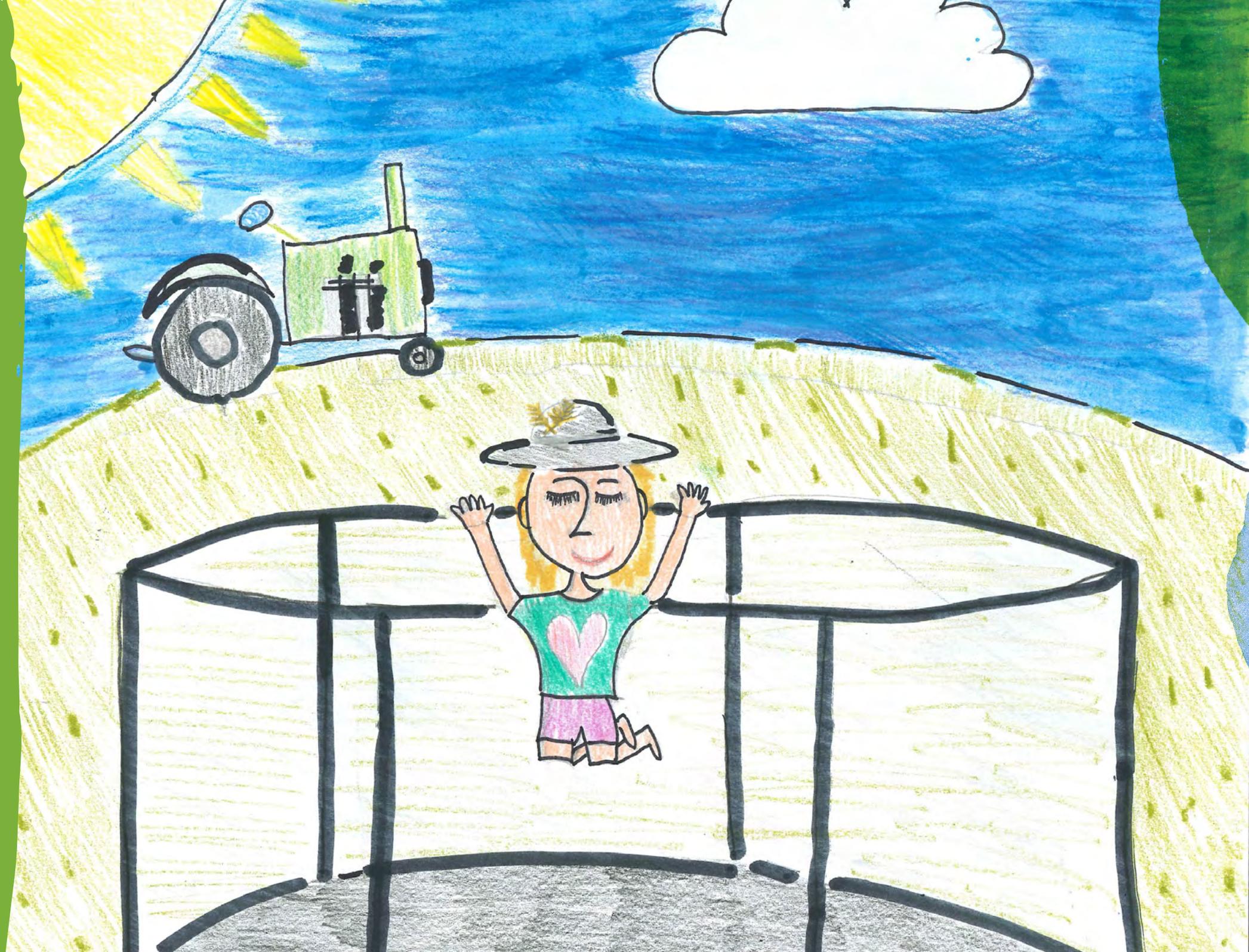
The Commissioner talks to children and young people and others in the community about what children and young people need to be healthy and reach their potential, and considers and reviews research and evidence about children's wellbeing.

