



Palmerston Grow Well Live Well
COMMUNITY ACTION PLANS FOR:

- ❖ Family violence
- ❖ Youth mental health and wellbeing
- ❖ Property crime

Prepared for:
The Palmerston Grow Well Live Well Leadership Group

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Background

In 2014, a group of community organisations agreed to work together using a ‘collective impact’ approach to improve the wellbeing of children and young people, aged 0 to 30 years, in Palmerston; marking the inception of the Palmerston Grow Well Live Well project. The approach has aimed to facilitate community-led action, decision-making and activities to advance the project’s mission, and as such, has involved extensive community consultation. The project is also underpinned by: a commitment to evidence-based action, best practice, innovation and continuous improvement processes all supported by quality data collection systems; applying a strengths-based approach; and trauma informed care.

Community consultations and publicly accessible data were used to inform and produce the first *Palmerston State of the Children Report*, released in 2016, which captures how children and young people are fairing. Guided by the Report, Palmerston Grow Well Live Well has committed to working with the community to create an action plan to provide strategic direction to improve outcomes for children and young people in Palmerston.

This report documents action plans for the next 3 – 5 years for three (3) priority areas identified by the community: Family violence; Youth mental health and wellbeing; and Property crime.

Methods used in action plan development

An analysis of data generated through community meetings and a survey (administered face-to-face and online) gathered by members of the Palmerston Grow Well Live Well’s Community Engagement Group between November 2016 and May 2017, involving approximately 400 participants, was undertaken to:

- ❖ identify priorities for action that inform focus group consultations; and to
- ❖ identify emergent themes in the data relating to vision/goals and strategies to inform focus group discussions.

Focus group consultations were undertaken with community participants between Tuesday 16th and Thursday 19th May, 2017; each day exploring a different priority area. Groups included participants that had an expressed interest in specific priority area/s, with each involving between 6 and 11 people and taking up to 2.5 hours in duration.

Focus group consultations were facilitated to:

- ❖ establish a common understanding of their respective priority area, defining the issues within the context of the Palmerston community;
- ❖ create a shared vision/goal for respective priority areas; and

- ❖ identify key strategies and activities, aligned with the community's vision/goal, and informed by the themes that emerged through analysis of survey data.

Focus group consultations generated 'visions' (broad goals) and 'strategies' consistent with those identified by community members through survey data. Focus group consultations, however, provided a richness and depth of meaning to survey data, enabling robust, cohesive and contextualised action plans to be developed that are considered achievable and that have mutually reinforcing activities, supporting diverse organisations to work in partnership for a common purpose.

Family violence action plan

Defining Family Violence

In the context of the Palmerston Grow Well, Live Well project and this plan, family violence refers to:

- Physical violence
- Emotional violence
- Financial abuse
- Verbal abuse
- Violation of individual rights (inability to make choices and decisions, being intimidated and unable to develop, being unable to participate in education, employment and other social, cultural and economic activities)
- Being controlled by another person and feeling disempowered as a result

Family violence may involve intimate partners, children, parents, extended family members and family connections.

This plan recognises that family violence can occur through many mechanisms and often involves multiple forms. It can occur through physical contact, verbal means, through technology (electronic tracking devices, social media, telephone etc.) and via intermediaries/third parties. It can occur anywhere including the workplace, social events, school, public places, and most often, in the family home. Victims experience the lived reality of family violence all of the time.

Vision/goal

The vision or goal for this plan is for Palmerston children and youth to feel and be safe in all spaces that they move through and to be educated, healthy and well so that they may participate fully in all facets of community life and society. It will be a place in which they will have choice, hope and opportunity to flourish in all aspects of their lives and reach their potential, with quality and accessible support systems in place and their human rights maintained.

