



GROW WELL LIVE WELL

PALMERSTON STATE OF THE CHILDREN REPORT

A REPORT ON THE WELLBEING OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN PALMERSTON

August 2016



THE STORY OF GROW WELL LIVE WELL IN PALMERSTON

In 2014 a group of community organisations agreed to start working together in a new way to improve how children and young people grow up in Palmerston. This new way of working is called Collective Impact and has been successful in some Australian communities and overseas.

Collective Impact is a way for organisations and community members to work together to address complex social problems, such as, ‘How do we support children and young people to grow up and reach their full potential?’. We realise that one organisation or government department by itself cannot have all the answers and that government, community organisations and community all need to work together to respond to social issues within the community that are impacting on the development and life chances of children and young people.

Grow Well Live Well is not just another Palmerston based community group. While many groups that work together will likely achieve some change and success, the Collective Impact approach is more ambitious. It aims for change to be sustained over time in both the community and in the way government and community organisations work with and for the Palmerston community.

An important part of Collective Impact is taking the time to build a strong foundation, so the community organisations leading the Grow Well Live Well initiative have spent time building the foundation and established a Leadership Group to drive and support the project. The Leadership Group includes representatives from the City of Palmerston, Northern Territory Department of Education, Child Australia, Early Childhood Australia, Save the Children, Northern Territory Primary Health Network, Families and Schools Together (FAST NT), Larrakia Nation Aboriginal Corporation, Australian Red Cross and The Smith Family.

In 2015 Grow Well Live Well became much more visible within Palmerston as community and service provider consultations began. Genuine community voice can be a tricky thing to capture so we used a number of strategies to help us gather information to get a clear picture of the issues that are important to community members. The consultations involved 360 community members and 35 service providers and the information gathered has been used to put together this report, together with data from other sources.

This report is the first Palmerston State of the Children Report and subsequent reports are intended to monitor how children and young people are fairing. Grow Well Live Well has committed to using the report to work with the community to create an action plan and advocate for resources and system change to support improving outcomes for children and young people in Palmerston.

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INTRODUCTION



PURPOSE

Welcome to the first Palmerston State of the Children report. This is a report for the Palmerston community. It is about how children and young people are faring. It shows what people think are the important issues and what the publicly available data from sources such as the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and others tells us. The report is designed to help the Palmerston community make changes so that we can build on the strengths and respond to the challenges faced by children and young people and their families. Thank you to all those who took part in community consultations and shared their stories with Grow Well Live Well.

HOW THE DATA WAS COLLECTED

Grow Well Live Well employed a project facilitator to find out what people in Palmerston think—what's good, what's worrying and what could be done better. Over the last year the project facilitator has talked with more than 30 different groups. About 360 people, including young people, contributed together with representatives of 35 organisations. Grow Well Live Well also employed a consultant to analyse the data and put this together with a wide range of statistics about Palmerston. This report comes from Grow Well Live Well's community consultations and the publicly available data.

For those interested in finding out about the details of methods and links to data sources, we have created a Technical Report, which can be downloaded separately from the [Grow Well Live Well web page](#) or from the [Facebook page](#). A list of data sources is shown on page 30.



HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

The data in this report is presented using the framework developed nationally by the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) for understanding how young people and children are faring. This is called the 'Nest Framework'. It has five groups or 'domains', connected by supportive systems. We have grouped the data and community views into these domains.

We all know that it is important for young people and children to feel loved and safe; to be physically and mentally well; to have basics like enough food or a place to live; to join in society, and learn well at school. Experts say that all these should be helped by supportive systems, making it easier for parents to raise their children and for young people to thrive.

These domains are how we can measure whether we are on the right path to making Palmerston a better place for children and young people to grow up in.