From this information the Commissioner works with children and young people, their families and government to improve policies, legislation and services that support children and young people's wellbeing.



*Girrawheen Senior High School students at the community planning workshop*





# Background

The places and spaces children and young people inhabit have a strong influence on how they experience life – their involvement in the community, engagement in school and enjoyment of social activities.

Artwork and words  
by Yerecoin student

“When I’m on the trampoline, I’m in my happy place. There is no rush nor race! Out in the paddock, the feeling is calm. You’re one with the farm! Yerecoin, what a great place to live!”

”

The right to play and enjoy community life in places and spaces that are safe and welcoming is something all children and young people are entitled to. These rights are enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Similarly, the Commissioner’s Statement of Commitment outlines that children and young people have the right to be safe and feel safe everywhere; the right to a healthy life; and the right to play, have fun and be active.

Enjoying all these rights is dependent on being able to live in a clean, safe community, having access to play spaces and other services and facilities, and having stable and secure housing.

In 2019, the Commissioner engaged Dr Carmen Lawrence to review the latest national and international research findings on the impact of physical and social environments on the health and wellbeing of children and young people.

The Commissioner then published a discussion paper and committed to the following actions:

- Further consultation with children and young people about what constitutes health, accessible, friendly and safe places and spaces.
- The development of a Child Impact Assessment tool that considers, in the context of the built environment, the impact of any proposed legislation, policy or strategy on the rights, interests and wellbeing of children and young people.
- Continue to engage with relevant stakeholders to ensure that the views and needs of children and young people and their families are duly considered in all planning and development processes.

Findings from the Commissioner’s Speaking Out Survey 2019 indicate that children and young people continue to be concerned about their living environment.

While most children and young people reported feeling like they belong in their community, there are signs that many do not feel this way, and for females, one-in-two Year 10–12 students were not sure that they felt a sense of belonging to their local community.

# Methodology

To further explore how WA children and young people feel about their living environment, the Commissioner sought their views in several ways.

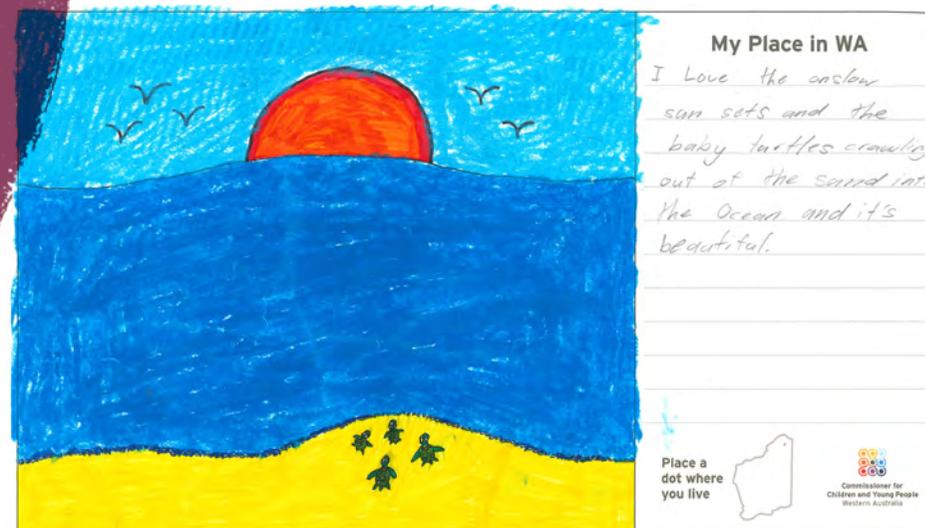
## Artwork consultation

In a statewide artwork consultation in late 2020, the Commissioner asked Year 6 students to share what they like and dislike about their local environment, or how it could change for the better. The Commissioner received 299 student artworks from schools across WA.

