



GROW WELL LIVE WELL

PALMERSTON STATE OF THE CHILDREN TECHNICAL REPORT

A REPORT ON THE WELLBEING OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

August 2016



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The *Palmerston State of the Children Technical Report* details findings of a project funded through Grow Well Live Well. The project is part of a Collective Impact process designed to work with the community to develop local solutions to address the needs of children and young people across the City of Palmerston.

Grow Well Live Well employed a project facilitator to bring together and consult with community members, children and service providers to find out what they thought was good for children and young people growing up in Palmerston, what they were worried about, and how their worries could be best addressed. About 360 community members and service providers were consulted. This report documents the key findings of these consultations.

Grow Well Live Well also engaged a consultant to collate a series of statistical indicators that show how well children and young people in Palmerston are faring. The indicators are built on the Nest framework, developed by the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth. The Nest framework allows international comparisons to be made across six domains: Loved and safe, having Material basics, being Healthy, Learning, Participating, and Supportive systems. The statistical indicators presented in this report are framed by these domains.

The consultations identified several strengths for children and young people in Palmerston. Among the many, the top three strengths related to the availability of extensive services and programs, the friendly and multicultural atmosphere in the city, and its many parks and recreation facilities. The consultations identified a number of concerns. In particular, people raised issues of crime, drug and alcohol abuse, domestic violence and violence more generally. Some suggested solutions to these challenges included having more cultural, family and community events or services, additional educational supports and more youth activities and facilities particularly for pre-teens and teenagers.

The statistical indicators presented also identify some strengths and challenges. In the Loved and safe domain, the statistics show that the concerns about crime are justified. But importantly also, data about early childhood vulnerability are cause for concern. In the Material basics domain the statistics show relatively good opportunities for youth employment, though there are some parts of the community that miss out. In general terms, the educational measure for socio-economic status, while improving, still lags behinds Australia as a whole. In the Healthy domain, most of the indicators reflect some concern across several areas: early childhood vulnerability, teenage pregnancy rates, and smoking rates for pregnant women. The statistics under the Learning domain are all concerning: academic performance, school attendance rates, and year 12 completions all lag behind the Australian average. Under the Participating domain, the statistics show areas of concern for the level of volunteering, youth involved in earning or learning, and the integration of people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. On the other hand, the high proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in schools presents opportunities for a celebration of and learning from indigenous cultures.

The trend data shows a number of favourable changes in Palmerston over time, with positive changes in every domain. Overall the report provides a basis on which decisions about programs and activities for young people in Palmerston can be made. The next step will be the development of an action plan.





INTRODUCTION



PURPOSE

This Technical Report accompanies the *Palmerston State of The Children Report* (Community Report) which summarises findings from community consultations and data sources designed to give community members an accessible overview of the findings of Grow Well Live Well's Collective Impact project to the end of July 2016. Both reports are about how children and young people are faring. It shows what people think are important issues and what the key statistics say. Both reports are designed to help Palmerston make changes so that we can build on the strengths and respond to the challenges children and young people, together with their families, face. We thank all those who participated in the community consultations and shared their stories with Grow Well Live Well.

The Technical Report provides considerably more detail than the Community Report and is designed for people interested in delving deeper into the data. This report explains methods in greater detail, provides more in-depth statistics, and specifies the data sources used for the Grow Well Live Well project.



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 well 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 (Hanleybrown et al., 2012; Karp & Lundy-Wagner, 2016).

Collective Impact is a way for organisations and communities 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 Palmerston.

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. 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.

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 about 360 community members including young people. About 35 service providers also participated. 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 track progress in improving the lives of children and young people. 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.

REPORT STRUCTURE

This Technical Report is structured to provide the reader with full details about the rationale for selecting various indicators, methodology and findings of the Grow Well Live Well project to date. The report concludes with a full reference list, which was used to prepare both the Community Report and this Technical Report.



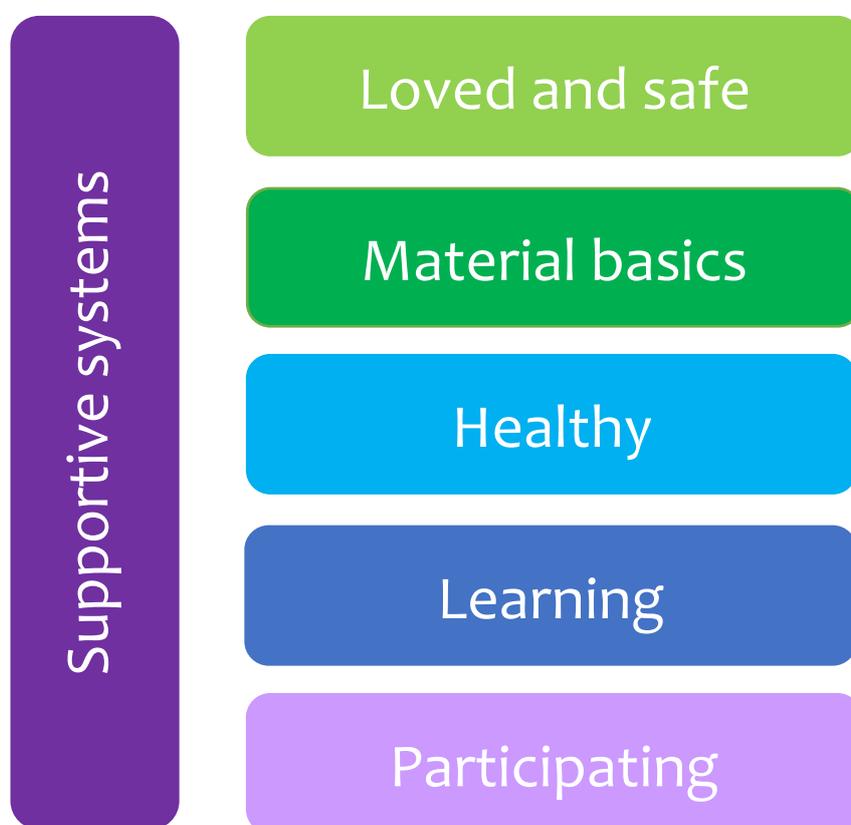
NEST FRAMEWORK

The data shown here uses the *Nest action agenda* as an organising guide to help us understand the state of children and youth in Palmerston.

The Nest aims to align efforts to improve the wellbeing of children and youth aged 0-24 years. It is about collectively identifying the outcomes that we want to achieve for children and youth, the most effective prevention-focused and evidence-based ways to achieve these, and how we can best align our collective efforts to achieve them. (Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth, 2014, p. 3)

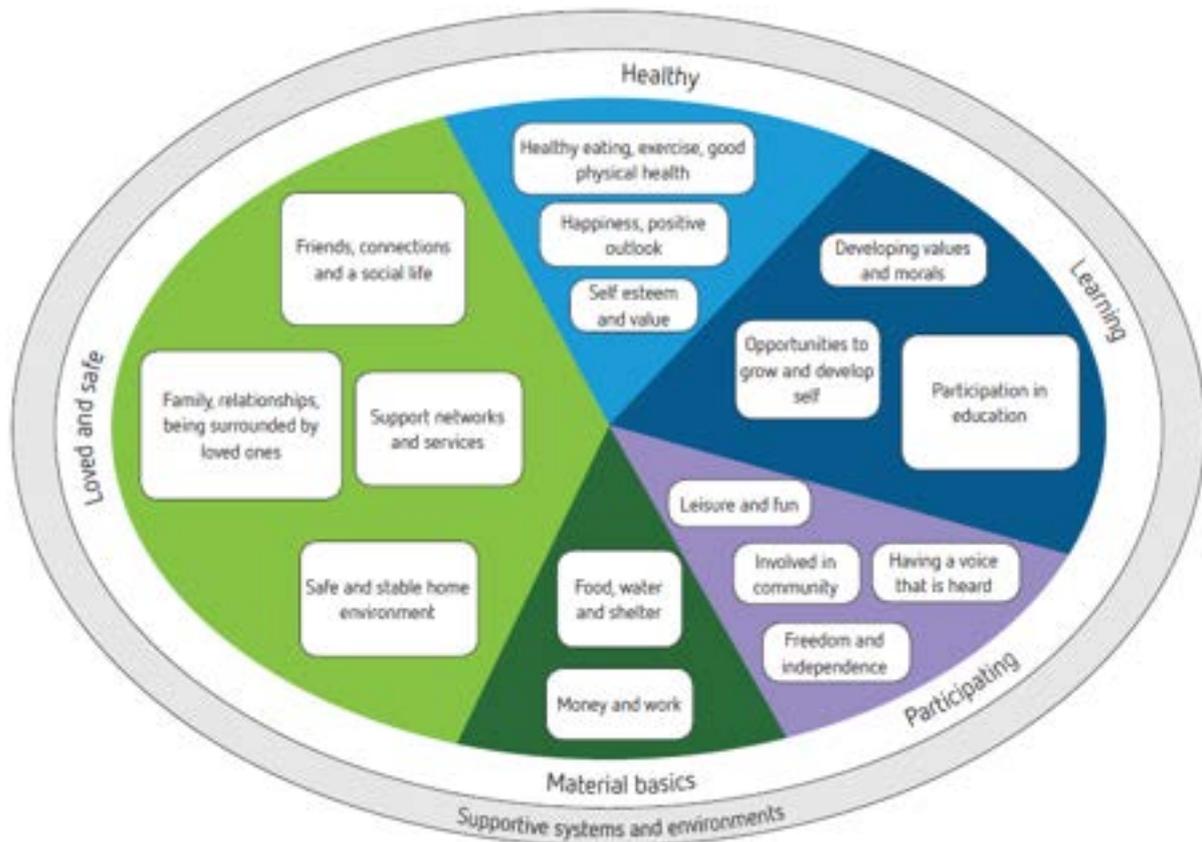
In its original form it had five ‘key result areas’ underpinned by ‘supportive systems’ represented in Figure 1 below. The revised framework replaces ‘supportive systems’ with ‘positive sense of culture and identity’. This report uses the original framework as it was used for the preparation of the *Report Card: The Wellbeing of young Australians* (Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth, 2013). We do however acknowledge the importance of a positive sense of culture and identity. The Nest framework purports to be an ‘action agenda for children’s sake and for Australia’s productivity’ (Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth, 2014, p. 3) and is built on human capital theory assumptions that see investments in the early years as having an economic return (Doyle et al., 2009; Heckman & Masterov, 2007). As members of Grow Well Live Well, we do not see the wellbeing of young people being limited to economic outcomes. That said, we do believe the framework is a useful organising structure for assessing outcomes and impact.

Figure 1. Nest action plan domains



It should be noted that while we have adopted the framework, the indicators for reporting to these key result areas are necessarily different for local areas than they would be for international comparison purposes. The data we have used does however fit with the Nest’s areas and themes contributing to a ‘good life’ as indicated in the *Report Card: Wellbeing of young Australians*. (Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth, 2013)

Figure 2. Areas and themes associated with Nest Report Card Key Result Areas.



Source (Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth, 2013, p. 7)



METHODOLOGY

The Grow Well Live Well project could be described in terms of ‘mixed methods research’ where qualitative perceptions of community members are informed by quantitative data obtained from reliable data sources (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). It could also be described as an action learning process where learnings are applied to an action plan and then an ongoing iterative review process (Stringer, 2014). A third and most important element of the project is that it is participatory (Kemmis et al., 2013) and developmental (Patton, 2011) where solutions are generated collectively. Participatory research is not designed to be objective (Markiewicz, 2010). Rather it engages with the subjective perceptions of all those involved in a community—in this case the community is made up of those who live and work in the City of Palmerston. Three underpinning questions informed the content for this report.

