

Media statement

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Re **Building resilience key in overcoming modern challenges**

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Canadian child resilience expert Dr Michael Ungar started his two-week Thinker in Residence program today by meeting with CEOs of government and non-government agencies and leaders from the Aboriginal community.

Dr Ungar is in Perth at the invitation of the Commissioner for Children and Young People to be the third Thinker in Residence to consider issues affecting the wellbeing of WA children and young people.

The 2014 residency will focus on what international research indicates is the best way to strengthen the resilience of children and young people, particularly those who are vulnerable, and how this can be applied to help WA kids.

During the residency, Dr Ungar will:

- deliver seminars for parents, professionals working to support WA children and families, early child educators and researchers
- meet with government ministers and senior management of government departments that deliver services to children and families
- visit Kalgoorlie to meet with teachers, service providers and members of the Aboriginal community
- hold discussions with key Aboriginal leaders including June Oscar, Ted Wilkes and Colleen Hayward
- deliver a lecture at Kings Park concerning the benefits of children participating in outdoor activity and experiencing some risk in their lives.

Acting Commissioner for Children and Young People Jenni Perkins said a structured, community-wide approach to building resilience in children and young people was important to help them manage the challenges modern life presents.

"Children and young people have always experienced some stress and hardship, and that is a natural part of growing up, but the challenges today are very different to what they were 50 years ago," Ms Perkins said.

"Some of these modern challenges, such as less access to the outdoors, increased 'screen time', and alcohol and drug abuse in the community, are reducing children and young people's ability to cope with stress and life in general.

"This decrease in resilience may be a factor in the increasing community concern about violence, self-harm, mental illness and other issues affecting young people.

"The increasing number of children and young people in the care of the State and those that come into contact with police and the courts are particularly vulnerable and will be a focus of the residency.

"Focussing our programs and services on the best available research is vital and Dr Ungar will help us consider how we can apply the evidence here in WA to help build stronger, more resilient children and young people."

For more information: www.cyp.wa.gov.au

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