## Planning workshop

In June 2021, the Commissioner brought together more than 100 Year 9 and 10 students from 14 schools across Perth and members of the Merredin Advisory Committee for a planning workshop to give young people a voice in shaping their community.

A pre-event activity encouraged the young people to walk through their local community and start thinking about its positives and negatives and how it could be better designed to meet their everyday needs. The event activities included the young people hearing from



Year 6 artwork consultation worksheet

experts about good community design and how it can impact their health, wellbeing and environment; then designing how their neighbourhood should be laid out, connected and activated.

Each school group produced a final layout annotated with their ideas for activities and facilities in their neighbourhood.

## DigiMe

Young people were invited to share their views on their local community through the Commissioner's DigiMe online platform, responding to the question: What's great, or not so great, about the community you live in?

## Change Champions

The Commissioner's Change Champions group of children and young people also shared their insights on the topics of: Do you feel connected to other people in your local area? and Do you feel safe in your local community?

Participation Guidelines and Child Impact Assessment Guidelines are available to assist organisations in including children and young people in decision making. All resources are available at [ccyp.wa.gov.au](http://ccyp.wa.gov.au).

*Students at the community planning workshop*

The quotes from young people in this publication come from these consultation activities and are grouped by the several key themes that emerged:



# Key themes

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Artwork and words  
by Mandurah student

“My place in WA is Canal Rocks in Dunsborough. It is special to me because my family and I go there when we visit Dunsborough (which is a lot). I like it not only for the beautiful scenery, but also just because its fun to climb rocks. Canal Rocks definitely holds a special place in my heart and I’d stay there forever if I could!”

”



# Safety

Safety is central to a young person's wellbeing and experience of their local community. Children and young people who feel safe are more likely to have the confidence to explore and develop their independence, develop healthy relationships with other adults and speak up if they feel unsafe.

"I strongly believe that my community is great, because I feel that I'm extremely safe in my home, my neighbourhood."

**"Good lighting at night, many people walking out on the streets, open areas, trees and nature, community events, low traffic, inclusivity and accessibility of public services etc."**

"I feel my neighbourhood is the ghetto but I feel safe."

**"Bad things are I don't feel safe sometimes."**

"[I] would not visit after dark, [it's] more unsafe."

**"I feel safe in my community generally. I can walk around during the day but in a group at night to be safe."**

I love living in Shark Bay  
because I can ride around town  
and go to school feeling safe

“

**"I think that my safe place is my house. I think it's a really safe place. My not so safe place is Northbridge. I don't like [it] because it's a bit dodgy."**

"Lack of lighting which reduces it's accessibility during the night."

**"The area is not safe to walk alone in. There are gangs and people who you cannot trust so it makes walking alone a scary experience."**

**"Yokine Reserve is a safe place in WA because it is a big public park that is friendly and safe."**

# Links to friends and family

Good relationships are a critical attribute of healthy, well-functioning communities. Children and young people consistently talked about spending time with family and friends as essential to their wellbeing.

“I love that I live in a very safe and not so busy community. I know a lot of people and nearly all of them are really kind. I don't usually have anyone in my neighbourhood to socialise with because a majority of them are a lot older than me.”



*Kalamunda  
Senior High School  
students at the community  
planning workshop*

“The great thing about my community is that all of my friends either live right next to me or they live right around the corner.”

“**Secret Harbour** is a safe and fun place to live in. It has always been a place full of kind-hearted and warm people who are happy to lend a hand within the community.”

“My community is amazing because there are so many different cultures and everyone on my street are really social.”

“I play around our apartment with some nice kids, go swimming, do drawing and lots more.”

“I love the community here it has lovely, friendly and caring people.”

“I feel safe in my community because I have people I trust around me. They help me to feel safe, protected, wanted and loved. I believe it is essential that all people are surrounded with people they trust.”

Artwork and words  
by Geraldton student

“My design shows where  
I come from. The six stars  
represent the 60,000+ years  
of indigenous culture.  
These words mean...  
‘this was and always will  
be Yamaji Barna’.”