1. How do community members perceive life for children and young people in Palmerston?
2. What do community members think should change in order to improve life for children and young people in Palmerston?
3. What does the available data tell about how things are (and how they have changed) for children and young people in Palmerston?

This report represents the culmination of one stage in the Grow Well Live Well project. It is not the end, only the beginning. While community engagement has been fundamental to the process thus far, the next phase of the project will go beyond gathering perceptions towards finding and implementing solutions.

Community consultations brought together about 360 individuals in a variety of focus groups across Palmerston (see page 20 for details of participants). These forums were an opportunity for people to share what they liked about living in Palmerston, what worried them and what they suggest should be done to improve Palmerston for children and young people. Each focus group discussion was documented with details of specific comments and summaries of the facilitator’s observations. Community members were consulted through their connections with organisations and events in the community. Organisational representatives participated based on their involvement with programs for children and families in the Palmerston community.

The combined set of documents was then collated into an NVivo (qualitative analysis software) database, with themes identified under the three headings: What’s good about Palmerston; What worries are there about Palmerston; and what would address those worries. This process is typically used for analysing qualitative data (Bernard & Ryan, 2010; Patton, 2015). Analysis was conducted by an independent qualitative analysis specialist.

RATIONALE AND CRITERIA FOR CHOICE OF DATA

We noted earlier (p. 3) that the indicators we used to represent the Nest framework differ from those used in the *Report Card* (Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth, 2013). Many of the indicators chosen for that assessment are not readily available at a local level and not necessarily suitable for comparison within Australia.



Our criteria for selection of indicators are as follows.

DATA SHOULD REFLECT THE NEST FRAMEWORK

We noted the importance of a shared framework of indicators earlier (p. 3). Using the Nest means that our data is squarely focused on the wellbeing of children and young people aged 0-24 years.

DATA SHOULD BE PUBLICLY AVAILABLE

All of the data used in this report is publicly available. Anyone with access to the internet can verify the sources. Other data may be available, but often it requires a time-consuming ethical and approval process to access it.

DATA SHOULD HAVE A POINT OF COMPARISON AT A NATIONAL LEVEL

We have chosen data that can be compared to national level data. In the Northern Territory, comparison with the whole jurisdiction, Darwin or other regional centres is meaningless and will create false and misleading interpretations. In remote communities and towns for example, the demographic, cultural and industry profiles are markedly different from Palmerston.

DATA SHOULD BE COMPARABLE OVER TIME

If we are to understand how Palmerston is changing, it is important to be able to plot the trajectory over time. We note however that Palmerston's change has been rapid. The first residents moved to what would become Palmerston in 1982. Now it is a vibrant city with a population approaching 40 000.

DATA SHOULD BE UNAMBIGUOUS AND REFLECT THE CURRENT CONTEXT

Our representation and interpretation of the data is unambiguous. To help others understand our interpretation, we have used a series of traffic light symbols as shown and explained in Figure 3.

DATA GAPS SHOULD BE ACKNOWLEDGED

There are some areas where we were unable to find any data for Palmerston. A lack of data enables problems to be masked or hidden. For example, while some people talk about youth suicide as a problem there is no publicly available data to show the extent of the problem. The same applies to child protection, breastfeeding rates, youth crime, and a number of other indicators. Highlighting the missing data enables the community to find ways to ensure that in the future, the data are not hidden.



Figure 3. How we represent the quantitative data in this report

| | | |
|---|---|--|
|  | Data suggests that Palmerston has comparatively more challenges. | Red does not 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 does not 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. | The yellow light 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 to show where we think a measure is important but isn't currently available. |

INDICATORS USED IN THE COMMUNITY REPORT

Table 1 summarises the indicators, sources and brief reason for the choice of indicator. References relating to the reasons for selection are also included.

Table 1. Rationale for the choices of indicators and their sources

| Domain | Indicator | Source | Reason for selection |
|----------------|---|---|---|
| Loved and safe | AEDC emotional maturity vulnerability | Australian Early Development Census (Commonwealth of Australia, 2016a) | AEDC domains predict children's later outcomes in health, wellbeing and academic success (Commonwealth of Australia, 2016b) |
| | AEDC social competence vulnerability | Australian Early Development Census (Commonwealth of Australia, 2016a) | AEDC domains predict children's later outcomes in health, wellbeing and academic success (Commonwealth of Australia, 2016b) |
| | Family violence police reports / 100 000 population | Northern Territory Police statistics (Department of the Attorney General and Justice, 2016) | Exposure to family violence and associated traumas are of concern to the wellbeing of children (Bair-Merritt et al., 2015; Richards, 2011). |



| Domain | Indicator | Source | Reason for selection |
|------------------------|---|---|---|
| | Property offences police reports/100 000 population | Northern Territory Police statistics (Department of the Attorney General and Justice, 2016) | The intergenerational impacts of crime and participation in the criminal justice system are profound (Wakefield et al., 2016). |
| | Mobility (same address one year ago) | Census (ABS, 2012b) | Frequent moves for young children can be distressing and interrupt schooling (Ziol-Guest & McKenna, 2014). |
| | Youth crime reports | Not currently available in NT police statistics | Youth crime is linked to a number of other educational and social issues (Australian Institute of Criminology, 2003). |
| | Child protection: substantiated notifications | Not currently available | Substantiated notifications are related to issues of neglect and abuse of children (Bilson et al., 2015). |
| Material basics | Unemployment rate | Small Area Labour Markets (Department of Employment, 2016) | Parents who are unemployed face greater financial stress and are less likely to be able to provide the material basics for their children. (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002) |
| | Young people employed (15-19yo) | Census (ABS, 2012b) | Young people with work experience are more likely to be independent and have better health outcomes (Viner et al., 2012). |
| | Young people employed (aged 20-24 years) | Census (ABS, 2012b) | Young people with work experience are less likely to experience mental disorders and to have increased financial resources (Sawyer et al., 2012). |
| | Children in low income, welfare dependant families | Department of Social Services (Public Health Information Development Unit, 2016) | Welfare dependence is an indicator of socio-economic disadvantage (Perales et al., 2014). |
| | Public transport services within city (weekdays) | Public transport maps and timetables, Palmerston (Northern Territory Government, 2016) | Access to transport affects access to services and participation in a range of activities (Welch & Mishra, 2013). |



| Domain | Indicator | Source | Reason for selection |
|----------------|--|--|--|
| | Index of Community Socio Educational Advantage (ICSEA) | My School (ACARA, 2016) | Across Australia ICSEA is a predictor of educational success and aspiration (Berger & Archer, 2016; Li & Dockery, 2015). |
| | Per cent of adults delaying medical treatment due to cost | Currently only available as a modelled estimate (Public Health Information Development Unit, 2016) | This element of material basics links to the 'healthy' domain, and is an indicator of equitable access (AIHW, 2016). |
| Healthy | AEDC Physical health and wellbeing vulnerability | Australian Early Development Census (Commonwealth of Australia, 2016a) | AEDC domains predict children's later outcomes in health, wellbeing and academic success (Commonwealth of Australia, 2016b). |
| | Teenage fertility rate (percentage with one or more children) | Census (ABS, 2012b) | Teenage mothers are more likely to be educationally, socially and materially vulnerable. Their children may also face greater risks (Borkowski et al., 2016; Wood & Barter, 2015). |
| | Percentage of low birth-weight babies | NT Department of Health and Families (2006 to 2008) (Public Health Information Development Unit, 2016) | Low birthweight is associated with other health indicators of vulnerability and disadvantage (Chen et al., 2014). |
| | Percentage of mothers smoking during pregnancy | NT Department of Health and Families (2006 to 2008) (Public Health Information Development Unit, 2016) | Smoking during pregnancy adds health risks to the unborn child and has health implications into adulthood (Hollams et al., 2013). |
| | Percentage of young people aged 15-24 reporting mental illness | Currently available only as a modelled estimate for all males and females (Public Health Information Development Unit, 2016) | Mental illness is related to other factors such as homelessness and domestic violence (Trevillion et al., 2012). |
| | Rates of youth drug and alcohol abuse | Currently available only as a modelled estimate for at risk alcohol consumption for those aged 18 years and over | Risky drug and alcohol consumption is related to other health risk factors and linked to domestic violence (Blagg et al., 2015) |



| Domain | Indicator | Source | Reason for selection |
|----------------------|---|--|--|
| Learning | NAPLAN Year 3 Reading Year 3 Numeracy | My School (ACARA, 2016) | NAPLAN scores predict future educational attainment levels (ACARA, 2015). |
| | NAPLAN Year 7 Reading Year 7 Numeracy | My School (ACARA, 2016) | NAPLAN scores predict future educational attainment levels (ACARA, 2015). |
| | Rates of school attendance | My School (ACARA, 2016) | School attendance is an indicator of engagement in learning (ACARA, 2015). |
| | Proportion of 20-24 year olds with Year 12 completion | Census (ABS, 2012b) | Completion of Year 12 facilitates access to employment and higher education (Lamb et al., 2015). |
| | AEDC developmentally vulnerable in more than one domain | Australian Early Development Census (Commonwealth of Australia, 2016a) | AEDC domains predict children's later outcomes in health, wellbeing and academic success (Commonwealth of Australia, 2016b). |
| | Percentage of pre-school aged children in playgroups | Data currently not available | Playgroups are important for learning and socialisation, including for parents (Strange et al., 2014; Targowska et al., 2015). |
| Participating | People aged 15-19 participating in voluntary work | Census (ABS, 2012b) | Volunteering is seen as a positive sign of civic participation, social capital and social inclusion (Bates * & Davis, 2004; Speevak-Sladowski et al., 2013). |
| | People aged 20-24 years participating in voluntary work | Census (ABS, 2012b) | |
| | Percentage of 15-19 year olds not earning or learning | Census (Public Health Information Development Unit, 2016) | Those who are neither earning or learning are more likely to be disengaged from the community (Walsh, 2010). |
| | People providing unpaid assistance | Census (ABS, 2012b) | Unpaid care may represent a general level of social cohesion in communities as with volunteering (Devereux et al., 2015). |



| Domain | Indicator | Source | Reason for selection |
|--------|---|---|---|
| | Cultural diversity: speaks English only | Census (ABS, 2012b) | Multilingual communities are potentially more likely to be tolerant of outsiders, creating a more inclusive environment (Colvin et al., 2015). |
| | Cultural diversity: people born in predominantly non-English speaking countries | Census (Public Health Information Development Unit, 2016) | Multicultural communities are potentially more likely to be tolerant of outsiders, creating a more inclusive environment (Colvin et al., 2015). |
| | Cultural diversity: Proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in schools | My School (ACARA, 2016) | Higher proportions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in schools create opportunities for reconciliation and respectful relationships in a learning environment (Verkuyten & Thijs, 2013). |





OVERVIEW OF PALMERSTON



WHAT DO WE MEAN BY PALMERSTON?

When we refer to Palmerston, we are talking about the City of Palmerston, shown in Figure 4. In statistical geography terms this is the Palmerston Local Government Area (LGA). While people from the rural area outside Palmerston use Palmerston's facilities, shops and services we wanted to focus attention on those who live in Palmerston. That's where Grow Well Live Well is focused. Data for Statistical Local Areas (SLAs) within the City of Palmerston are also available at times, and are included in parts of our analysis in this report.

