

Implementing the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations

Case Study: Department of Communities – Development of the WA Youth Action Plan 2024-2027 Koorlangka Bidi



Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Communities**

The Department of Communities (the Department) brings together vital services and functions that enable individual, family and community wellbeing.

The Youth portfolio, through the Department, leads a whole-of-government approach to improving outcomes for all young people in Western Australia aged 10 to 25 years.

We work in partnership with young people, the youth sector, community groups and across all levels of government to support the development of programs and initiatives that meet the diverse needs of young people.

Project in brief

Following conclusion of the Beyond 2020: WA Youth Action Plan, the Department led the development of the new Youth Action Plan 2024-2027 Koorlangka Bidi (Koorlangka Bidi).

Koorlangka Bidi, which means 'young people's path' in Noongar language, was built through one of the most extensive consultation processes with young people undertaken in Western Australia (WA). The initiative sought to ensure young people's voices directly shaped whole-of-government priorities and practical actions to improve their lives.

The process of developing Koorlangka Bidi was guided by National Principle 2: Children and young people are informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.

The journey

Young people were not only participants but also co-designers of the consultation process. The Department worked with the Ministerial Youth Advisory Council (MYAC) and Youth Week WA Ambassadors to test language, refine questions, and design workshops that were accessible and engaging. Importantly, the workshop facilitators were young people themselves, creating a peer-based model that made participants feel comfortable and valued.

Between August 2023 and March 2024 extensive consultations were conducted across metropolitan, regional, and remote WA. They included school workshops, community forums, drop-in sessions at popular youth hangout spots, and digital options such as online surveys, social media posts, video submissions, and creative formats (for example, art, poetry, or music).

This flexibility allowed young people to contribute in ways that suited them. A total of 2,271 young people participated, contributing more than 10,000 individual records (from post-it notes to pitches and surveys).

What made it effective?

- **Workshops were adapted to suit the needs of participants**, considering the location, age, literacy levels, and cultural context of each region. Activities were adapted so that young people could engage in meaningful and safe ways regardless of their background or circumstances.

- **Participants reflected WA's diverse population** with young people from a range of backgrounds participating including those who live in regional and remote WA, are LGBTIQ+, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, culturally and linguistically diverse, living with disability, or young carers.
- **Contributions from participants were recognised** with a personalised letter from the Minister for Youth recognising their input. Skills development was built into workshops, covering areas like public speaking, networking, and advocacy to ensure that young people left with tangible benefits.
- **Solutions-focused activities** asked participants to pitch solutions to issues they cared about. This helped young people develop problem-solving skills while providing Government with practical ideas for actions to include in Koorlangka Bidi.
- **The feedback loop was closed** with the draft focus areas, the action plan's name, and even the vision statement being tested with young people after they were drafted. A copy of the final action plan was shared with all consultation participants so that they could see how their input informed outcomes.



Outcomes

Koorlangka Bidi was launched on 8 October 2024 and demonstrates how youth participation can move beyond tokenism. By embedding co-design, valuing contributions, and ensuring transparency, the process not only shaped Koorlangka Bidi but also built young people's trust in government. It shows that when young people are engaged as partners, consultation becomes a tool for empowerment, learning, and long-term change.

For young people, the process created opportunities to feel heard, build civic and life skills, and connect with existing initiatives like MYAC. Feedback highlighted that many participants felt it was the first time government genuinely wanted to listen. Participants shared that their highlights were:

- *Being able to be vulnerable and share personal struggles without feeling judged*
- *Discussing what issue are most important to us within my group finding out what we are passionate about and creating solutions*
- *Knowing that I will somewhat be part of change and having an outlet to speak*
- *The inclusivity of the activities and feeling like I was actually doing something that can bring change*
- *The opportunity to voice our opinions without them landing on deaf ears*
- *The transparency and honesty, it was a safe space to share and talk about things that matter*

Sharing the learning

Engaging with young people at the start of a project is crucial so that their views can have a genuine impact and to ensure that any engagement isn't viewed as a 'tick-box' exercise.

Closing the feedback loop with young people was one of the parts of our consultation process that received the most positive feedback from participants. It demonstrates that their contributions were valued and have been taken seriously.



Pictured: Members of the Ministerial Youth Advisory Council with the Minister for Youth, the Hon Hannah Beazley MLA, at the Koorlangka Bidi launch event.

Meaningful involvement of young people has other positive outcomes beyond just meeting the rights of young people.

When conducted well, youth participation can:

- Enhance democratic outcomes.
- Improve organisational safety for children and young people.
- Strengthen community engagement and social trust.
- Result in policies and programs that better meet the needs of young people, leading to better community outcomes.
- Promote individual wellbeing through a sense of empowerment and connection to others.
- Cultivate valuable life skills among young people, such as leadership.

Young people have a right to be involved in decisions that affect their lives, and when supported meaningfully, they bring innovation, resilience, and insight that can improve outcomes for communities.

Next steps

The actions contained within Koorlangka Bidi are now being implemented by 18 State Government agencies. To ensure that young people can remain informed about how their voices have shaped Government decisions and policy, an implementation report will be published annually for the life of Koorlangka Bidi.

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