”



ALWAYS WAS ALWAYS WILL BE  
Yamaji Barna



# Nature

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Parks and green space are a vital component of healthy communities and provide everyone with valuable opportunities to play, rest and socialise.

Many young people spoke positively about the amount of green space, parks, beaches, natural bushland in their local community. However, in some areas there were issues with shade and rubbish.

Artwork and words  
by Pilbara student

“When the breeze runs  
by the leaves start to rustle.  
The water glistens in  
the moonlight. The native  
animals are asleep until the  
morning routine repeats  
for everyone.”

“

“[There is a] lack  
of shade in open  
spaces, therefore  
not conducive during  
periods of heat  
or rain.”

“

“The beach is my special place because I spend time with my family there. I love going down to the water to swim and look for sea creatures. I also love building sandcastles, looking for shells, and playing with my dogs, who also love the beach.”

I live in Waroona and the Waroona Dam is an important part of our region.

“There is broken glass and used needles scattered throughout the bushland and public areas. It's not hygienic and definitely needs a more clean environment.”

”

“I love going to the beach and watching the waves crash, all of the nice hot weather is great and fun to be living in.”

“**[There are] lots of green spaces and paths, this allows people to go outside for walks and recreation activities easily.**”

“We could use some more land for environmental uses.”

“**Mandurah is great because it has a lot of natural features and the community helps each other to get something done. Something that is not so great is that they are making a lot of buildings which is wrecking the mother nature.**”

“What's great about my community is that there is a lot of parks and amazing places to go.”

“Where I live is **Tom Price** and it's small but cool because it has Mt Jarndunmunha parks and the creeks - the creeks are so cool and they're amazing to go to with your friends and family. With the cold and sometimes warm water to me it's way better than a pool.”

“My place in WA is my paddock in **West Pinjarra**. I chose my paddock because it makes me feel calm, safe, happy.”

# Access to amenities

Young people appreciate being close to community facilities like skate parks, playgrounds, libraries and community centres. Lack of maintenance and graffiti were common concerns.

“My community is great. I love sport in every way. There are skate parks, beaches and so many more exciting programs to go to.”

”



I like the playground near my home and the small market near by. I don't like how much rubbish is around the neighbourhood and the dead weeds around the place. 🤔🗑️

Posted by Milk milly 🌱🌻🌸



“What is great about my community is, I live near the school I go to, it is about a five minute drive to school.”

“I love how there is a skate park near me and lots of fun trees to climb. I also have a great school to go to.”

“Poor maintenance of playgrounds and facilities: when examining the condition of the foot paths, children’s skate parks and playgrounds it was clear that they had not been maintained often or updated.”

“My favourite place in WA is the basketball courts at the **Mandurah Aquatic Rec Centre**. I like this place the most because I spend most of my week there playing basketball. I also make lots of new friends.”

"[There is a] lack of maintenance with facilities such as park playgrounds."

"There should be more big adventure parks."

"A community swimming pool [in **Baldivis**] would be helpful for people beginning to swim with their families."

"[My favourite place] is the **Australind** skate park. I want light for it if you ride in the night because some people don't have time during the day and are free at night."

"I live in **Wembley/Daglish**. It is safe and has lots of fun playgrounds."

"Our community [**Merredin**] is very welcoming with our sporting clubs, with our basketball and our footy and our netball. They really get us kids involved with it."

"Everything within **Butler** looks the same – it lacks variety and personality."