Supportive systems

Loved and safe

Material basics

Healthy

Learning

Participating



OVERVIEW OF PALMERSTON



Map source: Australian Early Development Census

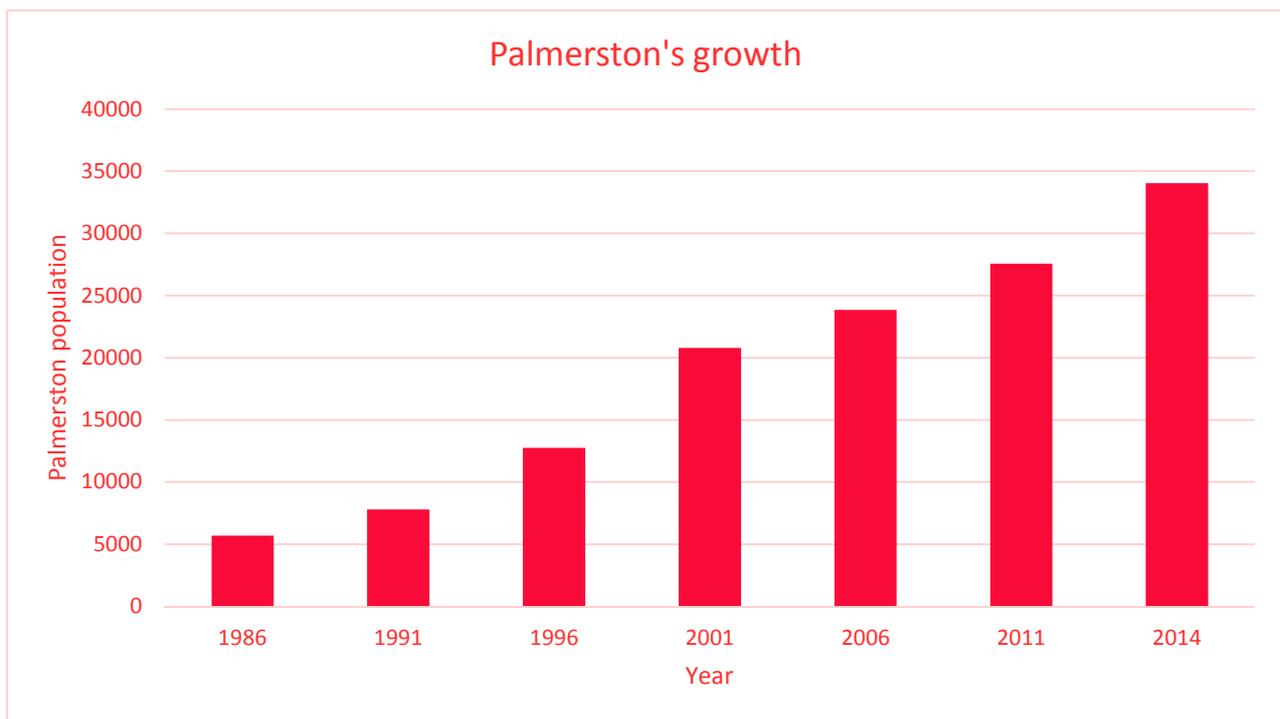


WHAT DO WE MEAN BY PALMERSTON?

When we refer to Palmerston, we are talking about the City of Palmerston, shown in the map here. We know that people from the rural area outside Palmerston use Palmerston's facilities, shops and services. However, we wanted to focus attention on those who live in Palmerston. That's where Grow Well Live Well is focused.



A GROWING POPULATION



Data sources: ABS Census (1986-2011), ABS Regional Statistics, Palmerston (2016)

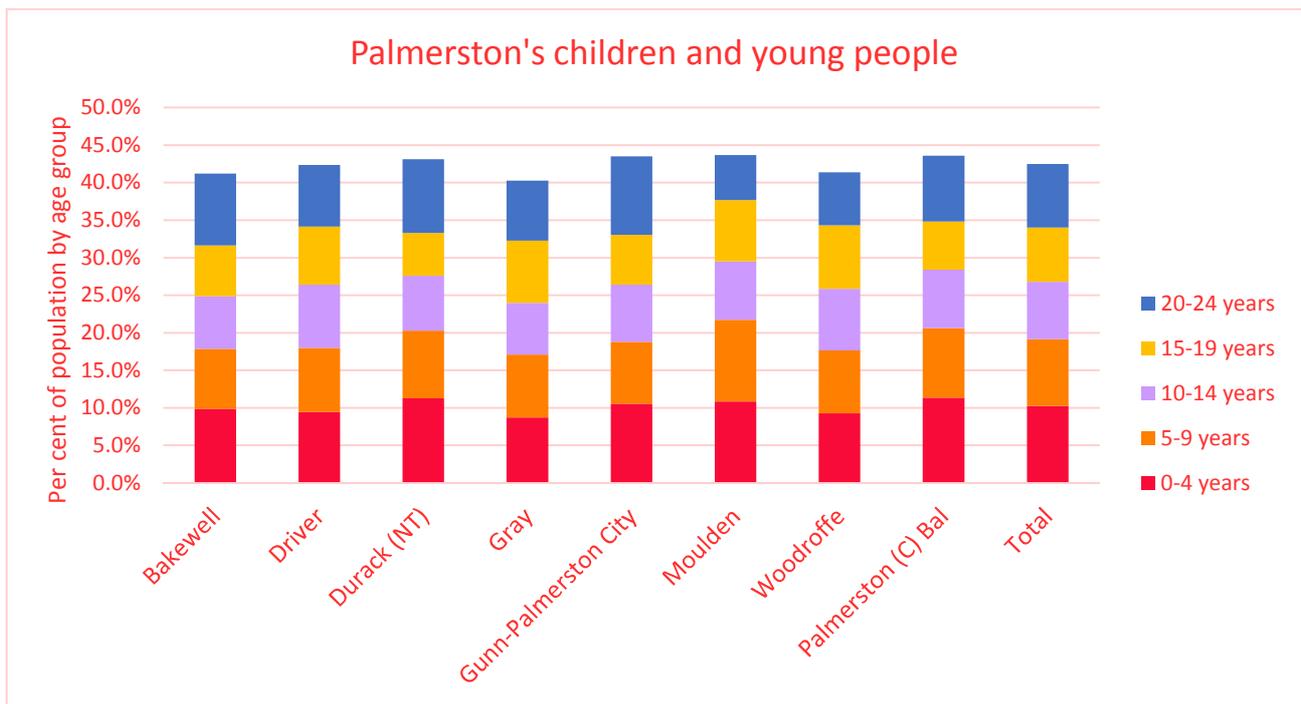
Palmerston has grown a lot since the first residents moved there in 1982. Few places in Australia have grown at this pace. Palmerston has transitioned from a small satellite town near Darwin into a well-established, vibrant regional city.



CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE ACROSS THE SUBURBS



Palmerston is a young city both in terms of its longevity and its people. About 42 per cent of Palmerston's people are under 25. Half the population is 29 or under—compared to Australia as a whole, where half the population is under 37.



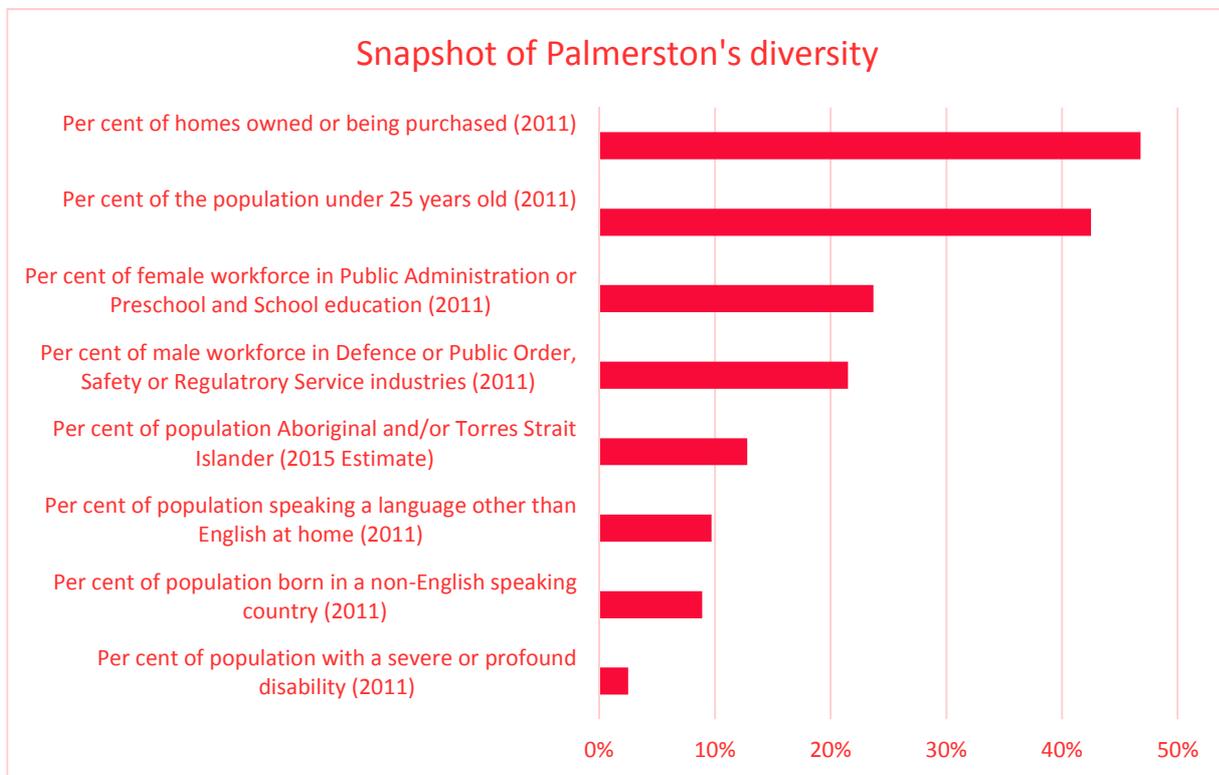
Data source: ABS Census (2011)



A DIVERSE COMMUNITY



Palmerston is made up of people from diverse backgrounds, ethnicity and cultures. Nearly half of the homes in Palmerston are owned or being purchased. More than four in every 10 residents are under the age of 25. Almost a quarter of all females in the labour force work in public administration or schools. More than one in five males work in defence or public order/safety/regulatory industries. One in eight identify as either Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders. Almost one in 10 speak a language other than English at home. One in 11 were born in a non-English speaking country. About one in 40 people have a severe or profound disability.



