



Commissioner for Children and Young People
Western Australia

Your Environment: Your Say

Key findings from the Commissioner for Children and
Young People's 'Your Environment: Your Say' survey 2024



Acknowledgement of Country

The Commissioner for Children and Young People proudly acknowledges and pays respects to the Traditional Custodians of the lands across Western Australia and acknowledges the Whadjuk people of the Noongar nation upon whose lands the Commissioner's office is located.

She recognises the continuing connection to culture, lands, skies and waters, families and communities for all the Aboriginal peoples. The Commissioner and her team also pay their respects to all Elders, past, present and emerging leaders. The Commissioner and her team recognise the knowledge, insights and capabilities of Aboriginal people, and pay respect to Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing.

Who is the Commissioner for Children and Young People?

Jacqueline McGowan-Jones is the Commissioner for Children and Young People in Western Australia (WA).

She has an important statutory role to monitor and review written laws, draft laws, policies, practices, and services affecting the wellbeing of children and young people under eighteen.

The Commissioner has a statutory duty to regularly consult with children and young people about issues that affect them and to promote the participation of children and young people in the making of decisions that affect their lives.

She also has responsibility to encourage government and non-government agencies to seek the participation of children and young people in their work.

More information about the Commissioner and the work of her office is available from: www.ccyp.wa.gov.au.

A note about language

For the purposes of this report, the term 'Aboriginal' encompasses Western Australia's diverse language groups and recognises Torres Strait Islanders who live in Western Australia. The use of the term 'Aboriginal' in this way is not intended to imply equivalence between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, although similarities do exist.

Disclaimer

This report has been prepared by the Commissioner for Children and Young People and is intended to provide the views of the children and young people who participated to the survey 'Your Environment: Your Say' between December 2023 to March 2024. Any errors of omission or commission are the responsibility of the commissioner for Children and Young People.

A selection of quotations is included in this report on the relevant topics. The quotations are generally unedited to ensure the voice of the child or young person is authentically represented. Editing has only been done where necessary for clarity, understanding or for confidentiality.

As per section 48(2) of the Commissioner for Children and Young People's Act 2006, the Minister may issue written comments to the Commissioner on a draft report. Attached as part of the appendices, as per section 48(5), I have included the Attorney General's comments.

Acknowledgement

Special thanks are given to Angela Xu, who undertook an internship through the McCusker Center for citizenship, for her contributions and assistance in preparing this publication.

We would also like to acknowledge the entries of the Commissioner's photography competition whose pictures have been used in the report. For more information, please refer to the 'References' section page 29 of this report.

Alternative formats

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ISBN: 978-1-7636912-0-9



Message from the Commissioner

As the Commissioner for Children and Young People Western Australia (CCYP WA) I have an important statutory role to monitor and review written laws, draft laws, policies, practices, and services affecting the wellbeing of children and young people under eighteen. I must also regularly consult with children and young people about issues that affect them and to promote the participation of children and young people in the making of decisions that affect their lives. I urge government and non-government agencies to seek the participation of children and young people in their work.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child state that all children and young people have the right to the best health care possible, safe water to drink, nutritious food, a clean and safe environment, and information to help them stay well.

In Western Australia, when I ask children and young people about the issues that concern them most, the environment emerges as a dominant theme. Recognising this, I sought the views of young people regarding environmental matters that impact and concern them.

The voices of children and young people are pivotal in helping WA leaders understand how well our state addresses environmental problems and helps to generate ideas for the future.

Given the increasing relevance of climate change in WA and the growing public concern for environmental issues, coupled with the scarcity of studies seeking young people's perspectives, I initiated the 'Your Environment: Your Say' survey.

Participants were invited to share their views on how well WA cares for the natural environment, requesting their perspectives on areas of success and opportunities for improvement. Over 60 per-cent of those who responded feel that much more could be done to care for our environment while approximately 90 per-cent care or strongly care about the environment. This provides a wonderful opportunity to engage our children and young people in the design of solutions and approaches to protect our environment into the future.

The survey garnered a robust response, with 981 eligible participants contributing their insights. The volume and quality of responses affirm the high level of engagement and concern that young people in WA hold for the natural environment. It is wonderful to see children participating and uniting to sharing their views on the environment.

I am delighted to present the key findings from this survey and hope these results serve as valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and community leaders as they work to address environmental challenges and implement initiatives that align with the expressed needs and priorities of young Western Australians.

I recommend that decision-makers investigate how they can include children and young people in age and developmentally appropriate ways in these matters. My office has developed participation guidelines to assist. You can locate these on our website - www.ccyp.wa.gov.au.



Jacqueline McGowan-Jones
Commissioner for Children and Young People WA



"Have
boats that
clean up
the rubbish
in the
ocean"

(11 year-old, female, Pilbara)

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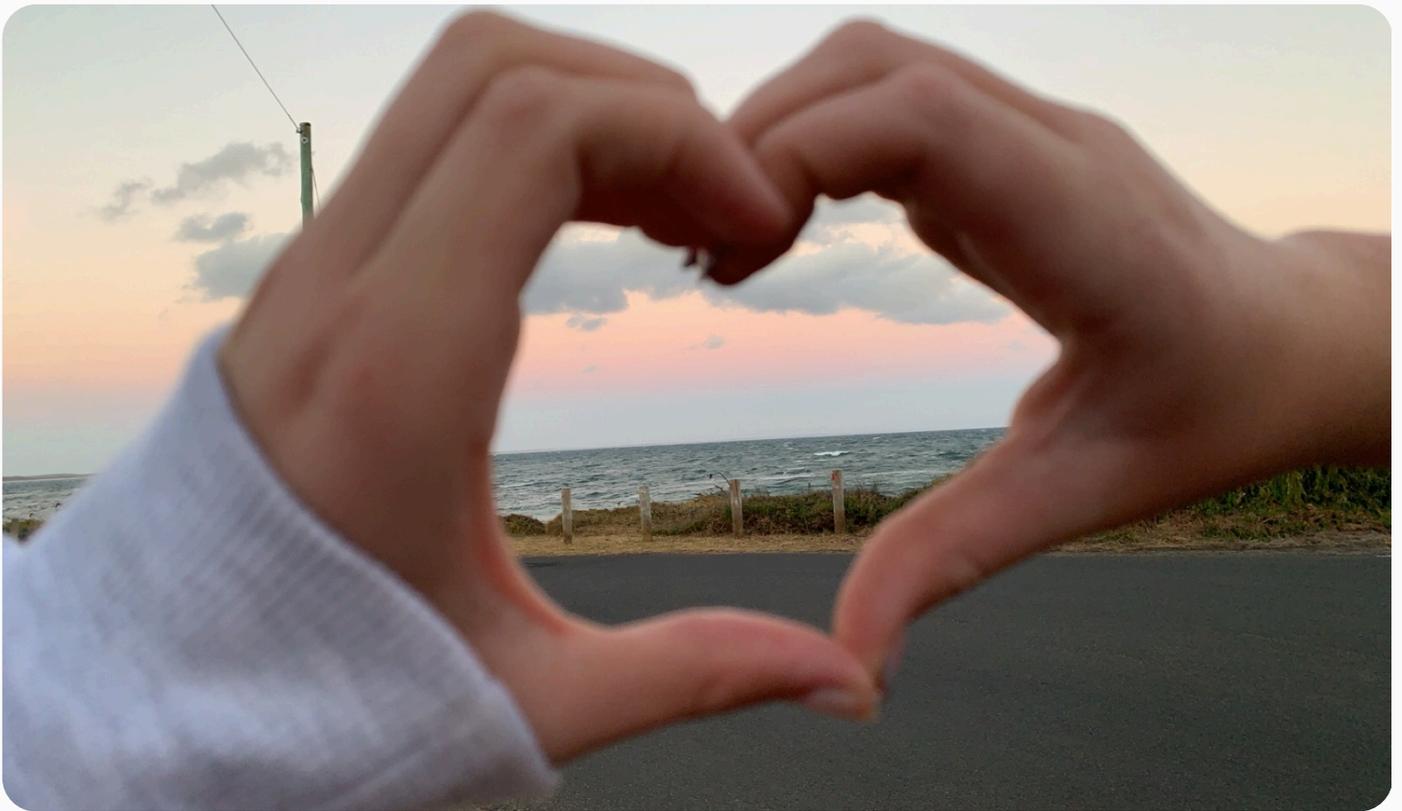
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"Stop littering and take care of the environment!"

(14 year-old, male, Wheatbelt)

What is the 'Your Environment: Your Say' Survey?

The '**Your Environment Your Say**' survey (the survey) provides an opportunity for WA children and young people to have their say about their concerns and how we care for the environment in Western Australia (WA).