Figure 4. Map of the Local Government Area for the City of Palmerston



Source (Commonwealth of Australia, 2016a)

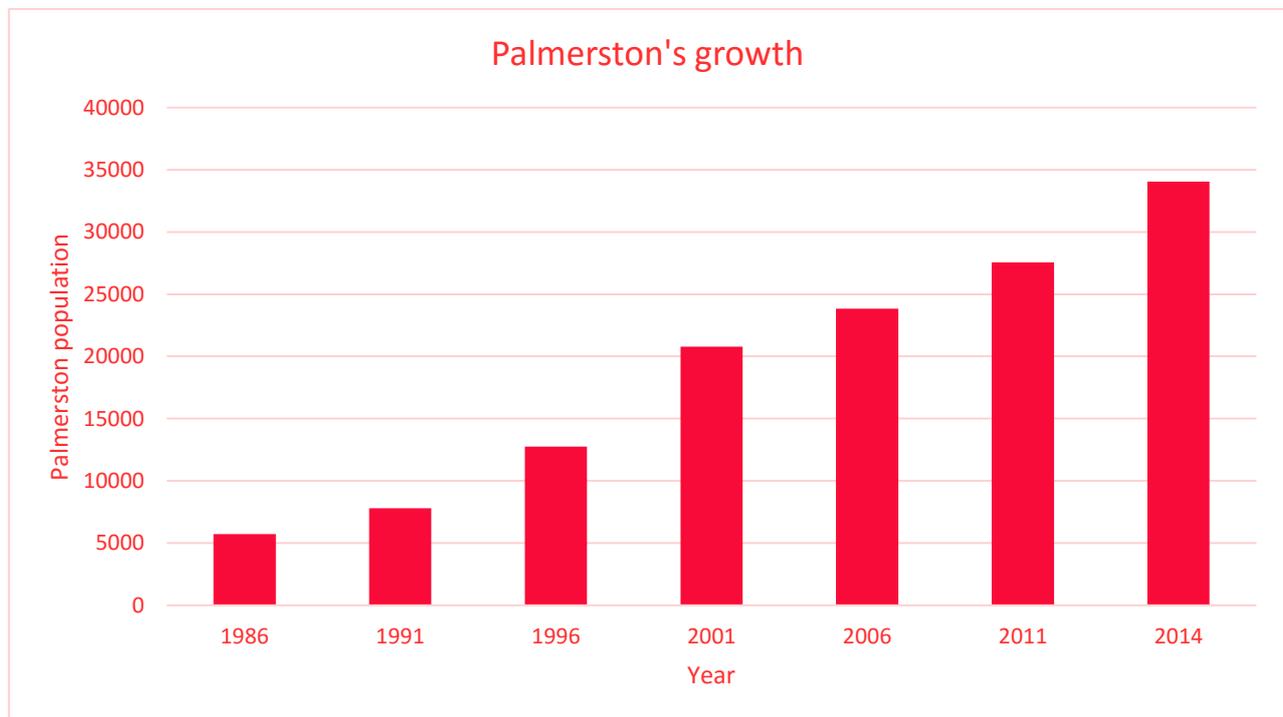


A GROWING POPULATION



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 of Darwin into an established, vibrant regional city. Figure 5 shows that growth, based on Census counts from 1986 through to the most recent Australian Bureau of Statistics estimates.

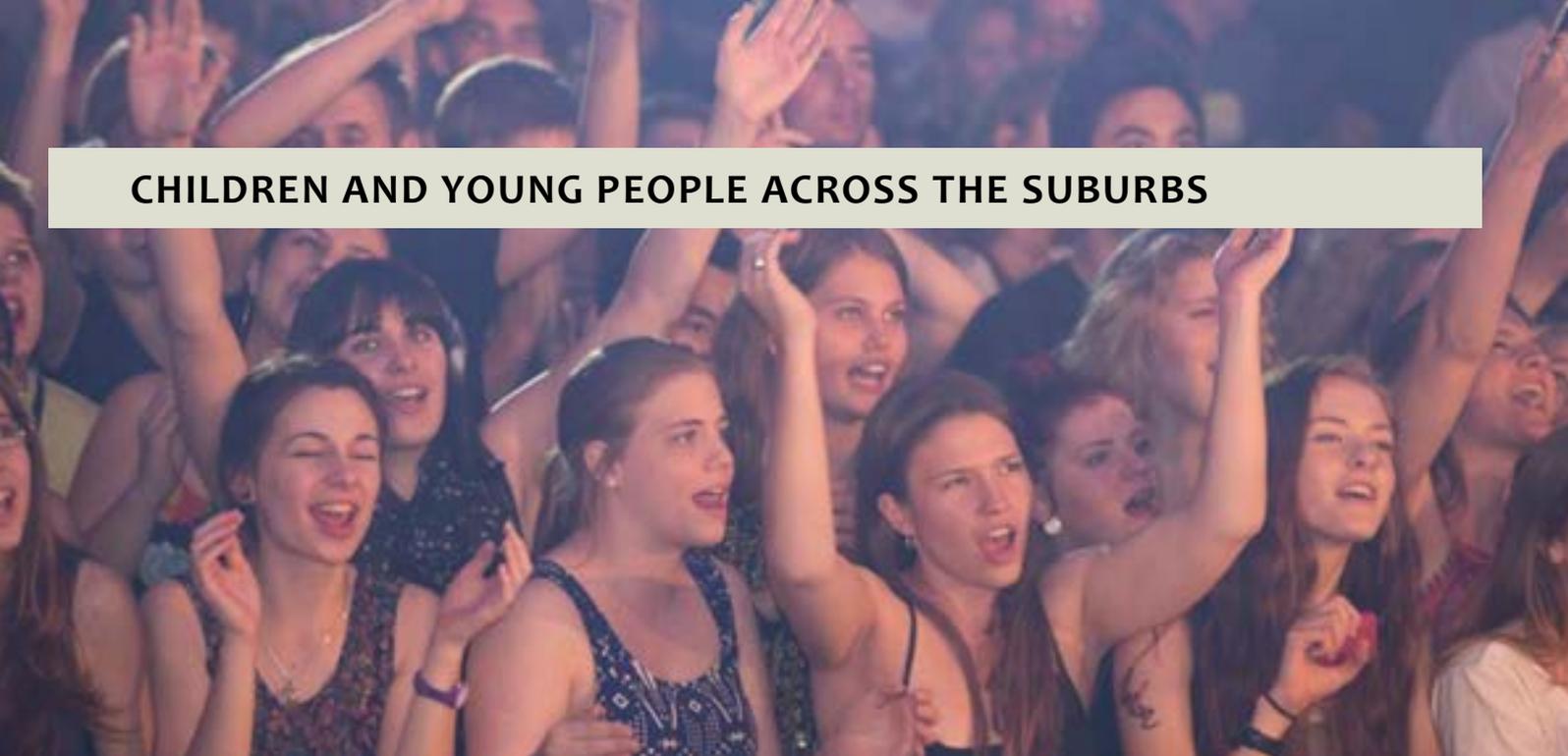
Figure 5. Chart showing Palmerston's population growth



Sources: (ABS, 1989, 2003, 2012c, 2016)

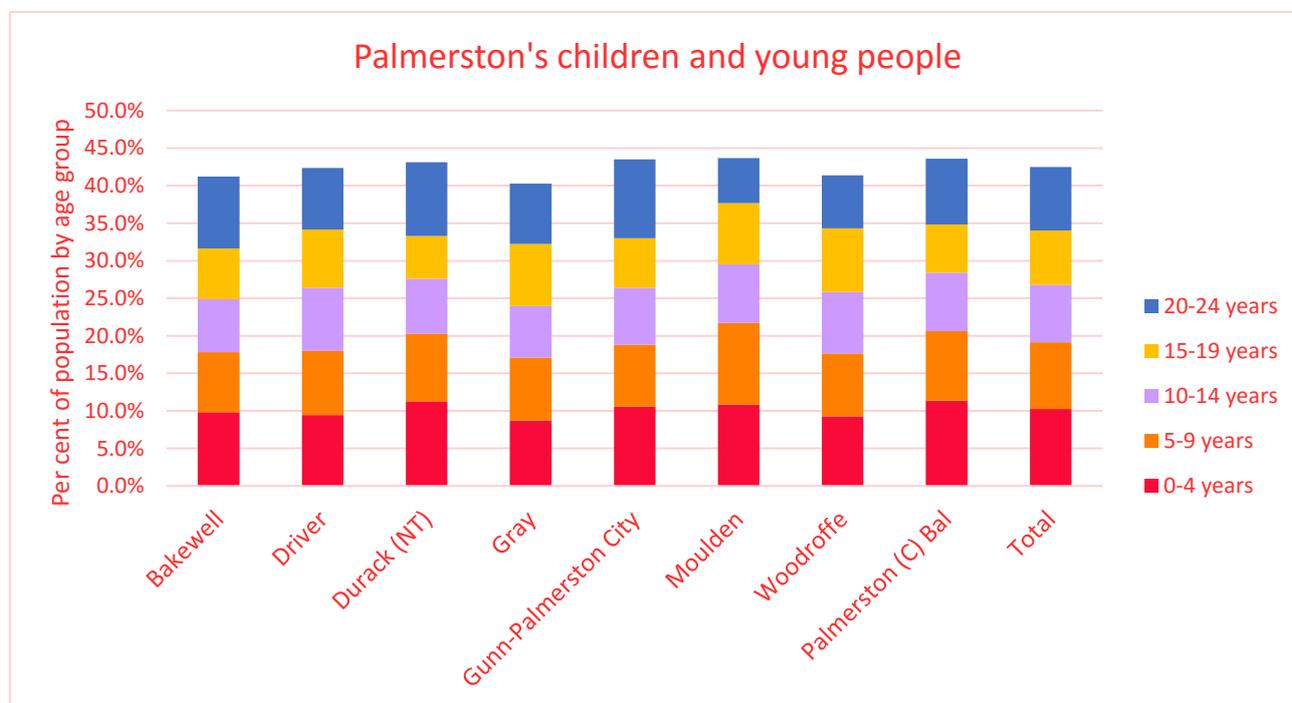


CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE ACROSS THE SUBURBS



Palmerston is a young city both in terms of its existence and in terms of its people. About 42 per cent of Palmerston’s people are under 25. Half the population is 29 or under—for Australia, half the population is under 37. Figure 6 shows some variation across the suburbs. Moulden has the most children under 10 years of age while Gunn-Palmerston City has the highest proportion of youth aged 15 to 24.

