

Far West regional consultation

In October 2015, around 30 people who work with children and young people in the Far West came together to contribute to a new NSW strategic plan. This is what you told us.



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what you thought was **working** for children and young people in Far West NSW

Collaboration and trust: Setting common goals and actions, cross-sector thinking, open and honest communication. Sharing resources. Interagency groups (EYDG, C&F, YSSI and the kids development strategy, as well as SAMs) with a foundation for future growth. Agencies reducing isolation for Far West communities

Alternative education: Alesco schools (eg Robinson College); Beyond the Goalposts*, alternative JJs education (Pause up*), options when entering the high school system (test centre), Let's go; School-based traineeships for Y11/12; Give IT a go (Royal Far West School).

Vulnerable young people: Greater parental capacity. 1:1 mentoring.

Recreational activities: PCYC free programs (freestyling Fridays, boxing, drop in room, police programs; school holiday programs (vacation care @ PCYC, library, regional art gallery); non sport as well as sport activities.

Services: early intervention programs in mental health (ABC—act, belong, connect), focus on border health and wellbeing,

Community: Efforts building resilience, PCYC, country rugby league, alcohol accord, DV programs, the results of engaging with and listening to children and young people.

Other: Greater parental capacity. Stable working population, consistent workers.



*You noted funding cuts here

what you thought was **not working** for children and young people in NSW and the Far West

Education and training: poor educational outcomes; **education doesn't have enough relevance for young people**; not enough take-up of social housing scholarships; self-paced online training—need face to face learning as well

A lack of funding or funding certainty: Pilot programs and short term **funding contracts create uncertainty** and can stop valuable programs. **Reductions in funding.** Rolling out funding for statewide programs on a per capita basis creates threshold issues for Far West.

Service workforce and systems: the district has a huge footprint, creating challenges; increases in data collection challenges workers seeking face to face time with children; consultation fatigue; barriers for accessing services (should be person centred); workers' knowledge of other services; **border challenges.**

Community/society: the social and emotional wellbeing of children and young people; links to community decision making; bullying (including social media); **getting information to children and young people** about sport and other activities; change in technology, leading to increased dependence (pros and cons); the social culture can create challenges.

Employment: high, not enough **local jobs or economic development**

Vulnerable families: low parental capacity; under resourcing for families (including poverty); engagement with families needs to improve; domestic violence; lack of good food; lack of connectedness, **resilience.**

Housing and homelessness: no accommodation for young people, leading to homelessness and couch surfing; no youth refuge; overcrowding in families; lack of housing for families

Drugs and alcohol: response is not good enough. For example there is no detox or rehab.

Aboriginal children and young people: high mortality, discrimination, cultural identification, Closing the Gap.

Children and young people with disability: eg no work experience opportunities.

Vulnerable young people: not enough 1:1 mentoring; issues with **safety**; trauma.

Recreational activities: no free school holiday program for older kids (10-17); limited activities.

*We've bolded issues that came up often

what you thought were **priorities** for children and young people in NSW the Far West

Approaches:

- Creating local career pathways for young people
- Better voice of young people in policy
- Better coordination between services
- Better communication with young people about what's available
- Respect for children and young people—being heard, being consulted, providing feedback when appropriate
- Creating connectedness and a sense of belonging, re-engaging, creating increased social capital and community cohesion
- Promoting existing services

Issues:

- Employment
- Education
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples—closing the gap
- Mental health, drug and alcohol—life skills for parents, children and adolescents; access to services including rehab; understanding and diagnosing mental illness
- Children and young people with disability

Systems:

- More funding for free programs, mentoring programs



"We all want to be treated as
our present, not our past"

Broken Hill schoolchild

we asked you:

What **three big ideas** do you have that could, if supported across the state, improve the lives of children and young people?

and we gave you some prompt questions:

What state-wide directions currently support effective local decision making and service delivery for children and young people?

What state-wide directions currently hinder effective local decision making and service delivery for children and young people?

What makes for good child-centred practice in this area

How should children and young people be involved

What local initiatives could be adapted and scaled up across the state?



you told us your big ideas for the strategic plan*

Effective service integration:

Formal and informal structures: building on existing collaborative, collective work to inform collective at a policy level.

Collective impact operating for Broken Hill: community collective needs and priorities inform support services and funding and create localised place-based solutions. Forum of 40 is one model.

Alcohol and drugs:

Community links: service education in schools.

Creating safe spaces for young people such as through Headspace.

Using social media to raise awareness of harmful effects and promote positive activities.

Access to **residential rehab and detox centres**.

"Teachers need to engage students more and get them involved" Broken Hill schoolchild

Activities for children and young people, and families to enhance resilience:

(Strengths based) **education in perinatal period**, including antenatal visits with midwife, antenatal classes; messages in sporting events; mum concerts. Aims to build attachment and reduce trauma.

Got IT! (early intervention and prevention), joint DEC/Health, could be rolled out across the state.

Life skills development for all youth, federal, state and local.

Education and transitions:

Job education and pathways: alternative pathways for disengaged young people, including work placement in Y11/12 (Cert III qualification) which gives practical experience.

Training opportunities for young people could be **mandated for every government contract**, at a net cost of less than \$8000.

Y6 screening of children for life skills, with a warm referral to high schools which can then personalise responses for vulnerable young people. Examples include classes where the teachers rotate around the children, to reduce anxiety of change..

*And lots of other ideas about how to make the strategic plan work that we also captured.

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p. thank you.



keep communicating with us via
acyp@acyp.nsw.gov.au