The survey was accessible to all children and young people in WA under the age of 18, for a duration of three months, from 11 December 2023 to 1 March 2024. All responses were provided anonymously.

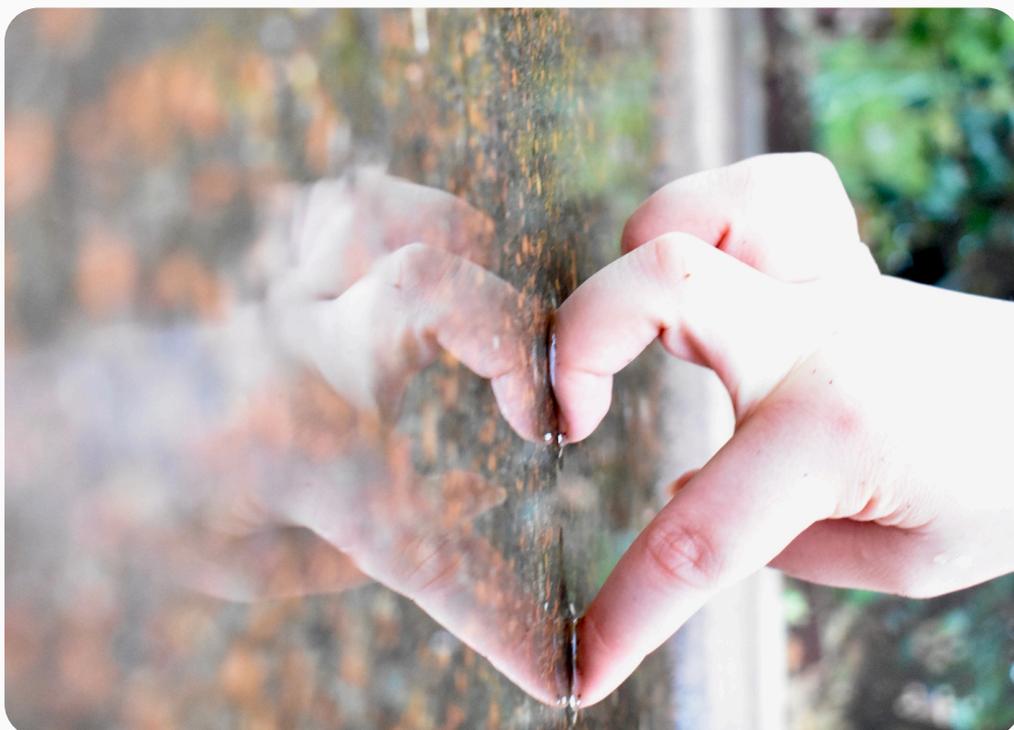
The office of the CCYP promoted the survey in various ways, including via social media, the official CCYP website and sharing the link to teachers, educators, school administrators, environmental groups, the youth sector and state and local governments.

The survey commenced with standard demographic inquiries, including for age, gender, region and Aboriginality, followed by focused closed-response questions regarding children's involvement with, and care for, the environment in Western Australia.

The responses to the survey have yielded invaluable insights into the environmental concerns most pressing to children and young people in Western Australia.

It is hoped that these survey findings are informative and helpful for developing resources, policies and practices that can better prioritise the concerns and perspectives of children and young people about the environment.

By prioritising the voices and perspectives of children and young people, we aim to shape a more inclusive and effective approach to environmental management in WA.



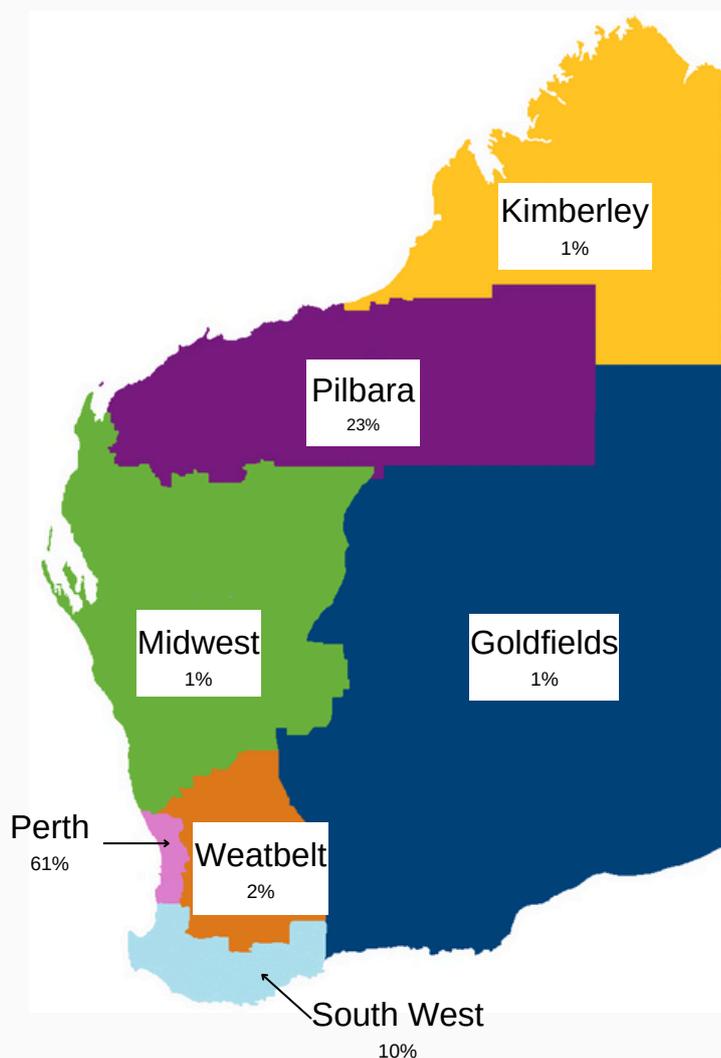
Profile of participants

We analysed answers to the demographic questions to understand the regional and age distribution of participants, representation of Aboriginal children and young people in survey responses and the gender proportions

Where do they live?

The survey was open to all WA young people aged 17 years and under, however, as indicated from Map 1, the distribution of participants across regions of WA did not correspond proportionally to the population of children in each region.

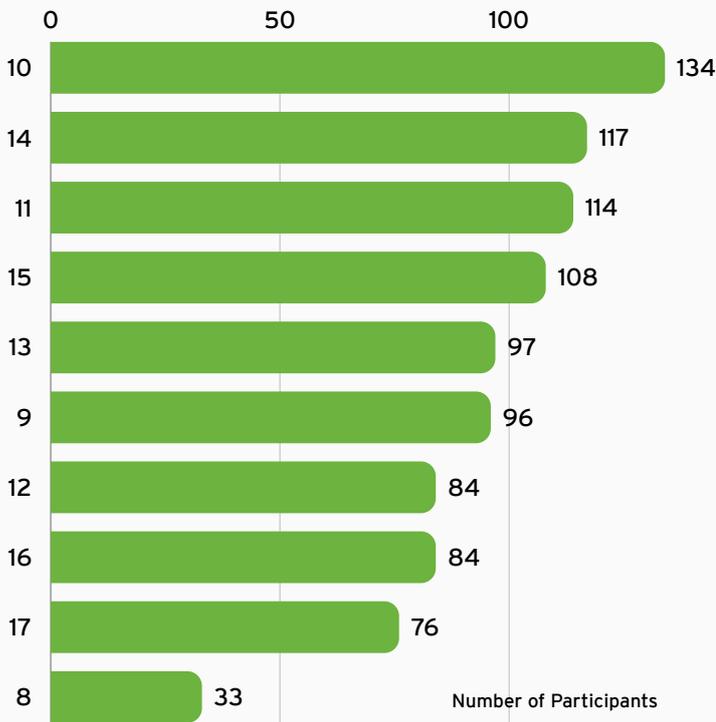
Of the total 981 survey participants, a large majority (61%) were located in the Perth metropolitan region at the time of the survey, with a smaller proportion of participants hailing from other regions of WA, including notably, 23 per cent of participants living in the Pilbara region, 10 per cent in the South West and the remainder located in the Mid West, Goldfields, Kimberley and the Wheatbelt regions.