Figure 6. Palmerston’s population by age group under 25 years



Source: (ABS, 2012b)

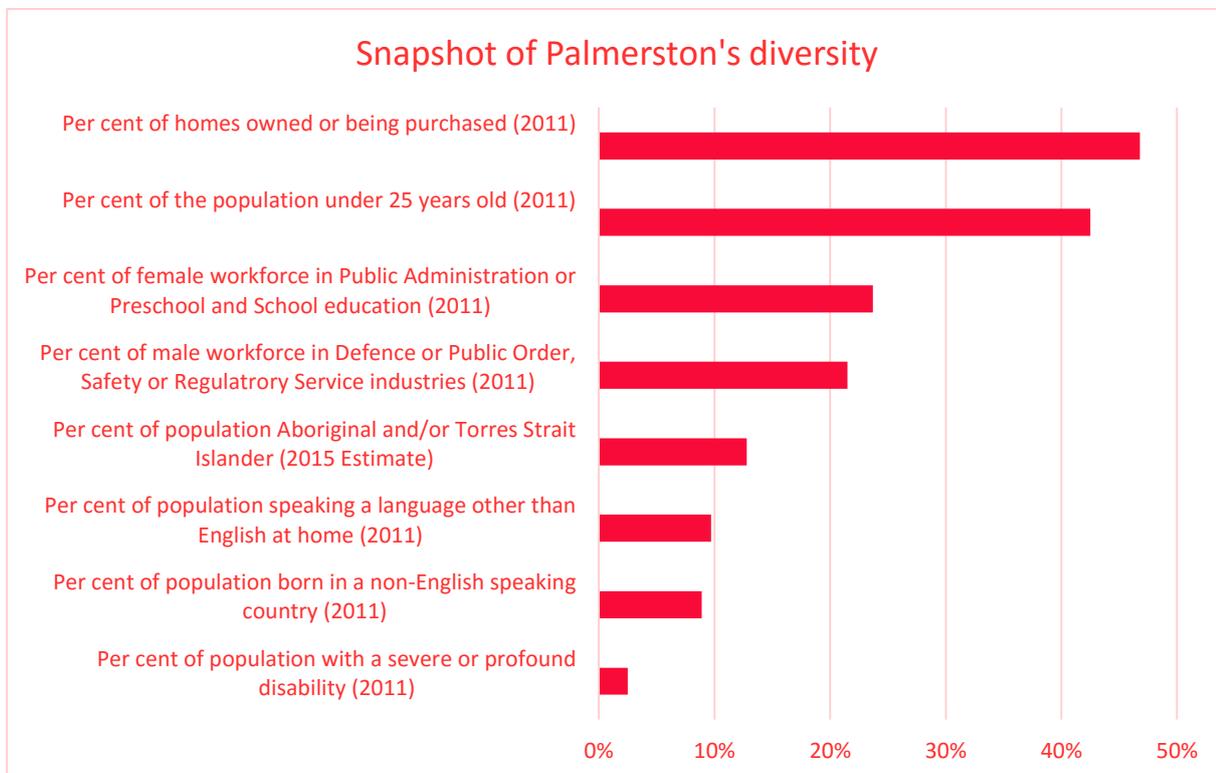


A DIVERSE COMMUNITY



Palmerston is made up of people from diverse backgrounds, ethnicity and cultures. Figure 7 provides a snapshot of this diversity. Nearly half of the homes in Palmerston are owned or being purchased. More than 40 per cent of 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 20 per cent of males work in defence or public order/safety/regulatory industries. One in eight identify as either Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders. Nearly 10 per cent speak a language other than English at home. Nine per cent were born in a non-English speaking country. Two and a half per cent of people have a severe or profound disability.

Figure 7. Selected statistics showing aspects of Palmerston's diversity

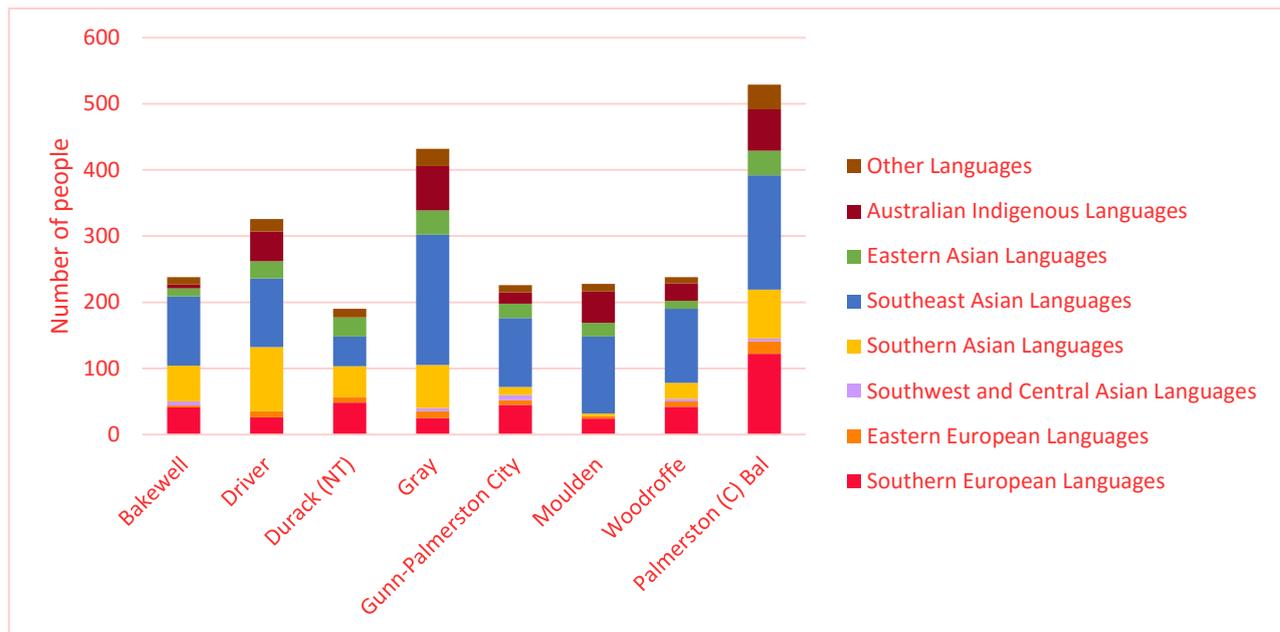


Sources: (ABS, 2012b; Public Health Information Development Unit, 2016)



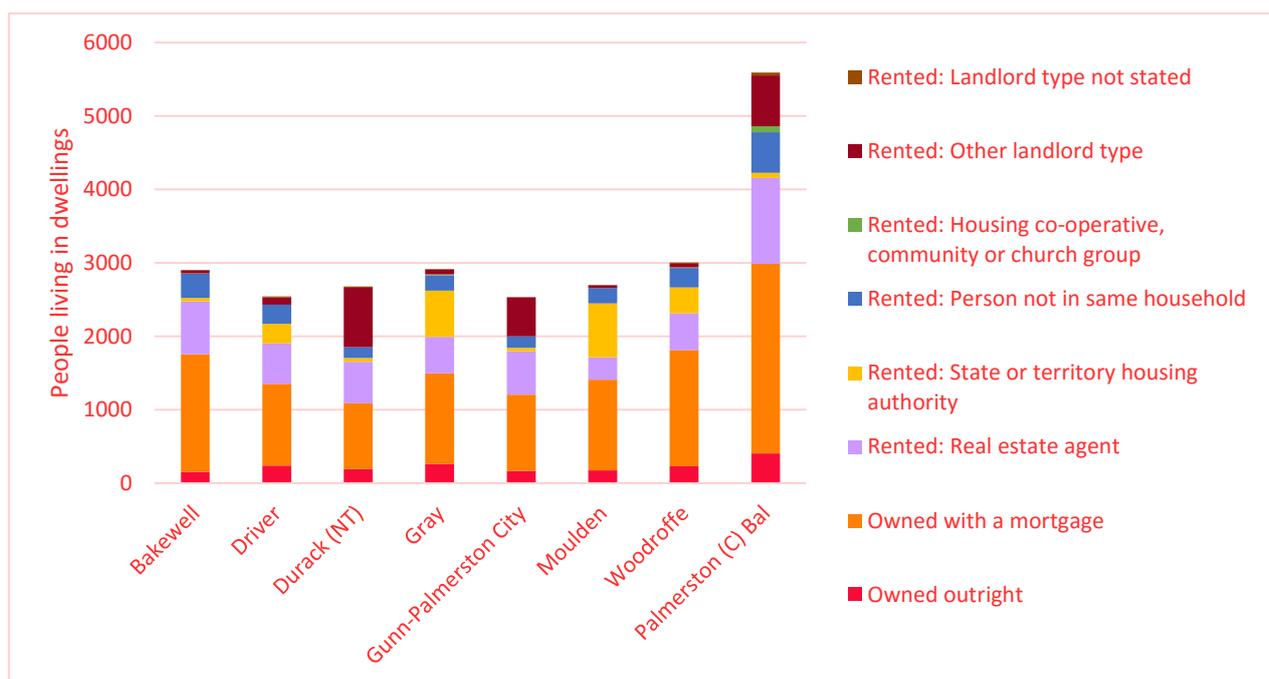
Figure 8 shows the diversity of languages spoken at home, other than northern European languages. More than 5000 people in Palmerston speak an array of languages other than English. The area of greatest diversity in 2011 was the SLA labelled Palmerston (C) Bal, which includes most of the newer suburbs of Palmerston. Figure 9 shows housing tenure types. The highest level of home ownership is in Bakewell (56 per cent) while the lowest is in Durack (39 per cent). The most common rental arrangement is through a real estate agent—Bakewell has the highest proportion of this type of tenure. Rental from state housing authorities is most common in Moulden.

Figure 8. Languages spoken at home (excluding northern European languages), 2011 for Palmerston Statistical Local Areas



Source: (ABS, 2012b)

Figure 9. Tenure types, 2011 for Palmerston Statistical Local Areas

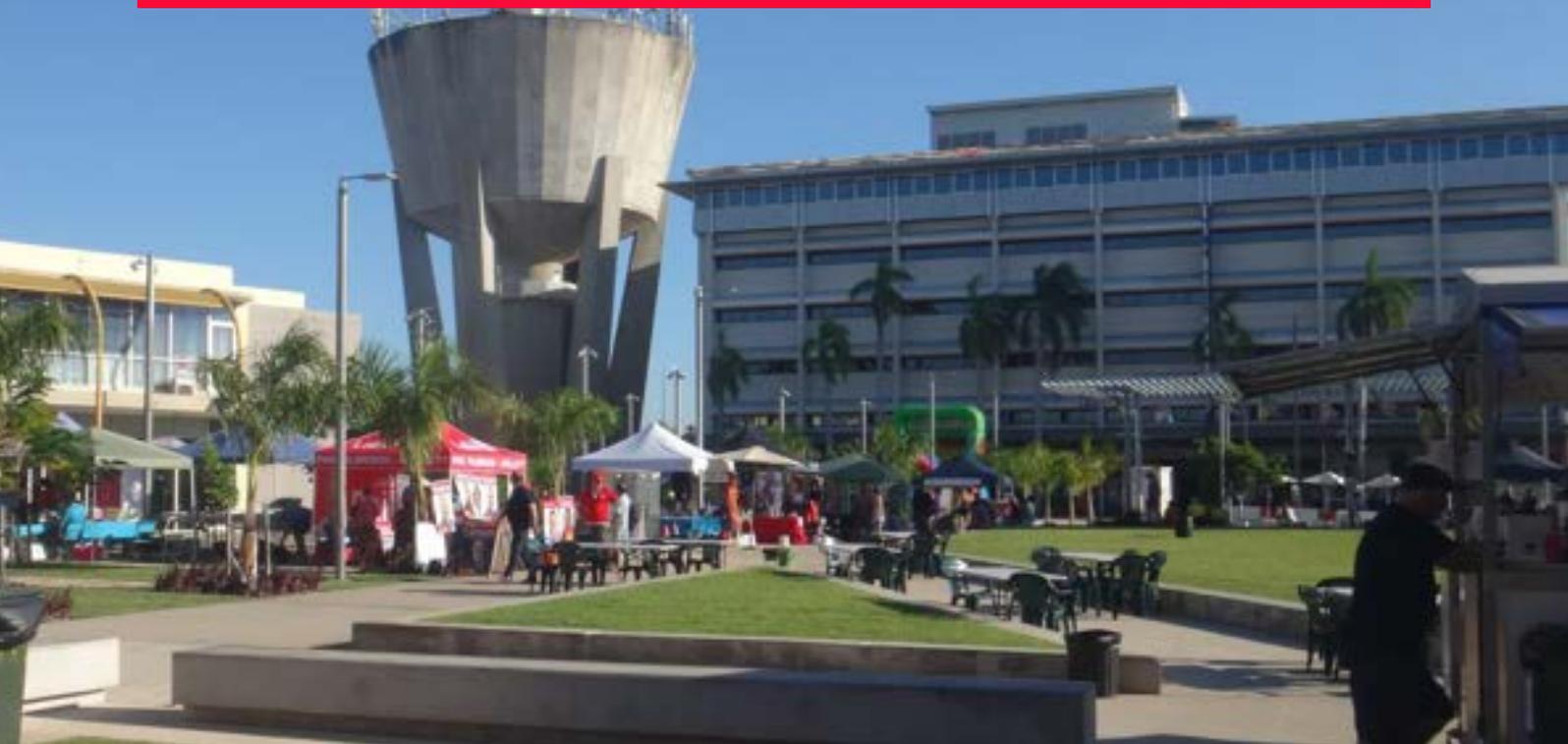


Source: (ABS, 2012a)





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 we summarise these views. We present the themes raised and match 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 gained 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.