Data sources: ABS Census (2011) and Public Health Information Development Unit (2016)

COMMUNITY CONSULTATIONS



We wanted to know what the people of Palmerston think about issues that affect children and young people. So we asked hundreds of people across the community to comment on three questions:

What's great about living in Palmerston?

What worries you about living in Palmerston?

What would make Palmerston a better place to live?

In the next few pages you'll see a summary of these views. While many comments were made by community members, there isn't room to include all of them. We've presented the top 10 themes raised and matched them to the domains we introduced earlier. We have tried hard to ensure that the community's views are represented as faithfully as possible. The views expressed are not necessarily from a majority of people we consulted, but they do represent the points that were raised most often in our consultations. It is also important to remember that the views expressed by community members may not accord with what the available data tells us. This does not mean the views are incorrect or wrong; this just points to the need for further investigation of either the data or the views expressed to more fully understand what is happening. The work of analysing the information from the consultations and going back to the community to build our understanding is ongoing and will form part of the process that Grow Well Live Well will undertake as part of the development of an action plan.



WHAT'S GREAT ABOUT LIVING IN PALMERSTON



People made hundreds of positive comments about living in Palmerston. We found comments that matched all the domains we are using.

Palmerston is well supported with a range of services and programs. The foundations are there: family support, education, and organisations focused on meeting the needs of children and young people. Those consulted thought things were looking up, particularly with a new hospital coming and retail precinct.

Beyond services and programs, many people felt that Palmerston has a vibrant feel.

“It's very community and family oriented, and we support each other.”

10 GREAT THINGS ABOUT PALMERSTON

AREAS OF STRENGTH

Range of services and programs

Supportive systems

Friendly and multicultural

Participating

Sport and recreation facilities

Healthy

Parks and open spaces

Healthy

Easy access to facilities and services

Material basics

Good for young families

Participating

Pride, identity, sense of belonging

Loved and safe

Good education opportunities

Learning

Entertainment and events

Participating

Affordability

Material basics

They talked about belonging, feeling included, that there were plenty of activities for everyone to join in, particularly for young families. Some talked with pride about ‘their’ Palmerston!





Parents talked a lot about Palmerston as a great place to bring up children—the great parks and open spaces, and a wide array of sporting facilities.

There were also lots of encouraging comments about schools. The wide availability of learning spaces for young children, teenagers and adults was celebrated.

Palmerston was compared favourably to other major centres as an affordable place to live, particularly in relation to housing affordability.

“Palmerston’s a close knit community, with lots of available family services, events and functions. The schools are smaller, I think, with cohesive and supportive community groups. There are plenty of sporting and extra-curricular groups for children to attend.”



CONCERNS ABOUT LIVING IN PALMERSTON

Like all communities, people had concerns for many living in Palmerston. Their worries fell into four of our domains.

The largest number of concerns fall into the 'loved and safe' domain. Many people felt Palmerston has a crime problem. Some felt threatened by the antisocial behaviour and violence they saw. Others described feeling unsafe. They worried that all these things gave Palmerston a bad reputation.

“I worry about crime. I see kids wandering the streets late; and the kids at shops bullying others.”

10 WORRIES ABOUT PALMERSTON	AREAS OF CONCERN
Crime, break-ins	Loved and safe
Drug and alcohol abuse	Healthy
Planning and the city environment	Supportive systems
Domestic violence and violence more generally	Loved and safe
Antisocial behaviour	Loved and safe
Unsupervised, neglected children roaming streets	Healthy
Housing and homelessness	Material basics
Poverty and vulnerability	Material basics
Cost of living	Material basics
Bad reputation	Loved and safe

But there were also genuine concerns about those in need, particularly those in poverty and those who were vulnerable because of homelessness.



Another concern was often linked to crime - the problem of drug and alcohol abuse, and particularly concerns about methamphetamines (ice). There were also concerns expressed about the number of children and young people 'roaming the streets' at night.

On a more practical level, many people felt the local council could be doing more to improve the city environment—things like fences around playgrounds and more shade in open spaces.

“I have also seen parents turn their lives around and their kids benefit both in behaviour and self-confidence. Counselling workers are a big part of healing for many but with so many newer issues, such as drugs and violence and crime, we need more of these accessible supports as the waiting list is long and sometimes it’s too late.”