Map 1: Survey respondents according to region

Age distribution

Chart 1: Survey respondents according to age

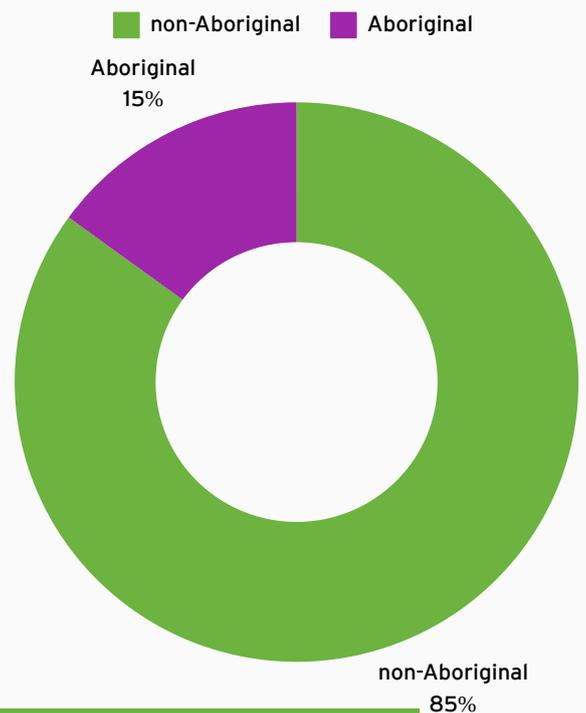


The eligible age range of participants was 8-17 years.

A larger proportion of participants (58%) were in the older age group, between 12 and 17 years, in contrast to 42 per cent aged 11 years and under.

Proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants

Chart 2: Survey respondents by Aboriginal status



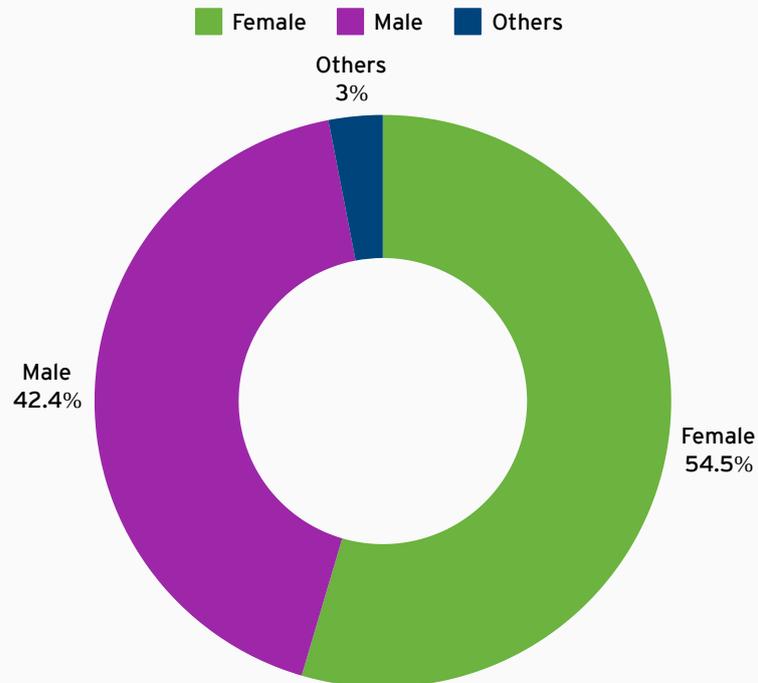
At 15 per cent, the proportion of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander participants is equivalent to the demographic representation of Aboriginal children and young people aged 17 years and younger in WA, which stands at approximately 14 per cent.⁽¹⁾

[1]- Commissioner for Children and Young People WA 2024, 'Profile of Children and Young People in WA - 2024', Commissioner for Children and Young People WA, Perth

Gender representation

Participants were asked “How do you describe yourself” and were given the option to select ‘male’, ‘female’ or ‘other’, 42 percent of the participants identified as ‘male’, 54 per cent as ‘female’ and 3 per cent as ‘other’

Chart 3: Survey respondents according to gender identification



Data collection and analysis

During the data collection period, over 1,000 children and young people responded to the survey, however, not all respondents were eligible to participate due to their age, and not all participants completed all questions of the survey. Final assessment and data cleansing resulted in a total of 981 eligible participant responses, which have been used to form the overarching thematic analysis.

Microsoft Excel and Power BI were used to analyse the quantitative data. All open-question answers were read at least once and assessed utilising Microsoft Excel tools to analyse specific recurrent themes.

This report is the product of careful review and analyses of results from both the multiple-choice questions, and the open-text questions, which have undergone thematic data analysis to identify the key themes that emerged from responses, including direct quotes from survey participants.



Engagement with the environment

The initial segment of the survey focused on understanding the level of engagement of children and young people in WA with environmental issues. This included recognising their concerns about environmental issues, documenting their interactions and experiences with the environment, and assessing the extent and nature of children's participation in activities related to the environment.

The willingness of children and young people to actively participate in the survey serves as an indication of their engagement with environmental issues.

The enthusiastic response highlights the significance of environmental concerns in the perception of WA's youth and their desire to contribute to shaping environmental dialogue and action.

How much do you care about the environment?

In response to the inquiry, "How much do you care about the environment?", participants were presented with various options to articulate their level of concern. An overwhelming majority (89%) responded that they care or strongly care about the environment.

Specifically, 473 respondents indicated that they "Care" about the environment, while 402 respondents stated that they "Strongly care," reflecting a high level of engagement and concern among children and young people in Western Australia for environmental matters.

The distribution of responses is summarised in Table 1. It is noteworthy that a small proportion of respondents (11%) indicated a lack of concern, with 9 per cent participants expressing that they "don't really care" and almost 2 per cent of respondents stating that they "don't care" about the environment.