Strategies/activities

Victim/family support

- ❖ Increase the level of service provision (emotional, practical and financial) and improve their accessibility by people experiencing family violence, with an emphasis on:
 - early intervention
 - immediate support
 - ongoing support
 - victim safety
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- linked up services through a one-stop-shop to make accessing support less complicated and more client-focussed
 - a 24 hour service hub
- ❖ Build the therapeutic workforce to ensure victims of family violence receive the social and emotional support, counselling and psychological services they need, with a focus on:
- immediate and longer-term access by victims
 - practitioners that specialise in family violence, trauma and working with children
 - practitioners that are qualified and experienced
 - practitioners that have the cultural competencies to work effectively with Aboriginal Australians and families from other culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
 - practitioners that include both men and women, Aboriginal Australians and people from other culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
 - the provision of parenting advice
 - the strengths of individuals and families
- ❖ Improve accessibility to safe and suitable crisis, short-term and longer-term housing options by victims escaping family violence through increasing the available stock/options, which incorporates:
- the establishment of a network of safe family homes in the community in which young people and/or their families can go to in an emergency and that is listed on a website
 - housing that has the capacity to accommodate varied family compositions and needs (e.g. large families, families with teenage boys, people with disabilities etc.)

Perpetrator services

- ❖ Establish and deliver high quality rehabilitative programs and services to perpetrators of family violence, which includes:
- accommodation outside of the family home creating the possibility for victims of family violence to safely remain in/return to the home
 - the opportunity for reformed perpetrators to be trained and provide peer support to other perpetrators
 - leadership by men

Targeted youth supports/services

- ❖ Develop and deploy a communication plan that provides information to young people, including homeless youth, about the types of family violence services and supports available and how to access them
- ❖ Provide emergency accommodation to young people escaping or needing a respite from family violence
- ❖ Make accessible high quality social, emotional and practical supports for
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young people experiencing family violence

- ❖ Make available more local sports and activities that are affordable/free and that support young people to participate and develop a sense of belonging/place (and where possible, organisers encourage and promote school attendance)
- ❖ Ensure young people are supported to continue their education, with particular emphasis on:
 - access to therapeutic and support services within schools and other educational settings
 - the delivery of ‘healthy relationships’ programs in schools and other educational settings to better inform young people/children about the various forms violence and explore what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour in a relationship
 - the development of non-destructive and non-violent conflict resolution skills
 - the creation of additional learning/educational opportunities provided through alternative settings (to school) to re-engage youth that have been adversely impacted on by family violence, e.g. Clontarf and SEDA

Community awareness raising

- ❖ All staff employed by organisations that provide support, assistance or services to people that are experiencing family violence, in particular first point of contact or front-line staff (face-to-face, telephone or internet-based), as well as educators, youth workers, health practitioners and others that are likely to come into regular contact with youth cohorts, to be properly trained:
 - to work with victims of family violence
 - in trauma informed care approaches
 - in the NT’s Family Safety Framework
 - ❖ Develop and deliver a public education campaign/s on family violence that:
 - encourages victims to speak up about violence so they can get help
 - identifies where help can be obtained
 - encourages community members to call the police if they hear/see family violence
 - creates a greater level of awareness about the impacts of violence on young people (e.g. trauma, academic outcomes, disengagement etc.)
 - informs the general community about the challenges women face in domestic violence situations and the difficulties they have in leaving violent relationships and why women will return to violent relationships
 - explains Australian laws on family violence, ensuring information is accessible to people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (where violence may be tolerated/accepted), and which details the nature of support that exists and how support can be accessed
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- focuses on building healthy family relationships
 - is delivered in schools from an early age

Structural/institutional response

- ❖ Provide structures, training and support for volunteers that work with young people and families that may have experienced family violence
- ❖ The sector/organisations involved in the delivery of family violence services and supports must have contracts/service agreements with governments (and other funding agencies) that have the flexibility to enable provision of crisis responses to victims of family violence where they have the capacity and capability

Policing and laws

- ❖ Build the size and capacity of the police workforce servicing Palmerston, in particular all front-line/first contact point staff, to ensure victims of family violence receive appropriate support, with a focus on:
 - mandated training in domestic violence and trauma informed care, with competencies assessed and reviewed on an ongoing basis
 - mandated participation in an intensive immersion program, working in a domestic violence service or safe house etc. to enhance professional competencies
 - ❖ Advocate for laws that:
 - protect youth when parents return to violent relationships, placing their children at risk
 - protect victims of violence that have obtained AVOs/DVOs or other protection orders to ensure the order is enforceable if they cross state/territory borders
 - carry harsher penalties for perpetrators of family violence
 - prevent perpetrators of family violence from purchasing alcohol, where alcohol-related violence has occurred
 - enable victims of family violence to access legal supports, such as DVOs, prior to physical abuse being sustained
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Youth mental health and wellbeing action plan

Defining youth mental health and wellbeing

In the context of the Palmerston Grow Well, Live Well project, youth mental health and wellbeing relates to people from birth to age 30. This plan is concerned with the emotional and mental stability of youth necessary for a fulfilling life, where individuals are empowered, have good self-esteem and can determine their own futures. It places value on high quality and targeted prevention, early intervention, intervention and post-intervention strategies that support this objective.