WHAT COULD MAKE PALMERSTON BETTER?

10 OPPORTUNITIES TO MAKE PALMERSTON BETTER FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

AREAS OF OPPORTUNITY

A lot of good ideas came out of our consultations with members of the community, and there were some quite clear messages about what was needed to address the concerns people had about Palmerston.

A supportive system is the foundation of many people’s ideas—one that plans for and develops supports and services for those that need them.

“Some coordination is required to meet the needs of the community.”

In particular, many people talked about the need for more facilities and activities for youth, specifically the need for more sport and recreation facilities. The other parts of a supportive system that mattered to many people relates to better information and communication about what is available, and better coordination and collaboration between service providers to make things happen.

<i>Cultural, family, adult education supports and services</i>	Participating
<i>Additional education/school supports</i>	Learning
<i>Youth activities and facilities</i>	Supportive systems
<i>Sport and recreation facilities</i>	Healthy
<i>More up to date information and better communication</i>	Supportive systems
<i>More resources for specialised services</i>	Material basics
<i>Collaboration and coordination of services</i>	Supportive systems
<i>More entertainment, cafes</i>	Participating
<i>Better public transport</i>	Material basics
<i>Peer mentors for young people</i>	Learning





“I think we need more programs for pre-teens and teens. There seem to be a lot of community activities for babies to pre-school but not much for the older kids.”

While many people were positive about schools in Palmerston, they also recognised gaps, particularly for those who have special needs, or who need more support, such as those who are disengaged from school. Some spoke about the need for more school counsellors. Others discussed the need for education about drugs and alcohol. Another solution offered in the learning domain relates to the need for peer mentors for young people.

One of the things that people said was good about Palmerston was that it was an inclusive, tight-knit community. But our consultations showed that some people weren't being included - people from different cultural backgrounds, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, and vulnerable families.

“I have a 16-year-old teenage son and he has lots of mates. There are a few things I have noticed about gaps in our services for these young people. At the age of 16 or 17 our kids are often expected to be independent at school, with jobs and socialising but the reality is that they are still young and needing support.”





STATISTICAL DATA

It's one thing to understand what people think - Combining statistical data with people's ideas can be powerful. In this report, we have included statistics that are generally available to the public. So they can be compared over time. In most cases in this report, we compare Palmerston with Australia. That's partly because of the diversity of communities across the Northern Territory which makes comparisons difficult. If you want to see the statistics, you can find links to all the data in our Technical Report.

UNDERSTANDING THE INDICATORS

Numbers can sometimes be hard to understand. That's why we have colour coded our data with three 'traffic lights'.



Data suggests that Palmerston has comparatively more challenges.

Red doesn't mean that things are really bad. It just means children and young people face more challenges than they do in other places.



Data suggests that Palmerston has comparatively more opportunities.

Green doesn't mean that everything is good either. It means that Palmerston's young people generally have more opportunities or are faring better.



Data does not clearly indicate more or less opportunities or challenges but may act as a baseline for future reference.

Yellow means that Palmerston's young people have about the same opportunities and challenges as elsewhere, or that we don't have a good point of comparison at the moment.



Data is not currently available for this indicator.

A data gap symbol is used where we think a measure is important but isn't currently available. We are highlighting data gaps because of the importance of ensuring collection or access to this data in the future, to gain a full understanding of how and whether progress is being made.



LOVED AND SAFE

Representing feelings of love and safety as a score is not easy. The Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) recognises that children who feel loved and safe are more likely to display signs of emotional maturity and be competent socially. On both these measures, Palmerston's young children show higher levels of vulnerability than children on average across Australia.

Feelings of safety and security are also reflected in police crime and domestic violence statistics. It seems that from our consultations, people's perceptions about crime are right. Property crime rates are a lot higher in Palmerston than they are on average across Australia. Family violence is also a concern because it impacts on the security and wellbeing of children. Australia-wide figures aren't available, but a comparison with three other Australian jurisdictions shows that Palmerston rates of family violence reports are midway between high and low.

Young people sometimes suffer when families move a lot. It is hard to make new friends and this can lead some children to feel insecure. The Australian Bureau of Statistics Census shows that Palmerston families do move a lot compared to the average for Australia.

A lot of people in the consultations were worried about youth crime and neglected children. Unfortunately, there is no publicly available data to provide an accurate picture of these issues. This is a significant data gap if we are to improve outcomes for children and young people.

“I think that for some children, the streets are a safer environment than their own homes.”