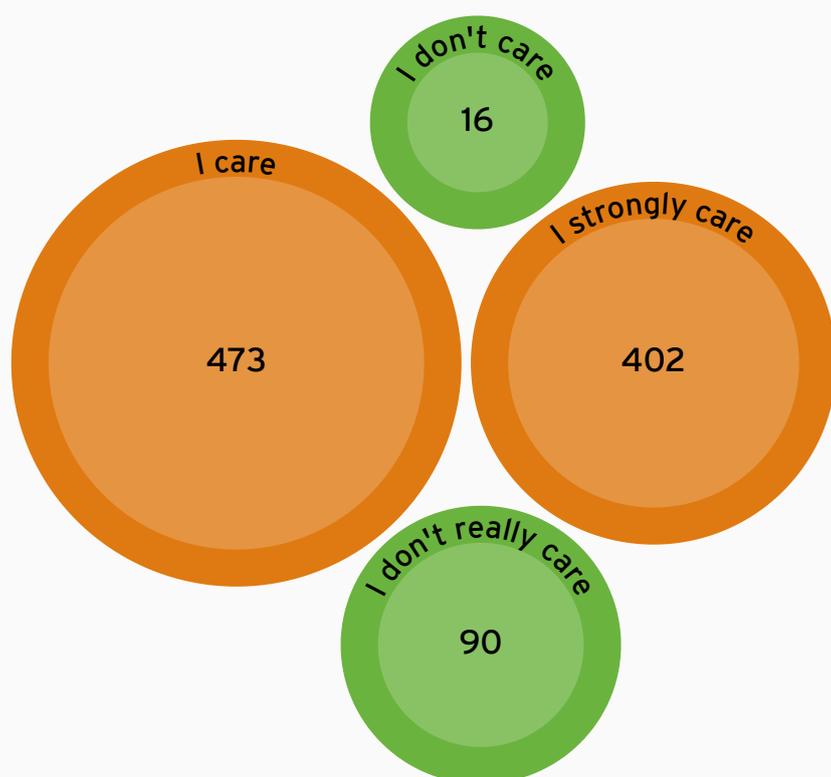


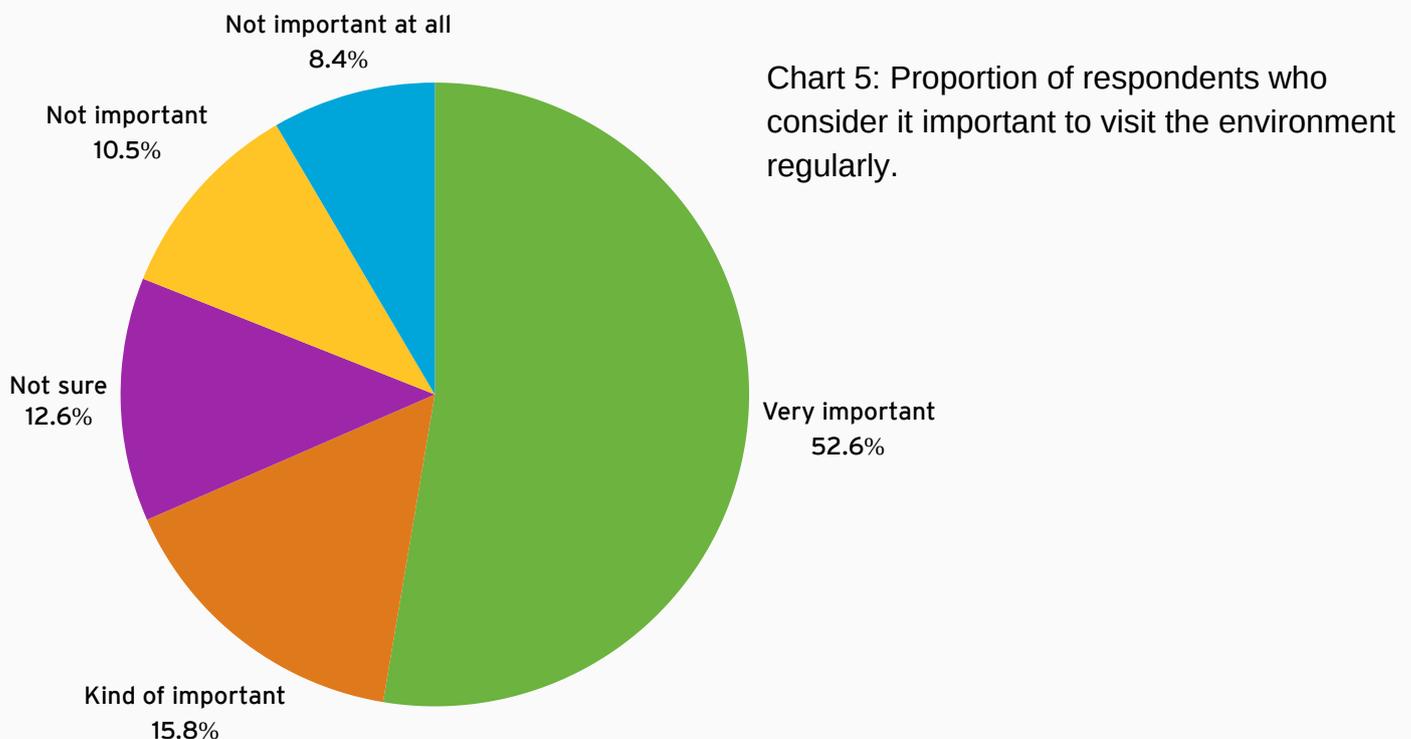
Chart 4: Proportion of respondents who care about the environment

How important is it for you to visit environments regularly?

A number of studies have been conducted into the role and significance of interaction with nature in childhood development. Research indicates that children who connect with natural environments and ecosystems tend to participate and volunteer more in groups, display improved mental health outcomes, are more responsive to learning and are more resilient to personal stress.^[2] It is important to consider the perceptions of children regarding their needs in relation to their engagement with and access to the natural environment.

Exploring the significance of regular visits to natural environments, respondents were asked to indicate their level of importance placed on such experiences.

The survey findings, as detailed in Chart 5, highlight the varying degrees of importance young people associate with regular visits to natural settings.



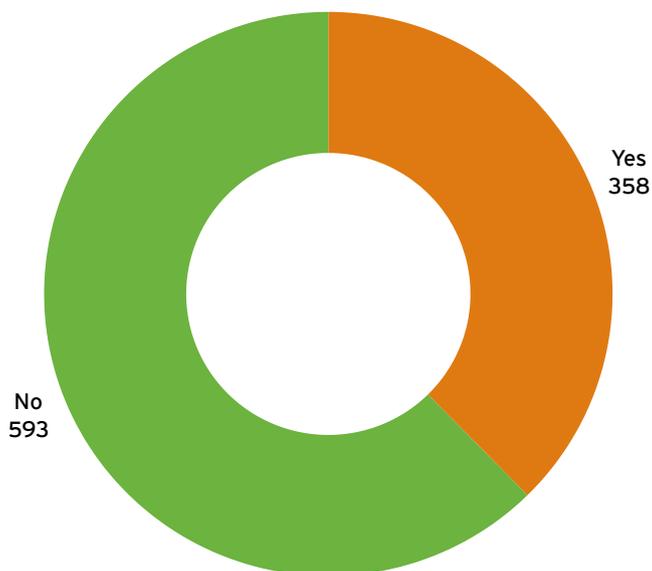
A majority (75%) of the survey participants responded that it is either “Very important” or “Kind of important” for them to visit the natural environment regularly.

Notably, this significant majority is reflected in the responses from participants located in the greater Perth area, indicating the importance of environmental access among children residing in urban settings, in comparison with children located in more regional or rural zones.

There was a slightly higher proportion of female participants (80%), than male (70%) and other (69%) participants who responded that it was important for them to visit natural environments regularly.

Do you do any volunteering or activities related to the environment?

Chart 6: Proportion of respondents who volunteer/ participate in activities related to environment



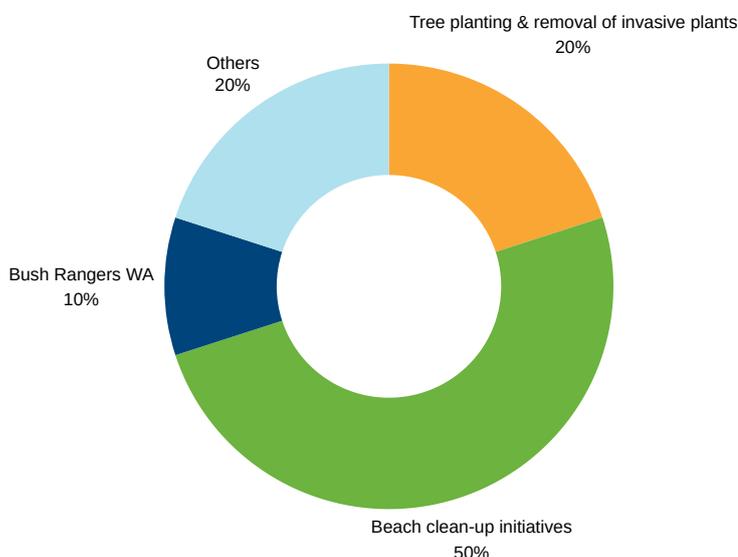
To include a further dynamic into our understanding of children’s engagement with the environment, participants were also asked “Do you do any volunteering or activities related to the environment?” Thirty-eight per cent of participants answered “Yes”, with the highest proportion of respondents living in the greater Perth area indicating participation in volunteering or other activity in relation to the environment (42%), compared to children located outside of Perth (32%).

This may suggest a greater availability of volunteering and community initiatives within Perth, than in some regional areas.

Participants who selected “Yes” were also provided the opportunity to “Tell us what you do in the text box”. The results from this indicated a wide range of activities WA children and young people are involved in, including the following three most common responses:

1. Beach clean-up initiatives: 50 per cent
2. Tree planting and removal of invasive plants: 20 per cent
3. Bush Rangers WA (youth-based conservation program): 10 per cent

Chart 7: Volunteering Activities



Other responses included involvement in advocacy, petitioning and rallying for environmental causes, participation in other youth development and conservation programs such as Girl Guides WA and Scouts Australia, and participation in animal rescue projects and eco-leadership programs.

Relevantly, many respondents expressed in open-ended responses that community engagement with the environment is an area in need of improvement for Western Australia.

Assessment of WA

How important is it for you to visit natural environments regularly?

Respondents were asked to choose the statement that best describes their response to “How well do you think people care for our natural environments in Western Australia?”. The minority of participants identified that we were caring for our environments well, with only 30 per cent responding with “Quite well” and 9 per cent with “Very well”. The most common answer was “okay” (37%), whilst approximately 20 per cent responded with “not that well”, and 5 per cent with “Not well at all”.