It recognises that the experience of mental distress is diverse and individuals must be supported through a strengths-based approach to control their recovery and/or manage mental illness, noting that 'recovery' has broad and relative meaning. The plan also recognises that youth are stigmatised because of mental health issues and mental distress stemming from a lack of understanding and subsequent assumptions made about youth, and that community must be challenged about their stigmatising ideas and better informed for youth to lead fulfilling lives.

This plan is also concerned with the wellbeing of youth in all parts of their lives, including intimate relationships, social connectedness, emotional stability, financial security, spiritual health, physical safety, educational attainment and employment.

Vision/goal

The vision or goal for this plan is that Palmerston youth will develop resilience (in its many forms) and feel valued, empowered and confident to determine, and have hope for, a future that is bright and fulfilling. Young people will receive a good education, have employment opportunities and will be equipped to deal with life's many challenges. It is for youth and their families to feel accepted, loved, connected and included in all parts of life, with the whole of community sharing in the responsibility for mental health and wellbeing. It will be a place in which individuals and families will feel supported when they are struggling and where young people are less drawn to alcohol and drug use as a coping mechanism or to self-medicate for mental health issues. It will also be a place where a youth voice forms part of all decisions impacting on their mental health and wellbeing. In particular, youth will be strategically involved in all aspects of service delivery and development of programs, drawing on the expertise of those with lived experiences, to drive creative and innovative solutions, with youth and their families having timely access to high quality and robust services and professionals. Mental distress will be understood by the community as a 'human

experience', with greater emphasis placed on strategies to address stigma and its consequences.

Strategies/activities

Targeted youth mental health supports and services

- ❖ Build the therapeutic workforce (counsellors, psychologists, mental health practitioners etc.) and create/expand youth mental health services in Palmerston to ensure timely access to support is available to youth experiencing mental health issues and distress, and their families, with particular attention focussed on:
 - experienced, well-trained and qualified practitioners that specialise in working with youth
 - free (or minimal cost) access
 - prevention and early intervention programs
 - the development and delivery of therapeutic programs that engage families with young children (age 3-5)
 - practitioners that specialise in working with youth/families that have been traumatised and/or have experienced intergenerational trauma
 - services that provide trauma informed care
 - a comprehensive, 24 hour, one-stop-shop youth service, resourced to respond to youth with multidimensional and multilayered issues and which incorporates a social media platform where questions can be safely raised and answered about the services/supports available and how to access them
 - streamlined and straight forward referral processes
 - young homeless people and their complex needs
 - a local 24 hour emergency youth mental health help line
 - culturally appropriate healing programs
 - outreach services
 - collaborations with local GPs

- ❖ Establish peer support services that:
 - are run by peers, delivering intentional peer support
 - use Facebook (or similar) to create a network where youth can share experiences

Education and employment

- ❖ Establish more creative programs that maintain the engagement of youth in school, with an emphasis on early intervention and:
 - targeting youth showing signs of (unexplained) non-attendance
 - leadership that use alternatives to exclusion/suspension and actively pursues truants with the objective of attendance (rather than consequences for non-attendance)
 - initiatives that celebrate improvements in attendance
 - less universal schooling systems and more alternative approaches to education and learning
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- ❖ Engage parents/carers in early childhood learning that connects young families to services and community and creates learning opportunities for whole families (e.g. parenting skills, child development, managing challenging behaviours etc.)
 - ❖ Link therapeutic programs with early childhood learning activities for families
 - ❖ Provide school-based mental health practitioners and create safe spaces for young people experiencing mental distress
 - ❖ Through school-based learning, deliver youth mental health and wellbeing programs that are innovative and that embed ‘lived experiences’ of youth as a means of connecting/resonating with young people and that address:
 - drug and alcohol use
 - healthy life choices
 - when support might be needed
 - the type of local support/services available and access