Indicator	Latest	Palmerston	Australia	Comparison
AEDC Emotional Maturity vulnerability	2015	11.4%	8.4%	
AEDC Social Competence vulnerability	2015	11.7%	9.9%	
Family Violence police reports / 100 000 population	2016	632	389 (NSW) 817 (WA) 1264 (VIC)	
Property offences police reports/100 000 population	2016	7584	3195 (2013)	
Mobility (Same address one year ago) Per cent of population.	2011	66%	79%	
Youth crime reports				
Child protection: substantiated notifications				



MATERIAL BASICS

For the material basics domain, we have selected six indicators to give a fair picture of the state of children and young people in Palmerston. By and large, the message here is encouraging.

Unemployment rates are lower- and specifically youth unemployment rates tend to be lower- than they are across Australia. Children are therefore more likely to be part of working families and less likely to be in welfare-dependant families. Young people are more likely to have work opportunities than other young people across Australia.

Public transport was raised as an opportunity for improvement in our consultations. So here, while we don't have a comparison, we've included a measure of what is currently available within the City of Palmerston, based on information from Darwin Bus timetables. In the next Report we will be able to see how much this has changed.

The Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) is a measure used on the My School website to show the level of need in student populations of schools. The measure for all schools in Australia is 1000—schools with lower values have more need. Palmerston schools, on average, show higher levels of need than those in many other communities.

In our community consultations, many people raised concerns about cost of living pressures. We don't have clear data on this so we have highlighted one indicator where we know there is a data gap.

*“It's great seeing Palmerston expand,
bringing new opportunities.”*



Indicator	Latest	Palmerston	Australia	Comparison
Unemployment rate	2016	4.0%	6.1%	
Per cent of young people employed (aged 15-19)	2011	47%	40%	
Per cent of young people employed (aged 20-24)	2011	75%	67%	
Per cent of children in low income, welfare dependant families	2014	19.2%	23.3%	
Public transport services within Palmerston (weekdays)	2016	161 services/day		
Index of Community Socio Educational Advantage	2015	941	1000	
Per cent of adults delaying medical treatment due to cost				



HEALTHY

It is difficult accessing recent community level data on health. So here, we rely to some extent on Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) data which indicates how pre-school children are faring as recently as 2015. In this case, the data for Palmerston shows levels of vulnerability for the physical health and wellbeing domain. The indicator is quite a lot higher than for Australia as a whole. That is, Palmerston children tend to be more vulnerable than children elsewhere.

The ABS census shows us another picture for youth. It tells us how many young women (in this case those under 20) have had one or more children. The rate for Palmerston is about 50 per cent higher than for Australia. Encouragingly, the data on birth weights suggest that the rates of low birth weights are not significantly different from Australia as a whole. But of concern is the high percentage of mothers who smoke during pregnancy. There is also a data gap for the rates of breastfeeding. This is a significant gap as breastfeeding rates have been shown elsewhere to affect educational outcomes into adulthood.

We would like to see data on mental health issues for young people along with indications of youth suicide. In addition, we would like to know how severe problems of drug and alcohol abuse are in the community. These issues were raised by many in our community consultations.

“The youth groups in many areas are in crisis due to mental health issues, trauma, drug issues and bullying. Youth are vulnerable and are in need of more support.”



Indicator	Latest	Palmerston	Australia	Comparison
AEDC physical health and wellbeing vulnerability	2015	12.5%	9.7%	
Teenage fertility rate (per cent with one or more children)	2011	3.3%	2.1%	
Per cent of low birth-weight babies	2008	7.0%	6.5%	
Per cent of mothers smoking during pregnancy	2006-2008	23.1%	13.7%	
Per cent of mothers who breastfeed				
Per cent of young people aged 15-24 reporting mental illness				
Rates of drug and alcohol abuse				
Rates of suicide for young people aged 15 - 24				



LEARNING

Our traffic lights in the domain of learning are all red. While National Action Plan – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) results and attendance rates are not the only measures of a good education, they do point to some challenges for schools in Palmerston. Similarly, the significantly lower proportion of young people with Year 12 completions, compared with Australia, is also cause for some concern. These concerns were reflected in our community consultations, where community members expressed worries about some areas of education in Palmerston. For young children entering school, the level of vulnerability they bring with them to school (as indicated by the AEDC data) is worrying.

Many people in our consultations spoke favourably about Palmerston as a great place to raise young families. Unfortunately, there is very little data about access to early childhood services or playgroups.