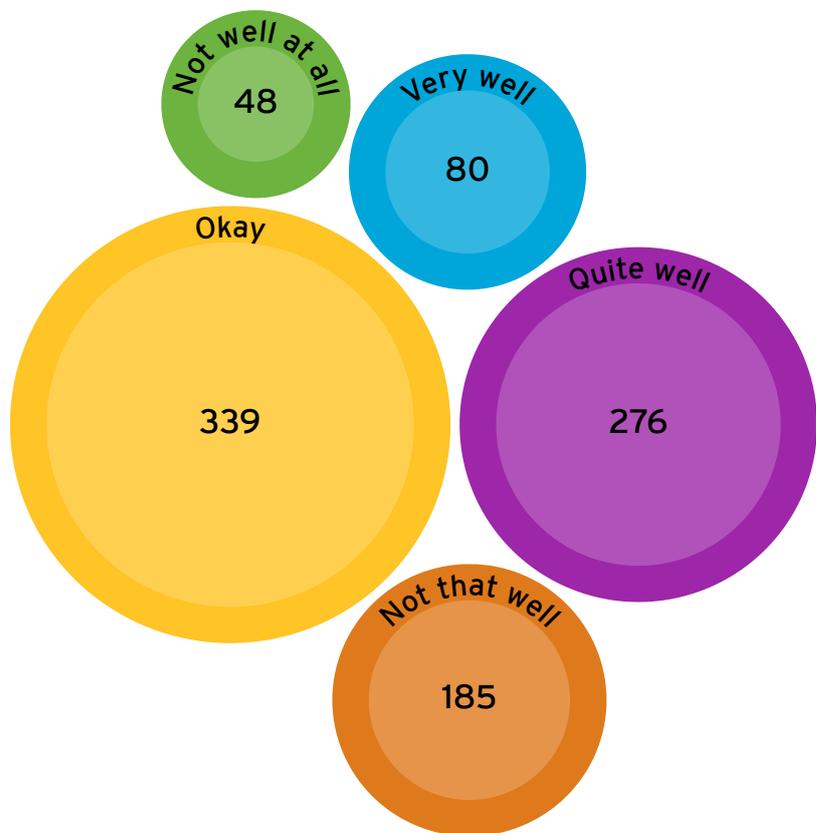


Chart 8: How well do you think people care for our natural environments in Western Australia?

These responses demonstrate that a majority of children and young people in WA perceive that people in WA are caring for the environment. However, there is still a significant minority, 25 per cent, who perceive room for improvement in this aspect.

Chart 8 illustrates that respondents aged 16 or above expressed the highest proportion of dissatisfaction regarding how well the people of WA care for our natural environment, stating it as “not that well”. Comparatively, younger participants were somewhat satisfied with how the people of WA were caring for the environment, with the most selected options being “quite well” and “okay”.

In the following section we will explore the most prevalent environmental concerns, issues and areas of improvement raised by children and young people and the specific recommendations they have provided.

The biggest environmental concerns of children and young people

Survey participants were given the opportunity to provide their opinions regarding their environmental concerns in response to open-text questions, allowing participants to share as little or as much as they liked, in their own words.

The three questions asked were:

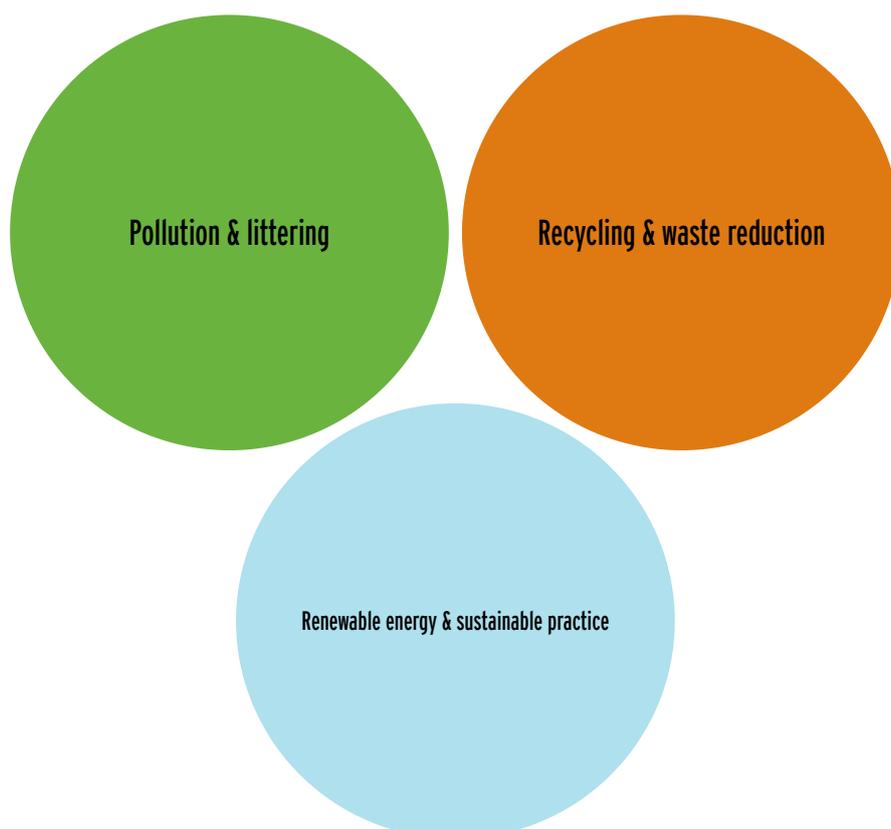
- What do you think we do well in WA to care for our environment?
- What could we do to better care for our environment in Western Australia?
- What do you think we should do right now to protect the environment for the future?

Three key environmental issues emerged from analyses of the responses:

1. Pollution and littering.
2. Recycling and waste reduction.
3. Renewable energy and sustainable practices.

The following section discusses these key issues raised in the report and proposes actions to enhance engagement and participation of children and young people with environmental issues in Western Australia and ways to incorporate their views into forward-thinking management of environmental issues.

Chart 9: Three environmental issues identified



Pollution and littering

According to litter data collected across Perth Metropolitan area in May 2022, a total of 18,245 items of litter were counted, with a calculated volume of 1,145.65 litres.

The issue of pollution and littering was the most commonly raised by participants across all three open-text questions. Thirty per cent of respondents commented on how we could better care for the environment, referred to pollution and littering as an area of improvement for WA. Further, 60 per cent of responses collected on what should be done right now to protect the environment in WA, also referred to littering and pollution.

Participants said:

"Stop littering and take care of the environment!"

(14 year-old, male, Wheatbelt)

"Put rubbish in the bin so it does not go in the sea and hurt the animals."

(8 year-old, male, Wheatbelt)

"Make jobs for people to clean our bush land of rubbish and also our streets clean and harsher fine for littering."

(14 year-old, male, Perth)

"Put rubbish in the bin bro...especially at the beach."

(8 year-old, male, Wheatbelt)

"Clean up the rubbish that you see on the floor, beaches, ocean, and parks."

(8 year-old, male, Wheatbelt)

"If we can make them realise that littering the environment is killing the earth and maybe we can reverse the damages to what we have done and correct them."

(12 year-old, male, Perth)

Participants seemed particularly concerned with the impact of littering on wildlife, including marine wildlife. The importance of keeping beaches and oceans free of litter was commonly voiced in the answers.

These results align with the responses to the final multiple-choice question which asked participants “Do you think littering is a problem in your environment?” Overwhelmingly, 78 per cent of responses answered either “It’s a big problem” or “I see litter often”, with only 2 per cent of participants answering “It’s not a problem at all”. Notably, a much larger proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents (86%) considered littering a problem in WA.

Over one-third (36.4%) of responses to the question “What do you think we do well in WA to care for our environment” also referred to pollution and littering as an area of strength, referencing both community initiatives and individual efforts. This highlights that while WA has endeavoured to address the issue of littering, young people consider that efforts to address the problem fall short of desired outcomes.

"Stop using plastic and paper...because plastic bags look like jellyfish to turtles."

(13 year-old, male, Perth)

"We must be stricter on littering, on reusing and making sustainable choices in the first place, and making sure that we dispose of our waste correctly so that we do not contaminate our environments any further."

(15 year-old, identifies as pan-gender, Perth)

"Stop littering, care about WA."

(14 year-old, male, Perth)

"Put rubbish in the bin bro...especially at the beach."

(8 year-old, male, Wheatbelt)

"Make the tip cheaper so people don't litter. Have roadside collections in places that don't have them."

(17 year-old, female, South West)

"Have boats that clean up the rubbish in the ocean."

(11 year-old, female, Pilbara)

Recycling and waste reduction

According to the WA Department of Water and Environmental Regulation, 6.2 million tonnes of waste was generated in 2021-22 and of that amount, 62 per cent was recovered and 2.5 million tonnes sent to landfills.

A significant environmental concern⁽⁴⁾ voiced by children and young people in our survey is recycling and waste reduction. Remarkably, 103 participants (11%), highlighted this issue as a top priority for environmental protection in WA. Particularly notable were the insights shared by older age groups, emphasising the critical need for sustainable waste management solutions across the state.

The suggestions put forward by children reflect a deep understanding of the urgency surrounding waste management. They advocate for a spectrum of measures, ranging from legislative reforms and education initiatives on recycling, to the implementation of innovative waste management techniques.

Some of the insightful recommendations provided by children and young people include:

"Confiscate un reusable plastic."

(10 year-old, male, Pilbara)

"Properly sort the rubbish to keep recyclable materials out of landfills."