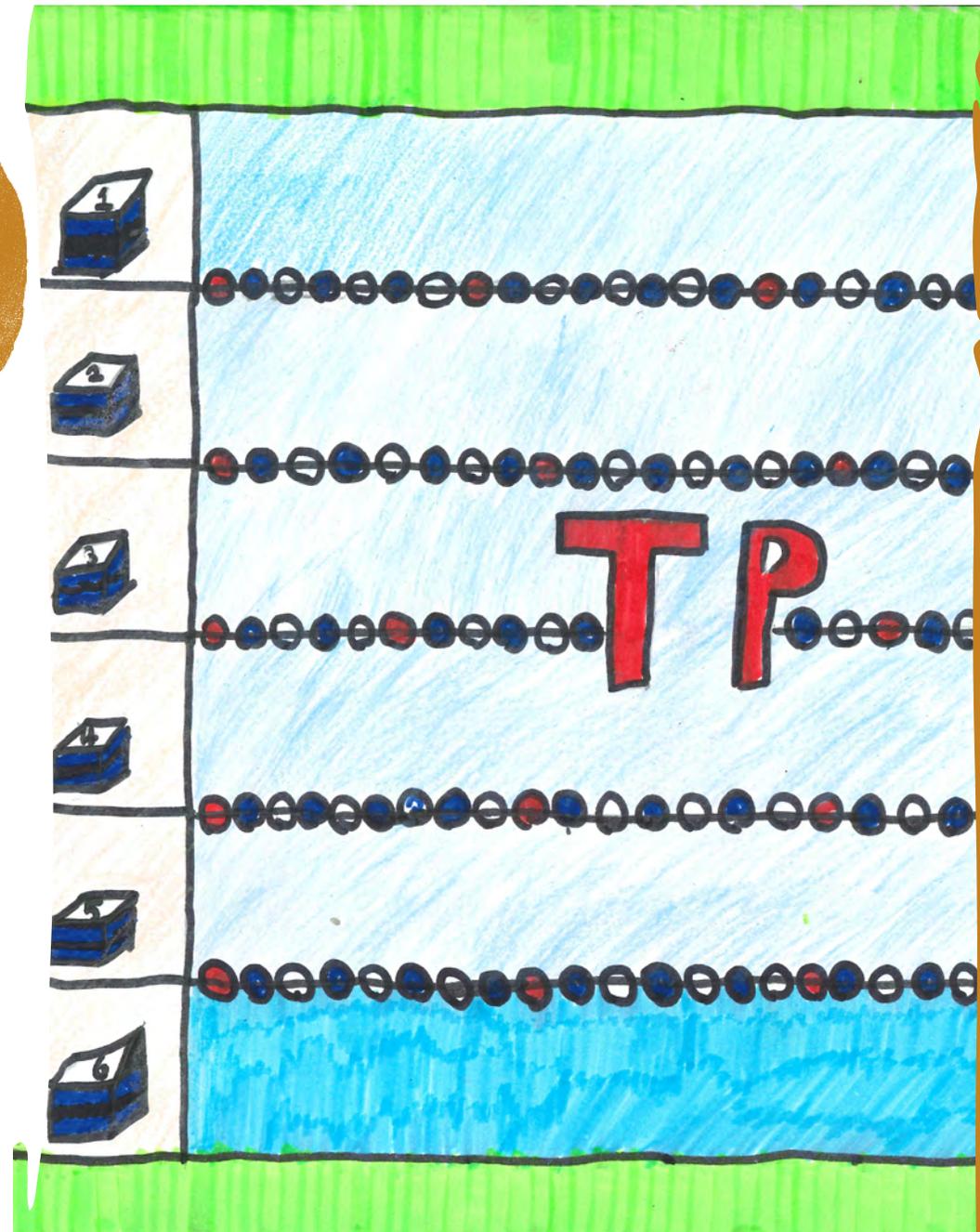
"It's [**Shark Bay**] clean and has no rubbish around town. The water is nice and some people are friendly. The whole town is very nice a safe place to live in. It's easy to find something to do, like the fishing festival and the Rec Centre. It's easy to make friends. I love jumping off the jetty some days."

"I live in the best place ever. I live in **Nedlands**."

Artwork and words  
by Tom Price student

"I like hanging out at the pool on the weekends with my family and friends. I like to swim laps and like to do races to see who is the fastest."