Indicator	Latest	Palmerston	Australia	Comparison
NAPLAN Year 3 Reading Year 3 Numeracy average scores	2015	371 359	425 398	
NAPLAN Year 7 Reading Year 7 Numeracy average scores	2015	524 511	546 543	
School attendance rates	2015	90.2%	92-95%	
Per cent of 20-24 year olds with Year 12 completion	2011	49.2%	69.8%	
AEDC developmentally vulnerable in more than one domain: (per cent of children)	2015	28%	22%	
Per cent of children aged 0-4 in playgroups				



PARTICIPATING

Our traffic lights point to some areas of concern for aspects of participation. Volunteering is one expression of a sharing and contributing community. The ABS census shows us that Palmerston's young people don't volunteer as much as other young people across Australia. It also shows that people generally provide less unpaid assistance than others across Australia. This points to lower than average levels of what we call social capital, which helps make communities more cohesive. The Census also tells us that overall, Palmerston is fairly mono-cultural. People who are different and who speak a language other than English or who were born in non-English speaking countries might therefore have trouble fitting in. The challenge for the community is to ensure those from diverse backgrounds feel welcomed, respected and supported.

However, Palmerston benefits from a rich diversity of Indigenous cultures. Schools in Palmerston have about five times as many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students than in most schools around Australia. This creates opportunities for shared understanding about Indigenous people, their cultures and history. Again, the challenge is to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are respected and valued across the community.

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Latest</i>	<i>Palmerston</i>	<i>Australia</i>	<i>Comparison</i>
<i>Per cent of people aged 15-19 participating in voluntary work</i>	2011	12.8%	16.6%	
<i>Per cent of people aged 20-24 participating in voluntary work</i>	2011	10.2%	14.9%	
<i>Per cent of 15-19 year olds not earning or learning</i>	2011	31.4%	19.9%	
<i>Per cent of people providing unpaid assistance</i>	2011	5.4%	8.8%	
<i>Cultural diversity: Per cent of people who speak English only</i>	2011	82%	77%	
<i>Cultural diversity: Per cent of people born in predominantly non-English speaking countries</i>	2011	8.9%	15.7%	
<i>Cultural diversity: Per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders students in schools</i>	2015	25%	5.3%	



PALMERSTON OVER TIME



Palmerston is changing. We saw earlier how the population has grown over the last 30 years. The changing mix of people in Palmerston affects how Palmerston looks and feels. The trends shown in this section represent a short summary of how things have changed, for better or worse over time. The green lights don't mean that the results are 'good'—or that we have achieved our goal—they just indicate improvement over a period of time.

We see improvements in a number of domains: domestic violence and property offence reports are down, standards of living are rising (indicated by ICSEA), teenage fertility rates are down, and Year 12 attainment rates have improved. A smaller proportion of people were living in public housing in 2011 compared to 2001, though this may be because the availability of public housing hasn't kept pace with the population growth. Increasing proportions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in schools, along with a rising proportion of residents speaking a language other than English, point to greater cultural diversity and richness in Palmerston.

In the healthy domain, the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) data points to increased health challenges for children in particular. School attendance data for schools in Palmerston has not improved significantly in the six years between 2009 and 2015.

Domain	Indicator	Before	Latest	Comparison
Loved and safe	Domestic violence reported incidents /100 000 population	2011 742	2016 631	
	Property offences /100 000 population	2011 8028	2016 7584	
Material basics	Index of Community Socio-educational Advantage (ICSEA)	2009 877	2015 941	
	Proportion of dwellings as public housing	2001 15.4%	2011 9.1%	
Healthy	AEDC physical health and wellbeing vulnerability	2009 10.2%	2015 12.5%	
	Per cent of females aged 15-19 years old with one or more children	2006 4.9%	2011 3.3%	
Learning	School attendance rates	2009 89.8%	2015 90.2%	
	Per cent of 20-24 year olds with Year 12 or equivalent	2006 44.6%	2011 49.2%	
Participating	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in schools	2009 23.0%	2015 24.8%	
	Per cent of people speaking a language other than English at home	2006 6.9%	2011 9.7%	



WHAT DOES THIS ALL MEAN?