It should be noted that the task of interpreting this data was given to the technical consultant who has particular expertise in this kind of analysis. Not everyone will necessarily agree with how themes have been classified. However, using an outsider for this task increases the objectivity of the process and may remove some perceptions of bias.



WHO DID WE CONSULT?

Table 2 summarises the people we consulted. In all 323 adults and 249 children were present at meetings arranged by the project facilitator. Most of the adults were females. In some instances, gender was not recorded but more than three-quarters of all adult participants were females. Among the children and young people involved in consultations about 40 were asked to respond to the questions posed.

We acknowledge that this sample of participants is not necessarily representative of all people in Palmerston. It is quite heavily skewed towards females and does not necessarily represent many groups of vulnerable people (such as homeless people, migrants, victims of crime, senior citizens, or those affected by drugs and alcohol). Another key group we were not able to consult were educators in local schools. There were time and process constraints that prevented Department of Education staff from participating. For similar reasons, police and youth justice workers were not specifically consulted.

Therefore, while many people discussed concerns (page 25) and possible solutions (page 29) relating to marginalised ‘others’, the extent to which the views of respondents reflect the objects of concern is unclear. These caveats should be taken into account so that actions resulting from this report also give voice to those who are (by virtue of their absence in these consultations) voiceless.

Table 2. Consultations conducted by project facilitator

| Consultation type | Adults present | Males identified | Females identified | Children and young people present (0-17) | Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders | Culturally and Linguistically Diverse |
|-------------------|----------------|------------------|--------------------|--|--|---------------------------------------|
| Community members | 209 | 15 | 160 | 247* | 61 | 22 |
| Organisations | 114 | 21 | 93 | 2 | 13 | 6 |
| Total | 323 | 36 | 253 | 249 | 74 | 28 |

* About 40 of these children and young people were consulted.



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

Beyond services and programs, many people felt that Palmerston has a vibrant feel. 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 several encouraging comments about schools. The wide availability of learning spaces for young children, teenagers and adults was celebrated. Some commented specifically about their child’s school.

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

Table 3 provides additional details for each of the themes that people discussed. The number of references refers to the number of times these themes were raised. They are grouped according to the Nest Framework domains (page 3). The dominant domains stand out, but note that in some of the comments, more than one domain is mentioned. For example, when people talked about health services, they may be talking about the service itself (as part of a supportive system) and they may also be talking about its impact on health.



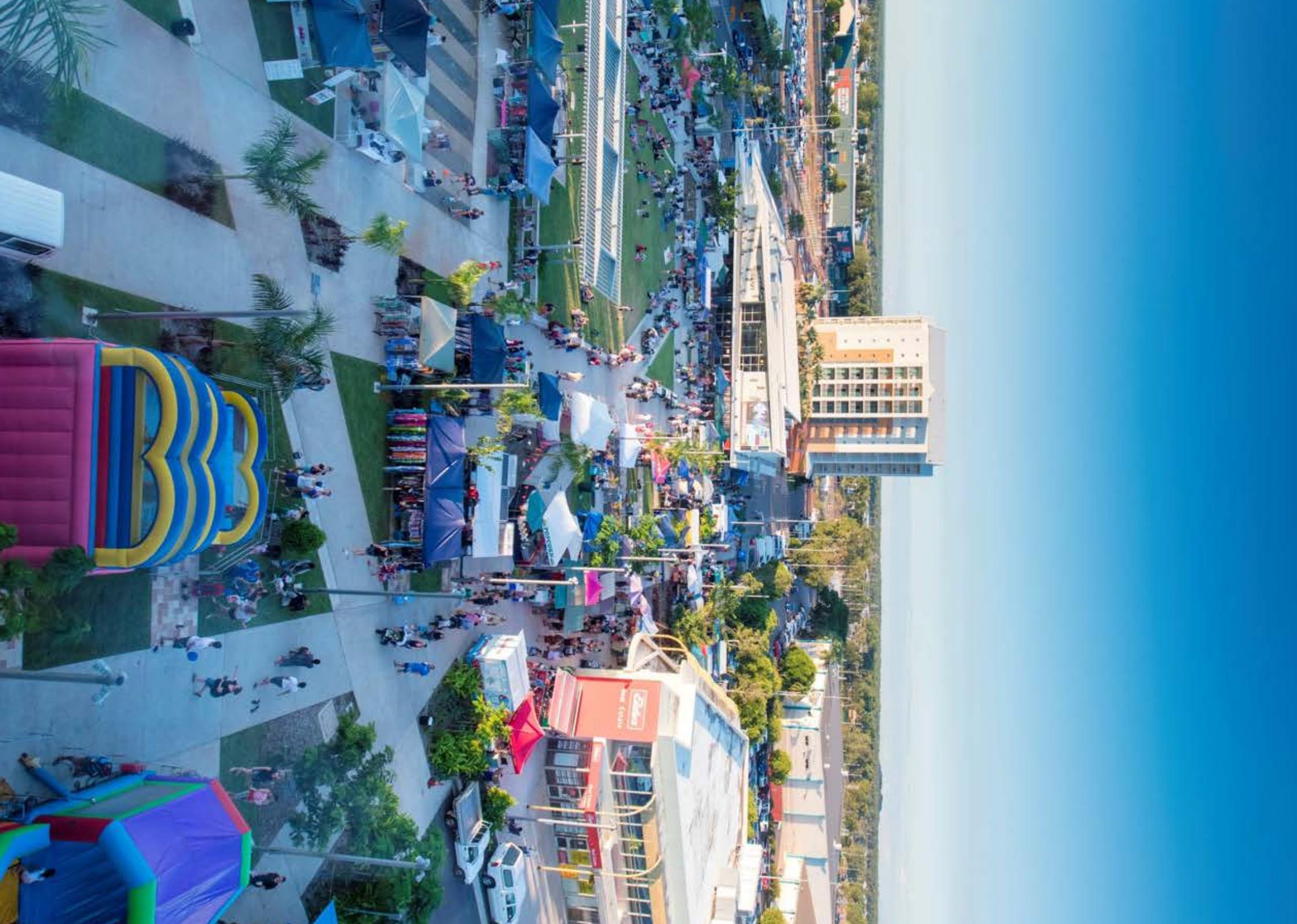
Table 3. Themes and comments for ‘what’s great about Palmerston?’

| Themes | Includes comments about | Number of references | | | | | | Total |
|--|---|----------------------|---------|-----------------|---------------|--------------------|----------|-------|
| | | Loved and safe | Healthy | Material basics | Participating | Supportive systems | Learning | |
| Services and programs | Health services, library, free services, NGO services, training courses, sport, parenting programs | 0 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 71 | 5 | 81 |
| Friendly and multicultural | Supportive close knit community | 0 | 2 | 5 | 38 | 1 | 2 | 48 |
| Parks | Public spaces, water park, parks with shade, skate park | 0 | 25 | 6 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 38 |
| Good education | Good schools and programs like FAST | 0 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 5 | 19 | 36 |
| Entertainment and events | Cinema, hotels with entertainment, local community events and functions, free events, fun things to do | 1 | 5 | 3 | 20 | 2 | 2 | 33 |
| Sport and recreation facilities | Cycle paths, sporting clubs, pool, playgrounds, sport facilities | 0 | 28 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 33 |
| Good for young families | Baby and toddler groups, family oriented activities, plenty of space for young children, lots of young families, strong community links that support families | 0 | 1 | 6 | 24 | 0 | 1 | 32 |
| Accessibility | Small community with everything you need close by, accessible services, easy to find what you need | 0 | 1 | 24 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 31 |
| Pride and identity | People stay longer than they intended, close knit community, community minded people, inclusive, its home, proud of community | 22 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 25 |
| Business | Great shopping centre and shops, looking forward to new shopping centre | 0 | 4 | 14 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 23 |
| Affordability | Cheaper houses, value for money, cheaper rent and gas, free and low cost activities | 0 | 0 | 15 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 17 |
| Growing | A growing city, getting better, change and expansion, booming with children | 1 | 0 | 11 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 14 |
| Laid back | Easy going, good for fishing and outdoor activities, relaxed and carefree lifestyle, close to the bush | 0 | 12 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 12 |
| Vibrant | Goyder square, markets, late night shopping, very | 0 | 0 | 0 | 12 | 0 | 0 | 12 |



| Themes | Includes comments about | Number of references | | | | | | Total |
|---|--|----------------------|---------|-----------------|---------------|--------------------|----------|-------|
| | | Loved and safe | Healthy | Material basics | Participating | Supportive systems | Learning | |
| | liveable, vibrant, active, good feel | | | | | | | |
| Employment | Job prospects, opportunities for children, good employers | 1 | 0 | 5 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 7 |
| Public transport | Good public transport services, regular bus stops, free transport for kids | 0 | 1 | 5 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 7 |
| New hospital | Can't wait for new hospital, won't need to go to town when it comes | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 0 | 6 |
| Other themes reported less than five times | Better than other places, opportunities, new, safe place for kids, housing availability, sports stars and role models, online information, supportive government | 4 | 2 | 15 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 24 |
| Total comments | | 29 | 89 | 116 | 115 | 92 | 38 | 479 |





CONCERNS ABOUT LIVING IN PALMERSTON



Like all communities, there are tensions and concerns for many people living in Palmerston. The worries people had are included in four of our six domains.

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

But there were also genuine concerns about those in need, particularly those in poverty and 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 Palmerston City Council could be doing more to improve the city environment—things like fences around playgrounds, and more shade in open space.

Table 4 shows additional themes with accompanying comments, with the number of references to each domain. The top three were often discussed together, which is why there is some overlap between the ‘loved and safe’ and ‘healthy’ domains. It should also be noted that comments about concerns were often about ‘others’ (e.g. homeless, Aboriginal, migrants, violent offenders). They were also sometimes based on what they perceived or what they heard other people say and sometimes on what they had seen or experienced.