(14 year-old, male, South-West)

"Maybe try to persuade more people to volunteer to recycle and get some people to get trash out of our bushland."

(11 year-old, male, Perth)

"More laws about littering (like in Singapore)."

(12 year-old, female, Perth)

"I think further education on how recycling works and getting people thinking about the environment at a young age can have a big impact."

(15 year-old, male, Perth)

The responses gathered from children and young people convey their conviction that there is considerable room for improvement in waste management practices. Children and young people emerge as advocates for innovative solutions to address the pressing challenges associated with waste disposal and environmental conservation.

"Properly sort out what goes into the landfills."

(15 year-old, male, South-West)

"More recycling bins on beaches, in parks and at other places where people often are."

(14 year-old, female, Goldfields)

"Change things from plastic to reusable things and make more learning groups for the kids that live in Western Australia."

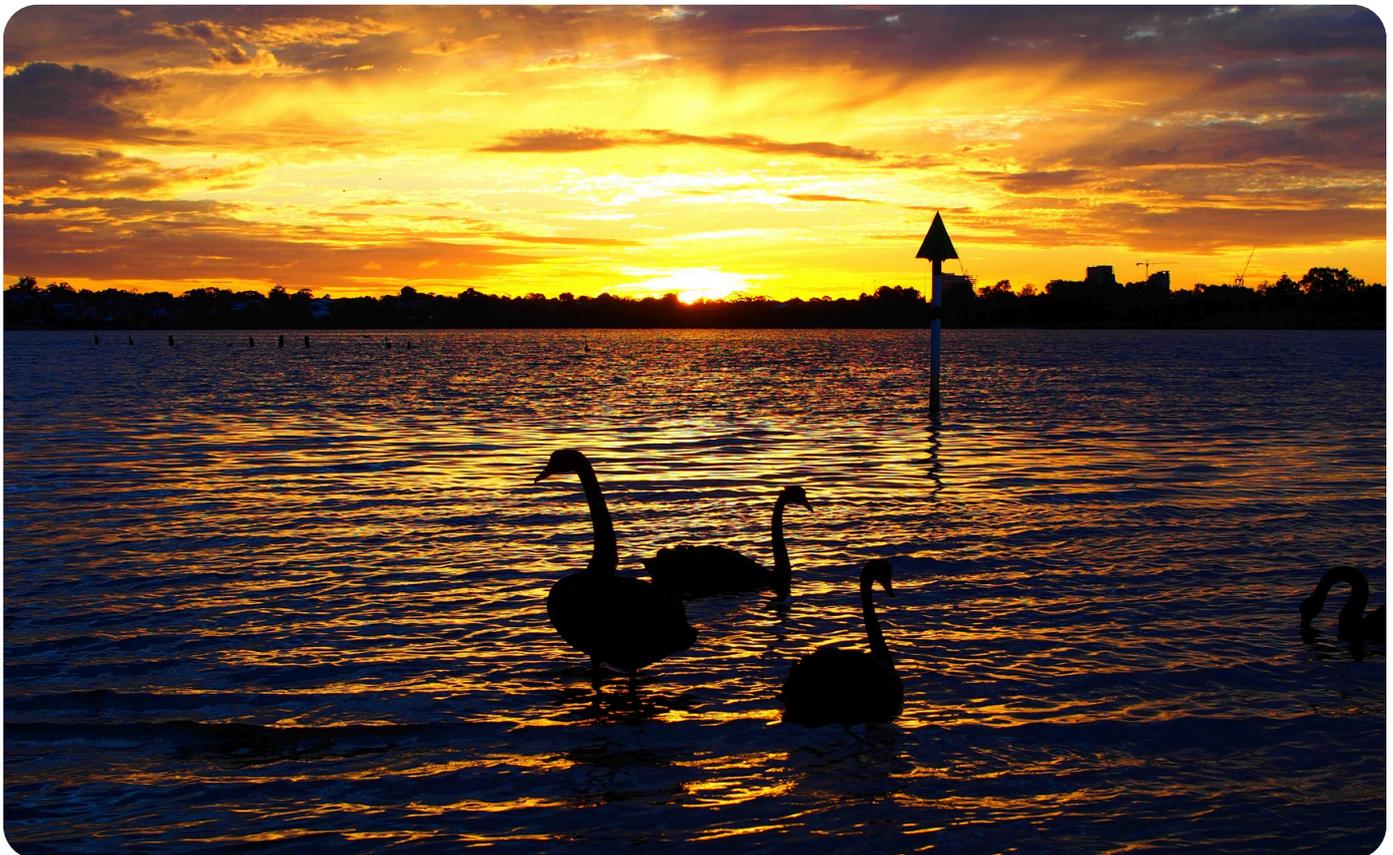
(10 year-old, female, Pilbara)

"Encourage recycle paper companies."

(13 year-old, female, Perth)

"Maybe teach people more about correct recycling, there are a lot of people who don't know how to properly."

(17 year-old, identifies as "gender non-conforming", Perth)



Renewable energy and sustainable practices

A prevalent theme in the responses from children and young people was the urgent need to adapt to renewable energy sources and sustainable practices. We received 211 responses (22%) which referred to renewable energy as a pressing matter demanding immediate attention in WA.

Children and young people also demonstrated a strong desire to transition away from unsustainable practices such as logging, emphasising the imperative of adopting eco-friendly alternatives.

The following responses highlighted concerns regarding unsustainable practices:

"Lots of forest is cut down by logging companies and it is not being regrown fast enough. I think the biggest concern is the exponential loss of green space/ original forests around Perth and W.A."

(16 year-old, female, Perth)

"I think mining is a big problem that affects the environment in WA."

(14 year-old, female, Perth)

"Ban all logging, not just that of native flora."

(16 year old, male, South West)

"Have designated state/ national parks which are protected from mining/ logging etc."

(16 year-old, female, Perth)

We received an overwhelming response from children and young people seeking to provide recommendations for transitioning towards renewable energy. These insights reveal a profound environmental consciousness among children and young people and an evident sense of urgency in addressing climate change.

Their advocacy extended to promoting wind and solar energy, urging government intervention, emphasising environmental responsibility, and advocating for systemic change.

The following recommendations were provided:

"I think personally we ... get more windmills and solar panels."

(11 year-old, young person who identifies as "other".)

"You could possibly invest more in clean energy and give less to the big oil companies."

(12 year-old, male, Perth)

"Creating more sustainable renewable energy sources like wave energy in coastal areas like Albany along with wind energy to power communities."

(14 year-old, male, South West)

"ACTUALLY commit to cutting fossil fuels and gas emissions."

(17 year old, identifies as gender-diverse, Perth)

"We could start converting our energy sources to solar and other resources that are sustainable."

(14 year-old, female, no region specified)

"More sustainable power sources."

(12-year old, female, Perth)

"Begin utilising the sun's energy."

(17-year old, female, Perth)

"More renewable energy, more public and accessible bins, look into seaweed farming for cows."

(14-year old, female, Perth)

"Promote and fund/compensate for organisation and business usage/reliance of renewable energies."

(17 year-old female, Perth)

"Reduce our reliance on industries with large environmental impact such as oil and gas, mining and logging although providing jobs and economic growth diversification of the economy is needed more to lessen our impact upon the environment."

(17 year-old, male, South West)

"We could completely switch to renewable fuels."

(11 year-old, male, Perth)

"More solar and wind less mines less litter more investment in renewables and encouragement and incentives to buy evs."

(14 year-old, male, Perth)

"We could make more water and wind turbines for energy instead of using smoke powered turbines."

(12 year-old, male, Perth)

"Have a renewable power grid rather than a fossil fuel one...Have more & better EVs and charging stations."

(14 year-old, male, Perth)

"Promote and fund/compensate for organisation and business usage/reliance of renewable energies. This could look like having public/community centres predominantly use renewable energies."

(17 year-old, female, Perth)



Community involvement

In analysing the extensive responses advising on solutions to address environmental problems raised, a prominent theme emerges: community involvement.

Relevantly, many respondents expressed in open-ended responses that community engagement with the environment is an area in need of improvement for Western Australia. Furthermore, there appears to be a gap between the number of participants who expressed concern for the environment and considered it important to visit natural environments regularly, and those who actively engage in volunteering or environmental activities.

In light of these findings, this may be a compelling case for encouraging and facilitating volunteering opportunities and environmental activities for children and young people across Western Australia. Such initiatives not only contribute to environmental conservation efforts but also foster a sense of responsibility, community involvement and improved outcomes for children.

In the words of the children and young people:

"Start a beach/park clean up, and a tree planting community."

(11 year-old, male, Perth)

"I think we should have more programs in schools about opportunities and ways to help the environment, as well as impacts that littering, and illegal dumping has on our ecosystems."