Community awareness raising

- ❖ Develop and deliver health promotion/education initiatives that:
 - raise community awareness about alternative pathways to welfare dependency and explore self-determination, responsibility and work ethic
 - highlight the importance of mental health (as well as physical health) and early warning signs that someone might need support
 - unpack the causes and impacts of (intergenerational) trauma on youth development and behaviour
 - focus on suicide prevention
 - work to de-stigmatise mental illness, applying a discourse that is more contemporary and that does not pathologise individuals’ identity and reflects the diversity of experience of mental distress
 - draw on the skills of media/public relations expertise to communicate with youth about services, activities, blogs, networks and ‘all things youth’

Activities

- ❖ Establish a youth centre/club in Palmerston that:
 - involves youth in all aspects of the centre’s/club’s operations
 - includes a range of activities, shaped by youth
 - has free activities (or minimal cost)
 - includes peer support as part of a suite of approaches to maintain youth engagement
 - facilitates ‘round table’ or ‘think tank’ discussions for youth on a range of topics enabling their contribution to broader societal issues
 - ❖ Provide activities and diversionary programs for youth that embed life skills,
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community services, sport etc., delivered by qualified, well-trained and experienced youth workers (and people working with youth)

Parenting supports

- ❖ Develop and deliver initiatives that support parents to raise healthy and well children, that place emphasis on:
 - peer support for parents and the opportunity for shared learning
 - parental involvement in the education of their children (from birth right through schooling)
 - approaches that guide and support children/youth to access support (early)
 - building trust and understanding with youth
 - desirable parenting skills at different developmental stages
 - poor/absent/neglectful parenting and its consequences
 - basic parental responsibilities (safe home, nutrition, sleep, education, supervision etc.)
 - strengthening family relationships

Structural/institutional response

- ❖ Increase the number of volunteers working with youth and provide suitable training and support to enable them to work effectively, with sensitivity and awareness, in settings where youth may be experiencing mental distress
- ❖ Establish systems for organisations/stakeholders working with youth and families in Palmerston to work collaboratively, applying a youth and family-centred approach, to facilitate access to services and supports
- ❖ Deliver professional development (that embeds a ‘lived reality’ component) to those that come into contact with youth experiencing mental distress, in particular employees/volunteers from agencies that may be a first point of contact (such as police, paramedics, emergency services, doctors, nurses, sports coaches, lawyers etc.) and that promotes a less harmful discourse and approach to delivering assistance (that does not inadvertently add to the distress of an individual)
- ❖ Address systemic barriers that prevent people age 25 – 30 years from accessing mental health services and supports, to ensure continuity of care and affordability, particularly where a person has complex needs
- ❖ Establish a ‘working with children: mental health and wellbeing’ qualification and register as an optional accreditation process for volunteers and practitioners (e.g. free online short course)

Laws and policing

- ❖ Create/enact laws that criminalise ‘bullying’
 - ❖ Monitoring and maintain the NT Police Darwin Facebook page (and similar)
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platforms) to ensure youth are not publicly vilified, preventing assaults on their mental health (that may be already fragile)

Property crime action plan

Defining property crime

‘Property crime’, in the context of Palmerston Grown Well Live Well project, refers to unlawful acts such as theft, break-ins and damage to public and private property and infrastructure, trespassing, vandalism and being a public nuisance.

Vision/goals

The vision or goal for Palmerston stemming from this plan is for it to be a place that is safer, cleaner and tidier and a source of pride to the community. It will be a place where the wellbeing of all community members is enhanced and youth are engaged in socially desirable, constructive and meaningful ways. It will also be a place where all members of the community, regardless of age, gender and ethnicity, are respected, accepted, included and cared for, and are socially connected with their neighbours and neighbourhood.