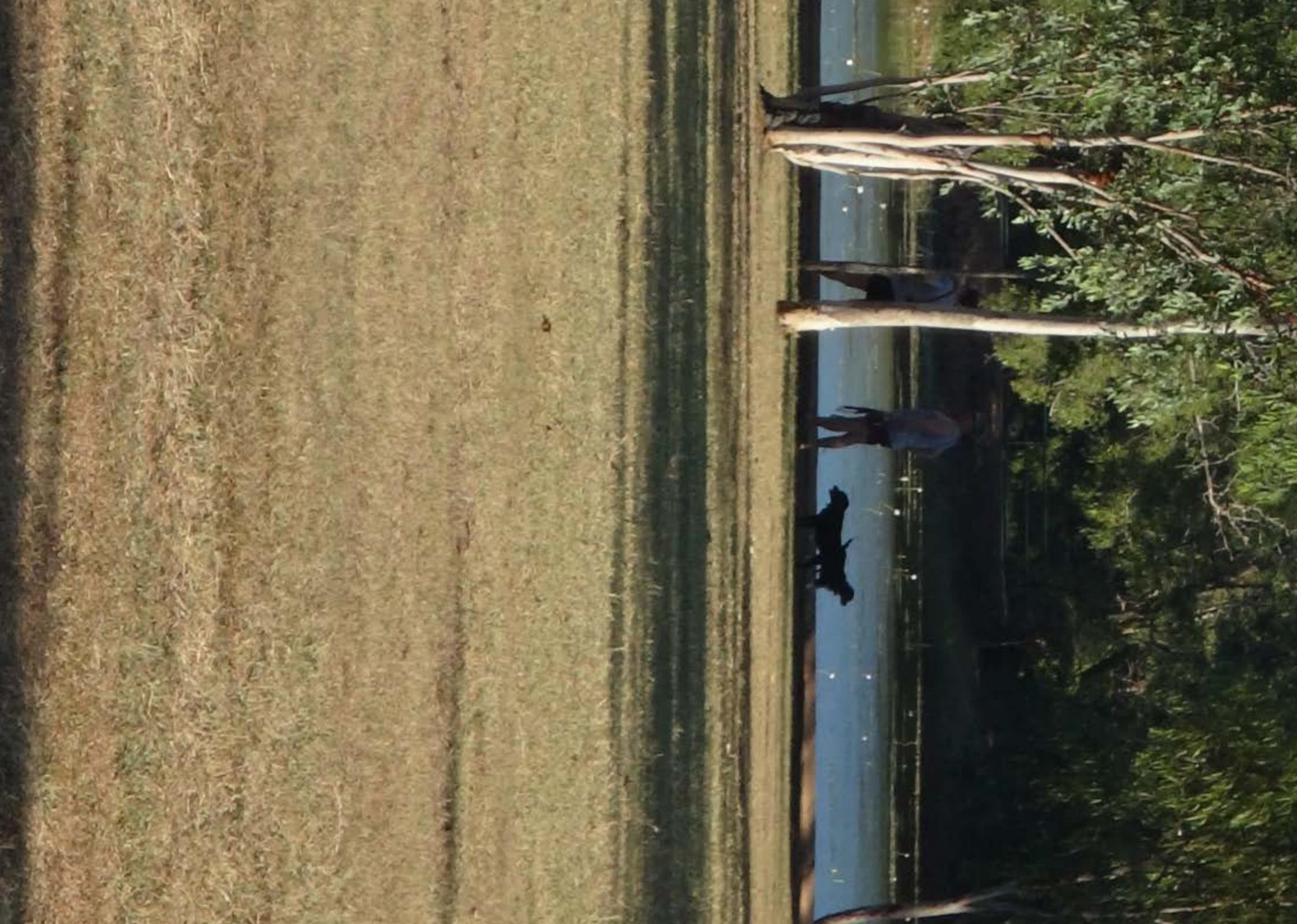
Table 4. Themes and comments for 'what concerns you about Palmerston?'

| Themes | Includes comments about: | Number of references | | | | | | Total |
|--|---|----------------------|---------|-----------------|---------------|--------------------|----------|-------|
| | | Loved and safe | Healthy | Material basics | Participating | Supportive systems | Learning | |
| Crime | Feeling unsafe, need better policing/security, break-ins | 86 | 11 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 106 |
| Drug and alcohol abuse | Alcohol abuse, methamphetamines and other drugs, sniffing, intoxicated people in public places, drug dealers | 17 | 65 | 6 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 94 |
| Domestic violence and violence more generally | Fighting, violence at the Interchange, gun threats, stabbings, domestic violence, children witnessing violence | 40 | 11 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 57 |
| Planning and city environment | Needs to be attractive for people, more shade, development concerns, lack of fences on playgrounds, more lighting | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 51 | 0 | 54 |
| Housing and homelessness | Couch surfing, pockets of public housing, homelessness, domestic violence shelters, youth shelters, Territory Housing maintenance | 3 | 6 | 27 | 3 | 7 | 2 | 48 |
| Antisocial behaviour | Bullying and aggression, threats, bad language, humbugging, scaremongering | 36 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 47 |
| Child neglect | Gangs of children loitering, children roaming at night, lack of parental supervision | 4 | 30 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 37 |
| Poverty and vulnerability | People can't manage money, overcrowded housing, debts, people looking in bins for food, housing stress | 0 | 0 | 21 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 24 |
| Cost of living | High cost of groceries, housing, fuel, rates, sporting activities | 0 | 1 | 19 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 21 |
| Racism | Disrespect for Aboriginal people and some migrant groups | 5 | 2 | 2 | 10 | 0 | 1 | 20 |
| Bad reputation | Negative stereotypes, media, stigma, false perceptions about Palmerston | 14 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 17 |
| Youth mental health and suicide | Self-harm, trauma, lack of services, suicide attempts among children | 2 | 12 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 17 |



| Themes | Includes comments about: | Number of references | | | | | | Total |
|---|--|----------------------|---------|-----------------|---------------|--------------------|----------|-------|
| | | Loved and safe | Healthy | Material basics | Participating | Supportive systems | Learning | |
| Other themes reported less than 10 times | Far from Darwin, dull, lifeless, gambling, not many services, unemployment, government structures, segregation and walled off suburbs, too hot, poor customer service, transient population, long way from family, kids lost in school, stray dogs, poor leadership and lack of vision | 7 | 6 | 11 | 29 | 20 | 4 | 77 |
| Total | | 215 | 149 | 92 | 58 | 87 | 18 | 619 |





WHAT COULD MAKE PALMERSTON BETTER?



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. These are summarised in Table 5.

A supportive system is the foundation of many ideas—one that plans for and develops supports and services for those that need them. Several people talked about the need for more facilities and activities for youth, particularly pre-teens and teens. Related to this was the perceived need for more sport and recreation facilities. Other parts of a supportive system that mattered to many people relate to improved communication about what is available; and then better coordination and collaboration between service providers to make things happen.

Some people suggested that Palmerston is an inclusive, tight knit community (see Table 3). But our consultations showed that some people weren't being included; people from different cultural backgrounds, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and vulnerable families.

Educational supports were also frequently discussed as a response for those whose needs were not being met. A range of targeted educational programs were identified both for children and parents (for example cyber-safety and drug and alcohol education), which are consistent with many of the worries people expressed. Peer mentors for young people were also suggested as a response under the learning domain.

Under the material basics domain, concerns for vulnerable people in the community prompted some people to call for more resources to address emergency and crisis needs. Worries about children being neglected or at risk in other ways prompted others to call for more policing and child protection resources. While some people consulted felt that public transport was a strength for Palmerston (see Table 3), others felt there were issues that needed to be addressed. These included the need for more late night services. Others expressed feeling unsafe when using public transport. In a similar vein, while many people thought entertainment and events were strong points for Palmerston, others felt there was need for more family friendly cafés, youth discos and other music events.



Table 5. Themes and comments for ‘what would make Palmerston better for children and young people?’

| Themes | Includes comments about | Number of references | | | | | | |
|--|---|----------------------|---------|-----------------|---------------|--------------------|----------|-----|
| | | Loved and safe | Healthy | Material basics | Participating | Supportive systems | Learning | |
| Cultural, family and community events or services | Family activities, parent support and training, find disengaged parents, engage Aboriginal elders to teach culture, family and cultural/community events, services for dads, NAIDOC week activities, multicultural services and education | 1 | 4 | 4 | 120 | 7 | 2 | 138 |
| Additional educational supports | Culture and language in schools, education about drugs and cyberbullying, education programs for disengaged children and to build self-esteem, school counsellors, adult and community education programs, extracurricular activities, breakfast clubs, life skills | 2 | 6 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 91 | 109 |
| Youth activities and facilities | Particularly for pre-teens and teens, drop-in centres, activities to keep youth off streets, youth buses | 3 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 84 | 2 | 96 |
| Sporting and recreational opportunities | Pool at the waterpark, more infrastructure, shade at the water park, more sports based in Palmerston (not Darwin), more indoor activities | 0 | 67 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 75 |
| More information, communication | Increased access to services, raised awareness of who is doing what, identify gaps in services, central information hub, easy access to information by Facebook | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 44 | 0 | 48 |
| Resources for support | Government funding certainty, more resources for police and child protection, more emergency relief funds and crisis support | 0 | 0 | 35 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 36 |
| Collaboration and coordination of services and activities | Collaboration between services, coordination, breaking down silos, relationship building with community, better strategic planning | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 33 | 0 | 35 |
| Public transport | Late night services, more regular services, free bus services, feel unsafe on public transport, bus to prison | 1 | 1 | 18 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 23 |
| More entertainment, cafés | More family friendly cafés and restaurants, discos, more music events, outdoor cinema | 0 | 1 | 0 | 18 | 0 | 0 | 19 |



| Themes | Includes comments about | Number of references | | | | | | |
|---|---|----------------------|---------|-----------------|---------------|--------------------|----------|-----|
| | | Loved and safe | Healthy | Material basics | Participating | Supportive systems | Learning | |
| Youth diversion | Late night activity/program options for youth, more services for boys, boot camp for youth | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 15 | 0 | 18 |
| Peer mentors | Role models for children and young people, develop and use youth leadership, male mentors, big brother/big sister programs, programs like Clontarf or Girls Academy | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 16 | 17 |
| Services for itinerants and homeless | Homeless shelters, showers and laundry, highlight need to support homeless particularly wet season | 0 | 0 | 6 | 0 | 10 | 0 | 16 |
| Childcare after hours care | More options for before and after school care, occasional day and holiday care, more subsidies, extended hours | 0 | 0 | 14 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 15 |
| Roads and traffic | Parking, slow traffic down in built up areas, more street lights, safety provisions, more police patrols | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 12 | 0 | 14 |
| Employment and enterprise services support | More options for training, grant writing support | 0 | 0 | 13 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 14 |
| New hospital, better health services | Occupational Therapy and disability supports, looking forward to new hospital, more specialised services, ante-natal care, youth mental health services, after hours services | 0 | 12 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 12 |
| Other themes | More retail, more inclusive, improve markets, rehab services, clean up the city, attract tourists, more art, post release programs, turn ideas into action | 0 | 0 | 10 | 17 | 14 | 1 | 42 |
| | | 9 | 95 | 109 | 174 | 227 | 113 | 727 |





STATISTICAL DATA

Understanding what people think is important. However, combining perceptions with statistical data can be more powerful. In this report we have included statistics that are generally available to the public (see page 5 for full details of rationales). That way they can be compared over time. In most cases here we compare Palmerston with Australia. That is partly because of the diversity of communities across the Northern Territory which makes comparisons difficult. The data are arranged into groups based on the domains we highlighted earlier: Loved and safe; Material basics; Healthy; Learning and Participating. We have not sought specific measures for Supportive systems as these cut across or underpin all the key result areas, as shown earlier in Figure 2 (page 4).