”



# Retail spaces

Young people frequently spoke about the importance of having shopping centres and cafes in their local area as they provide places for them to spend time with friends.

“

“In my community one positive thing I'd say would be the shopping centre because it brings everyone together after school and we all socialise and talk about our day.”

“My place in WA is Marine Terrace because it is the centre of **Geraldton**. It has good sports shops and good food.”

”

My place in WA is  
the halls head central because  
I go there alot with my  
friends. Some things I love  
about it is there is a  
coles, EB games and a kmart.

“Shopping centres are very close by allowing people to access the shops very easily.”

“This is a multicultural area which means there are many varieties of food from different cultures which is always a good thing, everyone can try different things which is a great experience.”

“We have to drive two hours [from **Merredin**] to the nearest shopping centre where we can purchase the essentials such as socks, underwear, clothes and things like that.”



Artwork and words  
by Mandurah student

**“My place is Perth because I love going to Perth and I love how modern the city is and that it is a very unique city. It is unique because of all the colours and different designs of buildings. That is why Perth is my place.”**



Artwork and words  
by Baldivis student

**“I think our community needs  
more places for our disabled...  
Why should they have to miss  
out on all of the fun just because  
they are in a wheelchair?  
It would make Baldivis  
a much better place with  
a disabled skatepark.”**

”



# The needs of others

Children and young people have strong views about how their communities could better meet the needs of people of diverse ages, backgrounds, interests and abilities, particularly those who are vulnerable.

“There is not enough hospitals for kids.”

“Something that isn't so great about Mandurah is homelessness.”

I have seen a lot of poor homeless people and we haven't taken action. This homeless shelter should be placed on the grass near the toilet block and playground of Rockingham beach as there is a lot of homeless people there. and everyone should be able to access it and the toilet block. It should have a lot of sleeping bags and a table with food to eat from + wash-up.

“Our neighbourhood [**Girrawheen**] needs help.”

“**[We need]** to not only to look at the needs of young people, but the diversity of the population in the suburb. Thinking about what others enjoy.”

“More effort needs to be put into improving country towns.”

“...many different aspects make up a place and you need to cater to different people.”

# Transport

Transport connections are important to young people, including a frequent public transport service that connects to the wider region and city, shopping areas, places to eat, parks and libraries. Being able to walk and cycle easily around their local neighbourhood is also a priority.

“Public transport is easily accessible.”

”

“[What’s great is the] major essential services such as education, health and transportation available in the area and is all within 15 minutes of travel by walking or bike.”

I'd like there to be more bus stops because next year I'll be taking the bus to high school and live about 700m from the closest one

“Lack of public transport: the only public transport near my area are buses and these buses don’t go very far into different areas. A train would be greatly appreciated.”

“**Butler** is definitely a liveable place (especially for families), meaning good educational facilities, medical services and supermarkets however, the transport does not come regularly enough.”

“**Kalamunda** is designed to be navigated by cars, and has limited public transport routes apart from school buses.”

“**Ellenbrook** is a new suburb and it’s well-supported, but it’s not walkable.”

“Our suburbs need to be more walkable.”

# Acknowledgements

The Commissioner would like to thank all the students for taking the time to share their ideas and insights on their local community and living environment. The Commissioner acknowledges the schools and teachers who supported their students to participate.

The Commissioner also acknowledges the Department of Education, Catholic Education WA and Association of Independent Schools of WA for their sponsorship of the workshop and supporting young people to have a strong voice.

**“I feel as if a lot more needs to be done for our environment and it should be easier for young adults to voice their opinions and concerns.”**

”



*Santa Maria College students at the community planning workshop*



As a non binary (agender), I'm quite happy that my community is LBGT+ supportive

Posted by Rin



**“Children and young people have views and ideas about how things can be improved, and they want to be included in the design of public places and spaces, so they feel safe and welcome and can make a meaningful contribution to community life.”**

Colin Pettit, Commissioner for  
Children and Young People



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