Strategies/activities

Parental supports

- Develop, promote and deliver accessible programs that support parents to expand their skills and increase their capacity to understand, navigate and manage complex and multidimensional underlying issues that impact on youth behaviour (e.g. intergenerational trauma, mental distress, addiction, financial stress, family violence, time, social/cultural and economic disadvantage, social exclusion etc.), that incorporate:
 - activities that re-establish the cultural connectedness of youth and their families on country
 - boundary setting and negotiating consequences
 - school-based delivery, as well as in other settings
 - skills and learning related to various developmental stages of children/youth
 - links to social, health and other supports
 - strategies that engage parents of youth that are disengaged from school and involved in property crime and illegal activities

Laws, policing and justice

- Increase the number of police officers and patrols in Palmerston, with emphasis placed on:
 - patrols in back street areas, as well as crime ‘hot spots’
 - youth property crime
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- youth beats involving police cadets and local youth
 - drug dealing and use
 - Create laws that allow curfews for youth to be established and for police to enforce (e.g. after 9pm, under 13 years)
 - Promote ‘victim and offender conferencing’ where youth have been involved in property crime and link youth and their families to ‘wrap around’ social, health and other supports/services they may need
 - Advocate for and deliver creative diversionary/rehabilitative programs to young offenders that have a focus on:
 - the development of self-respect and respect for the community
 - early intervention, where youth participate in camps/activities following their first offence
 - youth receiving a logical consequence associated with their offending behaviour, for example, cleaning up graffiti, assisting with repair work or working to pay for the costs of stolen items etc.
 - communities supporting bail conditions that engage young offenders in work
 - engaging parents in young offender diversionary/rehabilitation programs (particularly where youths are reoffending) to facilitate a family-centred rehabilitative processes that strengthens parents capacity to parent and re-sets problematic family dynamics

Targeted activities and services for youth

- Drawing from other jurisdictions and through consultation with youth, establish a 24 hour youth centre that:
 - involves youth in planning and operations
 - makes accessible a range of activities and programs that are affordable/free, fun and contribute to social inclusion (including boot camps, team building activities, camping etc.)
 - includes a full holiday program
 - creates alternatives to boredom and crime
 - targets youth that may be struggling
 - incorporates short-term crisis accommodation for homeless youth, youth escaping family violence or youth that need a safe place to sleep
 - includes provisions for private study/tutors
 - employs qualified youth workers (including men, women, Aboriginal etc.)
 - access to therapeutic healing programs with qualified and experienced practitioners
 - engages Elders (where appropriate)
 - has the capacity to link youth with specialist supports when family violence or mental distress is impacting on youth
 - Establish and make accessible a suitable drug and alcohol residential
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rehabilitation program for youth that uses qualified and experienced staff, with approaches to treatment that are based on evidence and that are flexibly delivered to meet the culturally diverse nature of the community

- Provide a multi-disciplinary youth outreach service in Palmerston that has the capacity to respond to complex issues and provide immediate/crisis support
- Support a suite of sports activities that are organised yet informal and can include all levels of experience and skill
- Build the youth-worker workforce, with particular attention on:
 - an increase in both male and female workers
 - engaging strong community mentors (identified by youth)
 - Aboriginal leadership
 - cultural diversity
 - recruiting youth that have been rehabilitated

Structural/institutional response

- Undertake a multi-agency review and mapping exercise to identify existing service gaps, duplication in service and the potential for greater collaboration/partnerships
- Funding agencies to build into contracts/service agreements the requirement for organisations to collaborate and share in the responsibility to deliver youth programs/services where collaboration has the potential to maximise and facilitate better outcomes for youth
- Organisations involved in the delivery of youth services/activities to consult youth and cultural leaders within the community
- Undertake ongoing research into initiatives relating to youth (locally, nationally and internationally) and use current knowledge and evidence to inform, create and deliver activities/initiatives in the Palmerston community context that are more likely to achieve desired outcomes
- Services that work with youth to initiate and advocate for media to publish positive youth-related stories, challenging the negative stereotyping of youth that has gained traction over recent years

Education, employment and training

- Ensure all youth are engaged in education, training and/or employment, placing emphasis on fostering:
 - a learning environment that is safe, positive and happy and promotes and supports healthy living
 - a culture where there is a community-wide expectation that all school children will be at school/formal education

Safe environments/infrastructure

- Expand neighbourhood watch groups
 - Enhance street lighting and install more CCTV/security cameras in public areas in Palmerston
 - Provide accessible information/programs/advice to a culturally diverse community and to businesses on staying safe and keeping property secure
 - Support and promote small-scale community/neighbourhood activities/initiatives that create local social connectedness with immediate/close neighbours (e.g. street BBQs, monthly breakfasts, neighbour days etc.)
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