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.

The yellow light 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 to show where we think a measure is important but isn't currently available.



LOVED AND SAFE

Putting a number on feelings of love and safety is not necessarily easy. In Table 6 we have identified five measures and two data gaps that represent the ‘Loved and safe’ domain.

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 young children show higher levels of vulnerability than children on average across Australia. This is of concern, particularly given that the indicators predict future success for young people as they move into adulthood (Commonwealth of Australia, 2016b). It is likely that these results are symptomatic of community perceptions about child neglect as shown earlier in Table 4.

Feelings of safety and security are also reflected in police crime and domestic violence statistics. People’s perceptions about crime as identified in Table 4 align with the data. Property crime rates are a lot higher in Palmerston than they are on average across Australia. Patterns of criminal behaviour are repeated intergenerationally (Farrington et al., 2009) and the impact of having an incarcerated parent affects children in a variety of ways, such that a ‘tough on crime’ approach may have a long-term detrimental impact on communities and families (Wakefield et al., 2016). Family violence is also a concern for the security and wellbeing of children (Bair-Merritt et al., 2015; Wood & Barter, 2015). Australia-wide figures are not available, but a comparison of three states shows that Palmerston rates of family violence reports, are in the middle of the range. There is clearly room for improvement.

Young people sometimes suffer when families—particularly low income, disadvantaged families—move a lot (Ziol-Guest & McKenna, 2014). It is hard to make new friends and this can lead some children to feel insecure, which can be reflected in behavioural concerns (Fowler et al., 2014). Palmerston families do move a lot compared to the average for Australia, though the data does not discriminate between low income and high income families or families with those working for defence forces.

A lot of people in the consultations were worried about youth crime and neglected children. Child protection data is reported at the Northern Territory level. Over recent years the number of substantiated cases has increased from 1243 in 2009-10 (Goldsworthy, 2015) to 2075 in 2014-15 (Department of Children and Families, 2015). Increases are occurring in other parts of Australia as well and the rates of reporting and substantiation tend to be higher in the Northern Territory than in other jurisdictions. Crime statistics for youth are not publicly reported at the Northern Territory level and it is unclear how the numbers have changed over time.

Unfortunately, there are no publicly available data at the LGA level to provide an accurate picture of these issues for Palmerston.



Table 6. Loved and safe indicators and measures

| 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) | 2011 | 66% | 79% |  |
| Youth crime reports | | | |  |
| Child protection: substantiated notifications | | | |  |

Refer to Table 1 for source details.



MATERIAL BASICS

For the Material Basics domain, we have selected five indicators in Table 9 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. The unemployment rate does vary by suburb however as Table 7 shows, and the rates are different for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, compared with non-Indigenous people.

Table 7. Unemployment rates, Palmerston region 2011

| Statistical Local Area | Unemployment rate | |
|------------------------|--|-----------------------|
| | Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people | Non-Indigenous people |
| Bakewell | 7.4% | 2.6% |
| Driver | 11.3% | 3.7% |
| Durack (NT) | 0.0% | 2.8% |
| Gray | 20.5% | 3.5% |
| Gunn-Palmerston City | 0.0% | 2.4% |
| Moulden | 19.3% | 5.0% |
| Palmerston (C) Bal | 6.4% | 2.4% |
| Woodroffe | 9.2% | 3.8% |
| Total | 11.2% | 3.1% |

Source (ABS, 2012b)

While noting this variation, overall young people in Palmerston are more likely to have work opportunities, than other young people across Australia. While we see this is a positive, there is a risk that a focus on employment rather than learning can lead to adverse outcomes (Staff et al., 2012).

Public transport was raised as an opportunity for improvement in our consultations. It is a key measure of access and equity (Welch & Mishra, 2013). While there is no comparison, we have included a measure of what is currently available within the City of Palmerston. The figure of 161 weekday services, does not include services between Palmerston and Darwin or to and from the rural area. 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 schools (Australian Curriculum, 2013). 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. There is, as might be expected, a difference between government and non-government schools as Table 8 shows. Over time, the ICSEA score has increased by similar proportions for both groups of schools.



Table 8. Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage, Palmerston schools, 2009 to 2015

| Year | Government schools ICSEA average | Non-government schools ICSEA average | All schools ICSEA average |
|------|-------------------------------------|---|------------------------------|
| 2009 | 863 | 909 | 877 |
| 2012 | 898 | 986 | 925 |
| 2015 | 917 | 997 | 941 |

Source: (ACARA, 2016)

In our community consultations, many people raised concerns about cost of living pressures. We do not have clear data on this so we have highlighted one indicator where we know there is a data gap. We did consider using a poverty line measure (Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research, 2016), but we felt this may be somewhat confusing because there are several different indicators that could be used.

Table 9. Material basics indicators and measures

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

Refer to Table 1 for source details.



HEALTHY

It is difficult accessing recent community level data on health. We rely to a large extent on 2015 Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) data which indicates how children aged 0-4 years are faring (Commonwealth of Australia, 2016a). In this case we show 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. As a predictor of future health (Commonwealth of Australia, 2016b), this is of concern.

The 2011 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. For those teenage parents, there is a stronger likelihood that they will be economically and socially disadvantaged as they raise their children, compared to older parents (Wood & Barter, 2015).

With a caveat that the data is now quite dated, measures 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, which adds health risks to the child (Been et al.; Hollams et al., 2013). We would also like to see data available on rates of breastfeeding. This is a significant gap as breastfeeding rates have been shown elsewhere to affect cognitive development outcomes into adulthood (Borra et al., 2012; Quigley et al., 2012).

We would like to see data on mental health issues for young people along with indications of youth suicide. We are aware that for Palmerston as a whole rates of suicide are 27 per cent higher than the national average (Public Health Information Development Unit, 2016), and it is higher for males than females. We also know that for males the suicide rate is more than 50 per cent higher than for Australia (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2016).

We would like to know how severe problems of drug and alcohol abuse are in the community, which we know are national issues of concern (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2015) despite recent declines in per capita consumption among young people (Livingston, 2014). These issues were raised by many in our community consultations.



Table 10. Healthy indicators and measures

| 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 young people aged 15-24 years reporting mental illness | | | |  |
| Rates of drug and alcohol abuse | | | |  |
| Per cent of mothers who breastfeed | | | |  |
| Rates of suicide for young people aged up to 25 years | | | |  |

Refer to Table 1 for source details.



LEARNING

We have identified seven Learning domain indicators and one data gap in Table 12.

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. The challenges are more notable for the government schools than non-government schools in Palmerston as Table 11 shows. Our consultation data did not raise school attendance or academic performance as an area of concern. This is most likely due to the lack of school educators or leaders in our sample.

Table 11. Average NAPLAN scores for government and non-government schools, and average attendance rates Palmerston, 2015

| School type | Average NAPLAN scores | | | | School attendance average |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------------------|
| | Year 3 Reading | Year 7 Reading | Year 3 Numeracy | Year 7 Numeracy | |
| Government schools | 359 | 498 | 351 | 490 | 90% |
| Non-government schools | 400 | 533 | 377 | 518 | 92% |

Source (ACARA, 2016)

The significantly lower proportion of young people with Year 12 completions, compared with Australia, is also cause for concern. These concerns are reflected in our community consultation data, which sees opportunities for improvement in some areas of education in Palmerston, particularly for more vulnerable young people. For young children entering school, the level of vulnerability they bring with them to school (as indicated by the AEDC data) is of some concern, especially in some suburbs where the levels of vulnerability are particularly high as shown in Figure 10. Data for the individual suburbs should be treated with some caution as the numbers are quite small. Given the highly mobile population, shifts in population mean that large fluctuations may just reflect movements in and out of suburbs.



Figure 10. Vulnerable on one or more domain(s)–showing national, state/territory, community and local community levels (2009, 2012 and 2015).

| Region (including local communities) ²⁶ | Number of children with valid scores (one or more domains) | | | Vulnerable on one or more domains(s) (%) | | |
|---|--|--------|--------|--|------|------|
| | 2009 | 2012 | 2015 | 2009 | 2012 | 2015 |
| Australia | 246421 | 272282 | 286041 | 23.6 | 22.0 | 22.0 |
| NT | 2865 | 3117 | 3248 | 38.7 | 35.5 | 37.2 |
| Palmerston | 481 | 551 | 554 | 23.5 | 24.3 | 28.0 |
| Bakewell/Johnston | 59 | 65 | 67 | 16.9 | 21.5 | 16.4 |
| Driver/Marlow Lagoon | 59 | 81 | 51 | 10.2 | 28.4 | 33.3 |
| Durack | 62 | 67 | 62 | 4.8 | 26.9 | 27.4 |
| Farrar/Pinelands/Yarrowonga | - | 27 | 26 | - | 11.1 | 15.4 |
| Gray | 65 | 37 | 68 | 47.7 | 29.7 | 47.1 |
| Gunn | 40 | 53 | 43 | 20.0 | 17.0 | 11.6 |
| Moulden | 66 | 69 | 53 | 30.3 | 33.3 | 39.6 |
| Palmerston City | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Rosebery/Bellamack/Mitchell | 55 | 87 | 134 | 29.1 | 19.5 | 20.1 |
| Woodroffe | 61 | 65 | 50 | 24.6 | 24.6 | 42.0 |

Source: (Commonwealth of Australia, 2016a)

Many people in our consultations spoke favourably about Palmerston as a great place to bring up young families. Unfortunately, we do not have adequate data about access to early childhood services or playgroups and this remains a data gap for now.



Table 12. Learning indicators and measures

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

Refer to Table 1 for source details.



PARTICIPATING

Our traffic lights point to some areas for concern for aspects of participation. Volunteering is one expression of a sharing, contributing and inclusive community (Bates * & Davis, 2004; Speevak-Sladowski et al., 2013). The Census data shows us that Palmerston youth do not volunteer as much as other young people generally do across Australia. It also shows that the community generally provides less unpaid assistance than other communities across Australia. This indicator points to lower than average levels of social capital (Falk & Kilpatrick, 2000; Field, 2003), which helps make communities more inclusive.

Disengaged youth who are neither 'earning or learning' are more likely to be socially excluded (Abello et al., 2015). The high proportion of youth in this category is of significant concern. It may be that some parts of the Palmerston community are fully able to take advantage of the educational and work opportunities, while others are not (see Table 7).

Notwithstanding the potential adverse impact of unpaid care for carers, the contribution of carers for those needing assistance is potentially important for a caring, cohesive society, especially where professional supports are not available (Devereux et al., 2015). The risk in Palmerston then, is due in part to the high mobility of the population and the absence of family supports for longer term residents with care needs. Our consultations did not show this as a major concern. However, this may be because families with children who have disabilities were not consulted.

The Census also tells us that overall, Palmerston is fairly monocultural. 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. From a cultural and social capital perspective there are potentially many benefits from increasing interactions with other cultures and languages (Colvin et al., 2015). Monolingual communities may struggle to create spaces for multilingual interaction because of hegemonic assumptions about what it means to be Australian.