(13 year-old, male, Perth)

"Community cleaning once a month, encourage it more in schools."

(15 year-old, female, Pilbara)

"Engage in more community services and scouts. As well as creating more programs."

(12 year-old, female, Perth)

"Government and business owners must support community environmental groups and for them need to more equipment and facilities."

(16 year-old, male, South West)

"More education and engaging programs for students (like clubs or associations in/out of school, community programs)."

(14 year-old, female, Perth)

"More involvement in people of the community (lots of ignorance or no knowledge at all). Trying to get more people involved so that the responsibility is shared equally."

(15 year-old, female, Perth)

"We should have a clean up the world thing where people can volunteer to clean up our world."

(11 year-old, male, Perth)

"Organise a cleaning company to clean up beaches and bushland."

(10 year-old, female, Perth)

"Get more help for the ocean."

(11 year-old, male, South West)

"Have a worldwide clean-up day."

(11 year-old, male, Perth)

"Have a pick up rubbish day."

(10 year-old, female, South West)

"Have a clean up day every month."

(10 year-old, male, Perth)

The resounding call for collective action and engagement within communities stands out. From advocating for beach clean-ups to organising tree planting initiatives, the emphasis on collaborative efforts to address environmental challenges highlight the importance of individual and collective action in mitigating environmental degradation.

The responses of children and young people in WA have indicated a strong desire to contribute and participate in conservation efforts via volunteer initiatives and have called for enhancement of opportunities to address all substantive environmental issues raised. For example, in response to perceived deficiencies in WA's management of littering and pollutions, participants have suggested joint community clean-up days and access to more volunteer groups.

Participants also expressed a desire for more opportunities to engage with wildlife protection initiatives, tree-planting programs and engagement initiatives within schools such as clubs or associations.

Conclusion and key areas for action

The 'Your Environment: Your Say' survey has provided invaluable insights into the environmental concerns of children and young people in Western Australia. With 981 eligible participants, the survey illuminates the significant engagement and concern of young Western Australians regarding environmental issues. The findings underscore a strong desire among children and young people to actively participate in shaping environmental dialogue and action.

Overwhelmingly, respondents expressed care for the environment, with a notable emphasis on the importance of regular visits to natural environments and engagement in environmental activities.

However, the survey also reveals areas where improvements are needed. A majority of respondents perceive that Western Australia could better care for its natural environment, with concerns particularly regarding pollution, littering, recycling, waste reduction, and the transition to renewable energy sources. The responses of young people in WA have also indicated a strong desire to contribute and participate in conservation efforts via volunteer initiatives and have called for enhancement of opportunities to address all substantive environmental issues raised.

The survey participants emphasised one resounding call to action: the pressing need to safeguard our natural environment, notably the ocean, from the adverse effects of littering and pollution to marine wildlife. Children and young people stressed the urgency and significance of maintaining litter-free beaches and oceans and called for an immediate need to address this issue.

Moving forward, it is imperative that the voices and perspectives of children and young people continue to inform policies, resource allocation, and practices related to environmental management in Western Australia. By prioritising the insights gathered from this survey, stakeholders can work towards a more inclusive and effective approach to addressing the environmental challenges facing WA.

Key areas for action

1. Children and young people want to be included in discussions and decisions surrounding climate and environmental issues. Future consultations within this field should seek to include children and young people as a key cohort for engagement as part of the decision-making process. This can include consultations, public hearings, and participation in drafting policies related to environmental protection and climate action.
2. As children and young people emerged as advocates for innovative solutions to address the pressing challenges associated with waste disposal and environmental conservation, they should be provided the opportunity to voice their opinions, ideas, and propose solutions through consultations or online platforms and forums.
3. Government agencies or environmental organisations should encourage internship and mentorship programs. They should be supported to provide hands-on experience and guidance to young people interested in environmental policy and advocacy.
4. All levels of Government could allocate funding and resources to support youth-led projects and initiatives aimed at addressing environmental challenges and promoting climate action in their communities. This could include grants, scholarships, or competitions for innovative ideas.
5. Local Governments are encouraged to engage with their Youth Advisory Councils on topics such as waste management, local parks, and nature reserves.
6. Local and State Government should aim to prioritise preservation and maintenance of local ecosystems, as well as develop sustainable practices, to ensure all children and young people are able to access clean and healthy natural environments.
7. Increase the availability of opportunities within Local Governments for children and young people to participate in community-based volunteering programs with an environmental focus.
8. The Commissioner for Children and Young People will send the 'Your Environment: Your Say' to Local Governments in WA to invite feedback surrounding the report findings and recommendations, as well as engage in discussion with Local Governments to learn about their environmental initiatives with young people.

Appendix I – Survey questions

1. Consent
2. How old are you?
3. How do you describe yourself?
4. Based on the map of Western Australia shown below, which region do you live in?
5. Are you Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?
6. Please choose the statement that best describes you.
 - a. I strongly care about the environment
 - b. I care about the environment
 - c. I am not sure if I care/don't care about the environment
 - d. I don't care about the environment.
7. For this question we are asking about natural environments like beaches, bush, local and national parks etc.
 - a. How important is it for you to visit natural environments regularly?
 - i. Very important
 - ii. Kind of important
 - iii. Not sure
 - iv. Not important
 - v. Not important at all
 - b. How important is it for you to visit natural environments regularly?
8. Do you think littering is a problem in your community?
 - a. It's a big problem
 - b. I see litter often
 - c. Not sure
 - d. I don't see litter often
 - e. It's not a problem at all.
9. How well do you think people care for our natural environments in Western Australia?
 - a. Very well
 - b. Quite well
 - c. Okay
 - d. Not that well
 - e. Not well at all.
10. What do you think we do well in Western Australia to care for our environment?
11. Tell us about the things you think we should do.
12. What could we do to better care for our environment in Western Australia?
13. What do you think we should do right now to protect the environment for the future?

Appendix II – Response from the Attorney General

As per section 48(2) of the Commissioner for Children and Young People’s Act 2006, the Minister may issue written comments to the Commissioner on a draft report. A report must include a copy of any comments issued under subsection (2). The comments provided by the Attorney General have been included within this appendix.



Attorney General; Minister for Electoral Affairs

Our Ref: 67-38249

Ms Jacqueline McGowan-Jones
Commissioner for Children and Young People
Level 1 Albert Facey House
469 Wellington Street
PERTH WA 6000

By email: Jacqueline.McGowan-Jones@ccyp.wa.gov.au

Dear Ms McGowan-Jones

PUBLICATION: YOUR ENVIRONMENT: YOUR SAY

Thank you for your email dated 2 July 2024 and your published survey, Your Environment: Your Say (the survey) that addresses the environmental concerns of young people.

I have consulted with the Hon. Reece Whitby MLA, Minister for Environment; Climate Action about the environmental concerns raised in the survey and enclose a summary (**Attachment A**) from the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation outlining some of the State Government’s initiatives and activities that address matters highlighted in the survey.

I would like to thank you and your office for presenting the voices of young people on matters of the environment and for your continued efforts to improve their wellbeing.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John Quigley".

Hon. John Quigley MLA
ATTORNEY GENERAL; MINISTER FOR ELECTORAL AFFAIRS

5 August 2024



Attachment A

Input to Department of Justice

The 'Your Environment: Your Say' Report clearly articulates the concerns of children and youth about the importance of protecting Western Australia's (WA) precious environment and living more sustainably.

The State Government is pursuing a vision for a WA with a sustainable, low-waste and low-carbon future; a thriving circular economy; and with secure water resources and a healthy environment that will sustain generations into the future. We are making good progress and the Government is leading in reducing emissions, protecting our natural resources, reducing waste, increasing recycling, tackling litter and supporting Western Australians to live more sustainably.

The most accessible way for young Western Australians to play their part in living more sustainably starts at home. The State Government supports local governments to raise awareness and provide options for individuals and households to play a key role to avoid waste and recycle more, which means less going to landfill.

The State Government is tackling organic waste (i.e. kitchen scraps and garden waste), which is one of the biggest contributions households can make to improve waste and recycling. Organic waste makes up around half of all household waste and when disposed to landfill generates greenhouse gases. The three-bin food organics garden organics (FOGO) kerbside bin system allows households to dispose of kitchen scraps and garden waste in the same bin which is convenient and gets turned into high quality soil improver and composts to help improve the environment. The State Government is working to make sure all local governments in Perth and Peel offer FOGO to their residents in the near future.