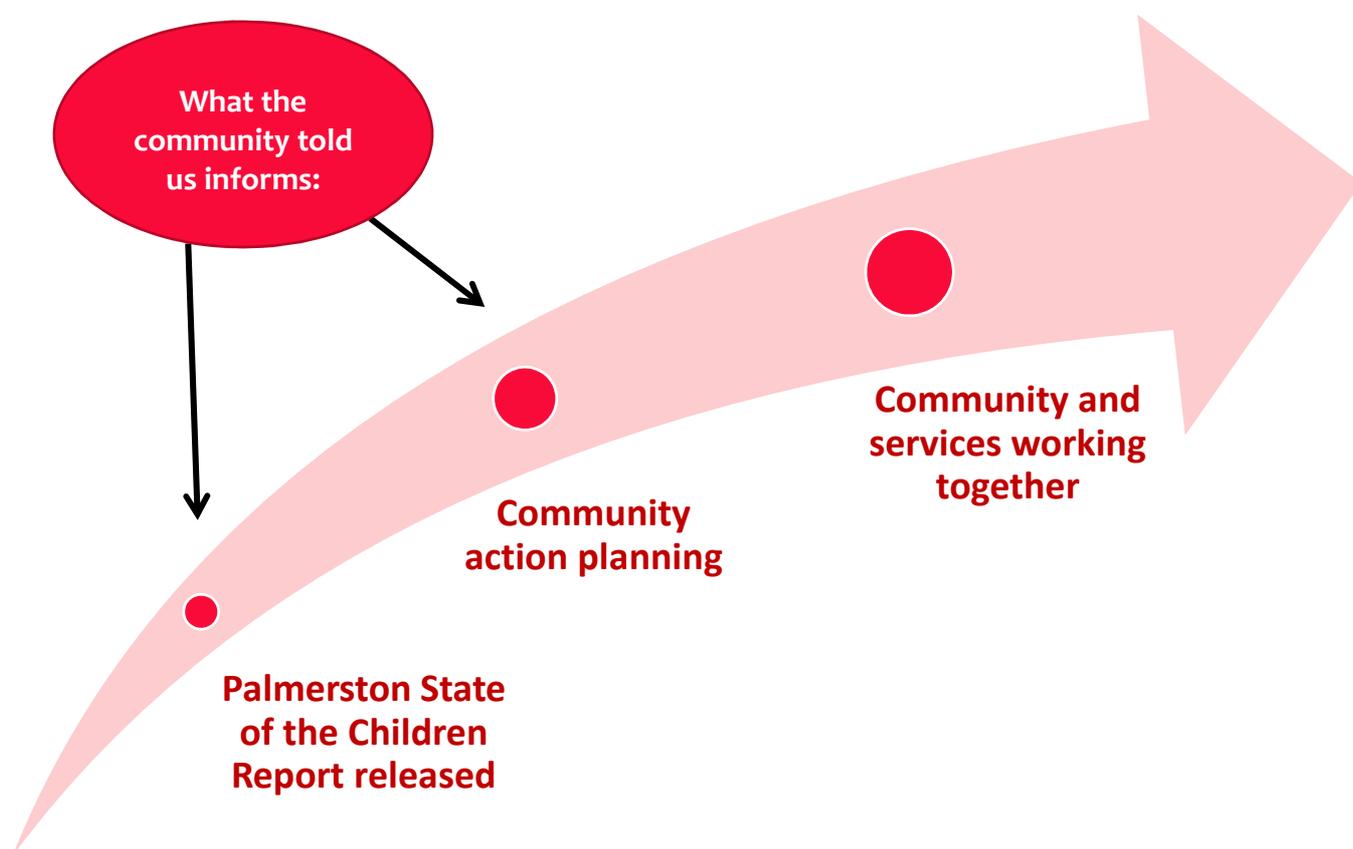


Making sense of all this information can be challenging. But having information can be powerful too. The data collected will help us measure how Palmerston is changing over time. But more importantly, it allows us to make decisions that respond to needs and concerns and help us advocate for change and resources to get things done. This is a report for Palmerston. The red traffic lights should not be seen as ‘having a go’ at Palmerston. Nor should the green lights make us feel there are no concerns young people in Palmerston. The story of Palmerston will continue to change over time and this report is aimed at allowing the community to influence how that story is told, what the priorities should be and what needs to happen to make sure our children and young people have the best lives they can in Palmerston.



TOWARDS AN ACTION PLAN

This enables us to go back to the Palmerston community to develop an action plan and advocate to government and services for change to support better lives for children and young people.



The report provides a picture of growing and living in Palmerston. The report and community consultation information will be used to plan short and long term strategies for children and young people in Palmerston.

HOW CAN YOU BE INVOLVED IN GROW WELL LIVE WELL?

We are looking for people from the Palmerston community to join with us in taking the next step, which is all about planning for positive change. If you think you could contribute or you would just like to receive our newsletter, please send an email to grow_well_live_well@outlook.com. Also, visit our Facebook page <https://m.facebook.com/GWLWpalmerston/> to be updated on when we'll be holding community planning sessions.



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GROW WELL LIVE WELL

Organisations represented through Grow Well Live Well include: Australian Red Cross, City of Palmerston, Northern Territory Department of Education, Child Australia, Early Childhood Australia, Families and Schools Together (FAST NT), Larrakia Nation Aboriginal Corporation, Northern Territory Primary Health Network, Save the Children and The Smith Family.

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