On the other hand, Palmerston benefits from a rich diversity of Indigenous cultures. Schools in Palmerston have about five times as many Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander students than could be expected in most schools around Australia. This creates opportunities for shared understanding about Indigenous people, their cultures and their histories through intentional pedagogical strategies. The rich intercultural learning that is possible in schools with high proportions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students could result in a deeper appreciation for diverse ways of knowing, being, and valuing. (Nakata et al., 2012). While this may not necessarily be easy to achieve, the point is that the opportunity exists where it otherwise may not.



Table 13. Participating indicators and measures

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

Refer to Table 1 for source details.



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 the city looks and feels. The trends shown in this section represent a short summary of how things have changed, for better or worse.

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. 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.

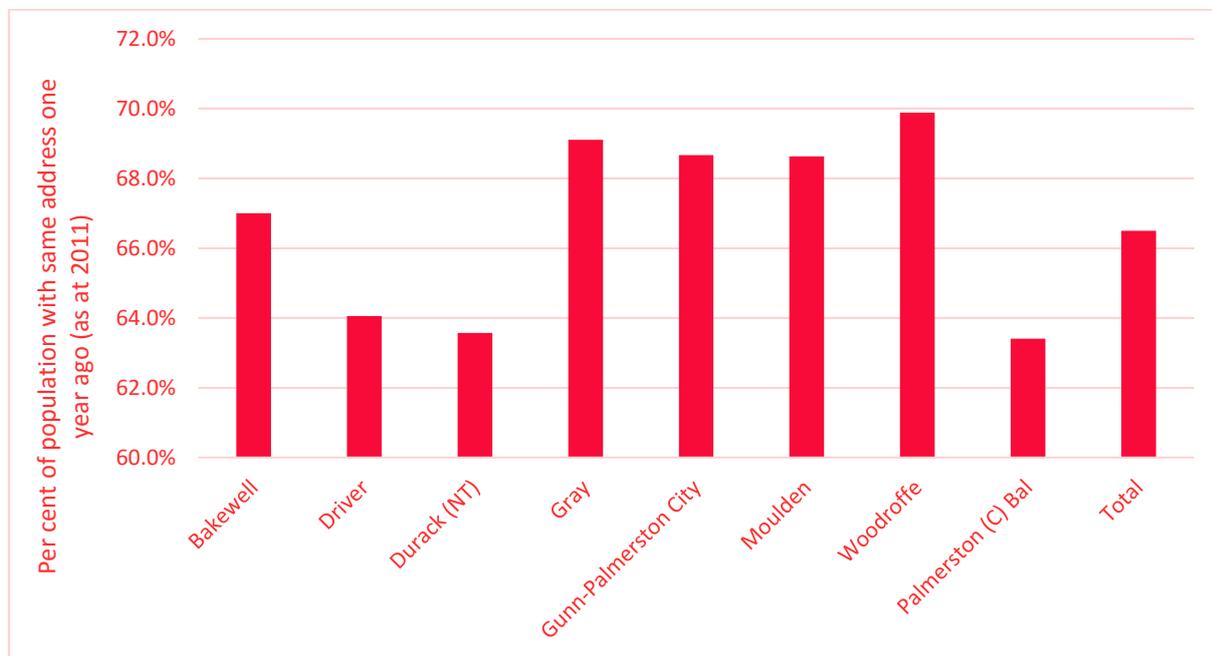
But in the healthy domain, the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) data points to increased health challenges for children particularly. Also school attendance data for schools in Palmerston has not improved significantly in the six years between 2009 and 2015.

The caveat on this generally positive review of trends is that population level change may be the result of the population change rather than changes within the existing population. The rapid population growth shown at Figure 5 points to this. In the eight years to 2014, an additional 10000 people were added to the population. In addition, as shown in Table 6, one third of the population changes every year. More than 5000 people come to Palmerston each year and about another 5000 leave. In addition more than 700 children are born and 100 people die (ABS, 2016). That amount of movement makes it somewhat difficult to assess what has changed for the people that do not move.



Figure 11 shows the per cent of people who had the same address a year ago, in 2011. Gray and Woodroffe were the most stable suburbs with just under 70 per cent having the same address compared to 12 months before. This falls to under 64 per cent in the newer suburbs of the Palmerston (C) Bal SLA and Durack.

Figure 11. Population stability across Palmerston Statistical Local Areas (SLAs)



Source: (ABS, 2012b)

One area of concern that shows in Table 14 is the result for the AEDC measure on physical health. The AEDC data for Palmerston shows increased vulnerability for all domains over the six years to 2015 as the extract from the 2015 AEDC report shown at Figure 12 shows. The AEDC report for Palmerston (Commonwealth of Australia, 2016a) provides additional detail by suburb. However, as noted earlier for Figure 10, suburban comparisons suffer from small sample sizes.

Figure 12. Trends for all AEDC domains, Palmerston 2009-2015

| AEDC domain | 2009 (Percentage of children - %) | 2012 (Percentage of children - %) | 2015 (Percentage of children - %) |
|--|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Physical health and wellbeing | 10.2 | 10.1 | 12.5 |
| Social competence | 10.6 | 10.9 | 11.7 |
| Emotional maturity | 8.1 | 8.7 | 11.4 |
| Language and cognitive skills (school-based) | 7.5 | 7.6 | 8.8 |
| Communication skills and general knowledge | 9.1 | 8.7 | 11.0 |
| Vulnerable on one or more domains | 23.5 | 24.3 | 28.0 |
| Vulnerable on two or more domains | 11.2 | 11.8 | 14.6 |

Source: (Commonwealth of Australia, 2016a, p. 19)



Table 14. Measures by domain over time, Palmerston

| 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 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: per cent of student population | 2009 23.0% | 2015 24.8% |  |
| | Per cent of people speaking a language other than English at home | 2006 6.9% | 2011 9.7% |  |

Refer to Table 1 for source details.



Before we jump to too many conclusions about these data, the impact of a changing population needs to be considered. As Table 15 shows, there has been a rapid growth in non-government school enrolments in Palmerston and only modest growth in government schools over the corresponding period. Not only are there more than 1500 additional children enrolled in schools, but as suggested by Figure 11, most of the 4563 children enrolled in 2009 are no longer at schools in Palmerston, either because they have graduated, relocated to a different town, or are attending schools in the Darwin City Council region or the Litchfield Shire. It is therefore not reasonable to deduce that this data shows that things are necessarily getting worse for children in Palmerston. Nevertheless, higher proportions of vulnerable or at risk children may place additional demands on services.

Table 15. Enrolment trends for government and non-government schools, Palmerston 2009-2015

| Enrolments | 2009 | 2012 | 2015 | Per cent change 2009 to 2015 |
|-------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|---|
| Government schools | 3431 | 3782 | 3821 | 11.4% |
| Non-government schools | 1132 | 1459 | 2327 | 105.6% |
| Total | 4563 | 5241 | 6148 | |

Source (ACARA, 2016)



WHAT DOES THIS ALL MEAN?



Making sense of all this information can be challenging. But having information can be powerful too. The data we have collected will help us know how Palmerston is changing over time. But more importantly, it allows us to make decisions that respond to needs and concerns. The data also helps us advocate for change and attract 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 rest on our laurels.



While we have data to base decisions on, the stories behind the data are just as important in considering a response. We have also shown that while some indicators show that Palmerston is doing well, when we look at different suburbs or at different parts of the population, pockets of the community may not be doing so well.

Another caution, which will require more work, will be to identify those groups of people who did not have a voice in the consultation process. In particular, males were largely missing from the consultations and their views may need to be specifically sought. The views of more marginalised people who are difficult to engage should also be sought, for example victims and perpetrators of domestic violence, victims and perpetrators of property crime, and those who are abusing drugs and alcohol. Further engagement with school leaders and Department of Education staff may also be required, together with other government stakeholders, such as Police, Corrections and Child Protection.

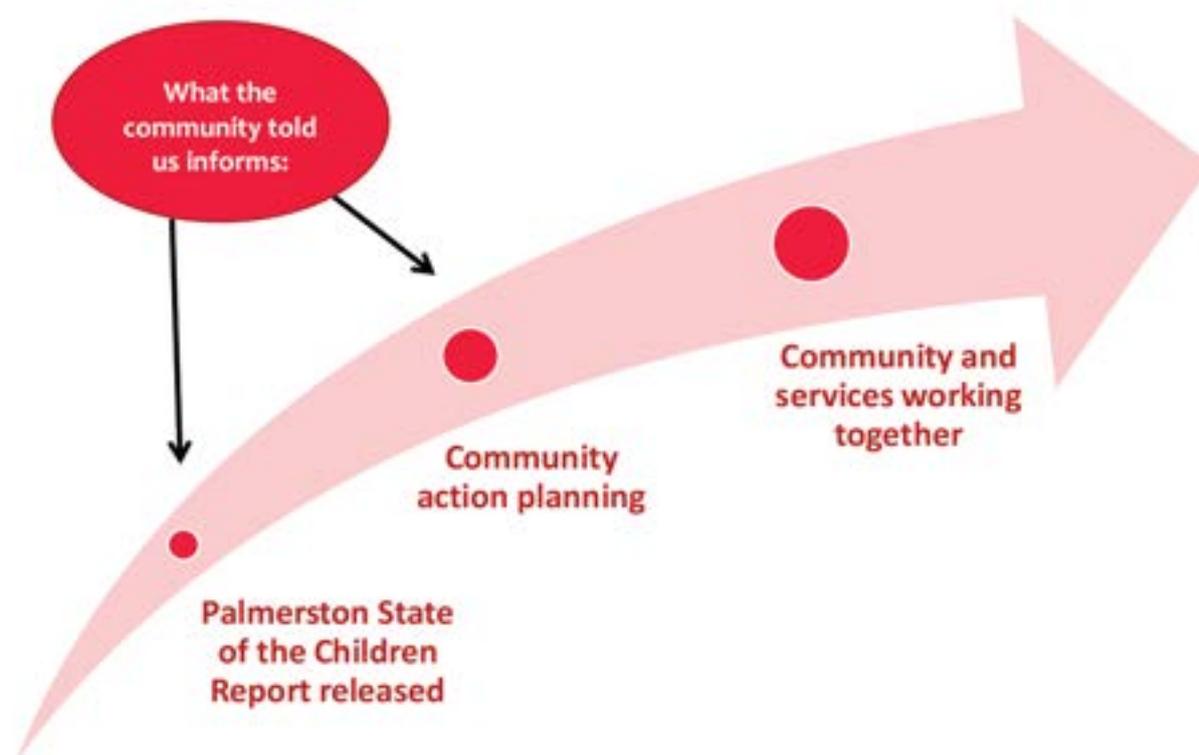
Of significance also are the data gaps. A response to issues of child protection, youth crime, drug and alcohol abuse, mental health, youth suicide, poverty and neonatal care will necessarily require an understanding of what the actual statistics are.

An important part of any intervention or program is its evaluation. Responses to the concerns raised in this report should be properly evaluated with the needs of those being targeted in mind. Participatory and development evaluation processes may work best, particularly given the intent of the Action Plan to work together with the community.



TOWARDS AN ACTION PLAN

The report will enable us to go back to the Palmerston community to develop an action plan and advocate to government for change to support better lives for children and young people.



This report provides a picture of growing up 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 the Palmerston area.

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 and where we'll be holding community planning sessions.





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