The State Government oversees Containers for Change which not only incentivises the community to recycle their drink containers by providing a 10c refund, but provides essential funding to community groups, including environmental and youth groups. By 30 December 2023, a total of three billion containers had been collected through the scheme, and over 900 WA schools offer and promote the scheme to school communities and students. Before the commencement of Containers for Change, only 34 per cent of eligible beverage containers were being recycled and this has now increased to over 60 per cent and has had a dramatic effect on reducing littering of drink containers in the environment.

The State Government's Plan for Plastics continues to tackle plastic waste and litter by banning many common single-use plastics. This has helped prevent millions of pieces of single-use plastics ending up as litter or in landfill. Many Western Australians are already regularly choosing to avoid single-use plastics and more than 98 per cent of Western Australians support further action. Stage 1 of the Plan for Plastics saved 430 million single-use plastics from landfill or litter in WA each year. Stage 2 will save an additional 700 million items annually. Western Australians can take further action on single-use plastics by choosing to refuse them, using reusables such as reusable cups and cutlery, and choosing alternatives.

The State Government encourages Western Australians to take responsibility for reducing waste in the community and provides the following support:

- The GREAT Sorts campaign is a State-wide waste sorting behaviour change advertising campaign, normalising five priority waste sorting behaviours individuals can take which have the biggest impact in reducing waste and increasing recycling: gifting good items to charity, swap or sell; recycling using kerbside bins or Containers for Change; earth-cycling food scraps and garden waste by using FOGO bins or home-composting; avoiding excess

packaging or food waste; and taking hazardous or difficult to recycle items to specialist recycling drop-off points.

- In addition, the State Government has provided more than \$8.65 million in WasteSorted Community Education grants since 2017 for projects which improve the recovery of materials including plastics, construction and demolition waste, textiles, FOGO and includes those which encourage younger Western Australians to take action.
- The WasteSorted Schools program helps schools reduce waste, recycle more and protect the environment through hands-on education programs and grants for in-school waste infrastructure. Since its inception in 2002, nearly 1,000 primary and high schools have participated and accessed over \$2.8 million in grant funding for improved waste infrastructure at schools.

The State Government is currently reviewing the State's waste strategy to ensure we are responding to the changing environment, new opportunities, and industry and community expectations. The current phase of the consultation closes in August 2024 and anyone is able to feedback their thoughts by visiting www.dwer.wa.gov.au.

Keep Australia Beautiful Council (KABC) is supported by the State Government and is responsible for leading the community in delivering the *Litter Prevention Strategy for Western Australia 2020–2025* (Litter Prevention Strategy) to reduce littering in WA. KABC oversees a number of programs to raise awareness across the community and tackle littering issues, many of which are open to youth to volunteer or participate:

- The Clean Schools program aims to change the littering behaviour of students and reduce litter in schools. The program engages large numbers of primary and secondary school students across the State. The total number of schools, daycare centres and other educational organisations registered for the program is nearly 800.
- The Government also runs a range of programs to tackle long-term prevention of litter and marine debris. Under the Marine Debris Project, KABC has continued its 20-year partnership with the Tangaroa Blue Foundation, an Australia-wide, not-for-profit organisation dedicated to the removal and prevention of marine debris. The major event under this partnership is the WA Beach Clean-up. Tangaroa Blue hosted its 19th annual WA Beach Clean-Up on the weekend of 14-15 October 2023, with the support of KABC. A total of 1,412 volunteers converged on 98 beaches to remove and audit marine debris along 167 km of coastline. KABC partnered with Tangaroa Blue for the 2023 WA Beach Clean-Up activities. KABC visited Albany, Denmark and Walpole, supporting local schools and community groups with beach clean-ups and audits. Over the five days, 121 volunteers removed 3,300 items of debris weighing 39.5 kg from 5.5 km of coastline.
- The Adopt-a-Spot program is a popular community engagement program that has involved more than 59,000 registered volunteers since its beginning in 2009. The program engages volunteers to undertake litter clean-ups at registered sites in their communities to contribute to a litter-free WA. As of 30 June 2024, 2,279 groups were registered in the Adopt-a-Spot program, with 172 groups joining in 2023-24.
- Outback Packs continued to provide travellers with tools to manage their own litter and conduct clean-ups at rest areas, campsites and on roadsides. During 2023-24, 8,480 Outback Packs were assembled by participating school students before being distributed. Various Department of Justice offices also provided assistance through their community service programs. KABC community volunteers contributed many hours to major event clean-ups across WA, and KABC provided litter collection bags, car litter bags, pocket ashtrays and pop-up bins to organisations promoting the anti-litter message at events. KABC managed or participated in 22 events in 2023-24.
- KABC Community Litter Grants provide financial support to communities and organisations with projects aimed at addressing local litter problems. Grants of up to \$10,000 are available for initiatives and projects that incorporate education, improvements to infrastructure and littering enforcement, consistent with KABC's Litter Prevention Strategy for WA.

It is clear from the 'Your Environment: Your Say' Report that progress on transitioning to renewable energy sources is important to children and young people.

The State Government has introduced climate change legislation to Parliament to create a framework for WA's enduring response to climate change and ensures WA contributes to national and global mitigation efforts. The legislation establishes the target of net zero emissions by 2050 and requires interim targets to be set.

The Government recently released the *Sectoral emissions reduction strategy for Western Australia* to provide robust and credible pathways for transitioning net zero emissions by 2050. The Strategy includes new initiatives and significant investment to support the net zero transition and is underpinned by significant investment to reduce emissions across the economy.

The \$37 million Clean Energy Future Fund supports the implementation of innovative clean energy projects in WA through to 2030-31. To date, more than \$12 million has been awarded to eight projects, two of which have been successfully completed, that will collectively reduce emissions by more than 163,000 tonnes per year.

In 2022, the Government announced a target to reduce emissions from Government operations by 80 per cent below 2020 levels by 2030. The target builds on commitments for the State-owned electricity provider, Synergy, to exit coal-fired power generation by 2030.

An additional investment of \$500 million was provided as part of the 2024-25 State Budget to establish Clean Energy Link transmission projects essential to the transition to electrification. This investment builds on more than \$4 billion committed over the past 12 months to unlocking WA's cleaner, affordable and reliable energy future through investment in wind generation, battery systems and the electricity grid.

The Government is also supporting green energy projects by creating a dedicated cross-Government facilitation team – the 'Green Energy Approvals initiative'. The initiative is driving the delivery of green energy solutions for WA, underscoring the State Government's commitment to net zero by 2050.

WA is already experiencing the impacts of climate change including flooding, bushfires, more frequent and severe droughts, heatwaves and rising sea levels. In recognition of these changes, the State Government released WA's first Climate Adaptation Strategy: Building WA's climate resilient future in July 2023, which sets out 37 actions to ensure WA communities and the economy are resilient to the risks posed by climate change. Almost \$40 million was allocated in the 2023-24 State Budget to deliver the Strategy.

References

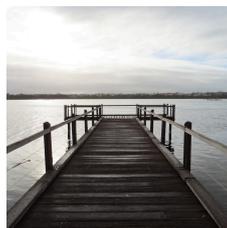
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2. Hartig T, Mitchell R, de Vries S, Frumkin H (2014) Nature and health. Annual Review of Public Health 35: 207–228. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7424505/>;
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4. https://www.wasteauthority.wa.gov.au/images/resources/files/2023/10/22230563_Waste_and_recycling_report_and_data_2021-22_20231004.pdf

Photo competition credits

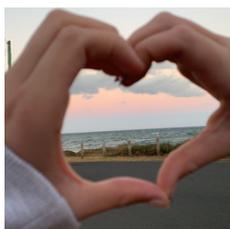
The Commissioner's Photography Competition invited WA's young people aged 10-17 to capture the essence of Youth Week WA 2024 through the theme, 'Head. Body. Heart.' Participants showcased their creativity and perspectives by submitting photos that reflected self-care, connection, and authenticity. Thank you to all of the young people who took part.



Declan, 17 years old



Cy, 15 years old



Riley, 13 years old



Jeffrey, 13 years old



Tara, 17 years old



Matilda, 10 years old



Tai, 15 years old



May, 10 years old



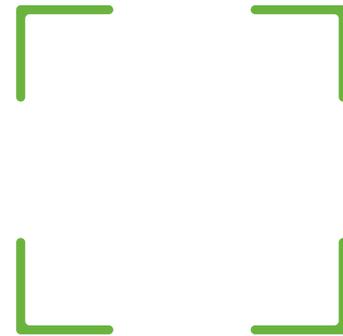
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Connect with the Commissioner



Further information

To learn more about the project, you
can read the full report on the
Commissioner's website
www.ccyp.wa.gov.au or scan the QR
code below to go directly to the report



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