



Hon Simone McGurk MLA
Minister for Child Protection; Women's Interests;
Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence; Community Services

Our ref: 74-23203
Your ref: Petition 047

Hon Peter Foster MLC
Chair
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs
Parliament House
4 Harvest Terrace
WEST PERTH WA 6005
env@parliament.wa.gov.au

Dear Mr Foster

Thank you for your correspondence received 11 May 2022 regarding Petition No. 047 – Crime and antisocial behaviour across the Kimberley.

The McGowan Government is committed to improving the lives of young people at risk of becoming repeat offenders and diverting them from the criminal justice system. This is demonstrated in the strong commitment to support the long-term development of the Kimberley region through the 2022-23 State Budget.

The comprehensive cross-agency investment includes \$40.4 million to deliver a range of programs and initiatives to respond to youth crime and break the cycle of reoffending in the Kimberley. Specific initiatives that will be rolled out as part of this package are:

- \$15 million towards an on-country residential facility to provide an alternative to detention, as well as \$500,000 to plan and develop other safe place proposals.
- \$4.3 million to expand the Government's successful Target 120 program to four locations in the Kimberley including Broome, Halls Creek, Fitzroy Crossing and Derby.
- \$11.7 million to extend the Kimberley Schools Project to keep young people engaged with the education system.
- \$2.5 million for Operation Regional Shield, enabling police to deploy additional resources to parts of regional Western Australia as required.

Target 120 is an early intervention program for young people at risk of becoming repeat offenders and works intensively with the individual and their family including siblings. Target 120 focuses on a cohort of young people that are interacting with police and the justice system but have not yet been in detention.



Target 120 has proven to be extremely successful in supporting our most at risk children and stamping out crime since we first launched the program in 2018. Approximately half of the young people involved in Target 120 to date have had no further contact with police.

By working with at risk children and their families and focusing on the causes of offending, Target 120 is helping steer these young people away from the criminal justice system to promote safer communities. The expansion of Target 120 is part of a multi-pronged approach across government to tackle youth crime.

As you may be aware, on 15 February 2022, WA Police Force Operation Regional Shield commenced in response to the escalation of violence, criminal activity and antisocial behaviour impacting the Kimberley including the towns of Broome, Kununurra, Fitzroy Crossing, Derby and Halls Creek. Operation Regional Shield aims to reduce the risk of criminal activity and violence directed at WA Police Force and the public by engaging youth and reducing the volume of street present young people. Young people are conveyed to a safe place or the Broome Police Station to identify a responsible adult.

The Departments of Communities, Education, Youth Justice and WA Police Force work collaboratively to follow up with children and young people identified as at risk. There are two local interagency forums provide a collaborative and coordinated response to assist vulnerable children and young people and their families to improve outcomes:

- 1) Young People at Risk, co-chaired by Communities and the WA Police Force; and
- 2) Children at Risk, co-chaired by Communities and the WA Country Health Services.

The Department of Education and respective schools also attend the forums. At risk children are referred to these forums for interagency discussion and coordination of responses to concerns including high non-attendance at school. Wherever possible, responses are led by the family and young person.

Communities' Child Protection workers support parents to demonstrate parental responsibility including safety planning for their children. Communities has an office with staff based in each of the Kimberley towns of Broome, Derby, Fitzroy Crossing, Halls Creek and Kununurra and provides an outreach to Wyndham. Communities also has Child Protection staff in the remote communities of Bidyadanga, Looma, Djardjin, Kalumburu, Balgo and Warmun. Communities continues to ensure that an after-hours response is available through Crisis Care, with Communities staff available in both the East and the West Kimberley should a local response be required.

The concerns raised in the petition about the need for safe houses/safe places is noted, however, police interactions in Operation Regional Shield indicates that police are able to identify safe places for children. The current focus in addressing concerns related to youth in the Kimberley includes providing engaging activities for young people and their families, community night patrols and connecting at risk youth to relevant family support and education services.



The McGowan Government has a demonstrated record of continued strong investment in the Kimberley region, including the successful development and delivery of initiatives under the Kimberley Juvenile Justice Strategy. The Kimberley Juvenile Justice Strategy is a cross-government approach involving Aboriginal people, Communities and relevant organisations in the co-design of place-based initiatives that aim to positively impact the livelihood of young Aboriginal people and reduce youth offending across the Kimberley. The Department of Justice is the lead agency responsible for the Kimberley Juvenile Justice Strategy.

Addressing issues that are generations in the making will take time and we are determined to make lasting and meaningful change.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Simone McGurk'.

HON SIMONE McGURK MLA

**MINISTER FOR CHILD PROTECTION; WOMEN'S INTERESTS;
PREVENTION OF FAMILY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE; COMMUNITY SERVICES**

1 June 2022