



## Media Release

---

<b>Date</b>	13 March 2009
<b>Re</b>	<b>Commissioner impressed with local commitment to kids</b>
<b>Contact</b>	Darren Gillespie 0434 327 804 / 6213 2208

---

The WA Commissioner for Children and Young People said meeting local people committed to supporting children and young people and seeing the benefits were highlights of her recent visit to the region.

Michelle Scott, the State's first children's Commissioner, made the observation following her two day visit to Bunbury where she held meetings with representatives of organisations that work with and on behalf of children and young people.

Ms Scott said her visit on 11 and 12 March was part of a State-wide travel program she is undertaking to ensure she hears about successful programs and issues affecting children and young people.

"My work is informed by what is actually happening in the community so hearing the views and ideas of children, young people and the people that work with them is very important," Ms Scott said.

"The information I gather from these visits helps me advocate for change when speaking to government departments and Ministers."

Ms Scott said many of the issues expressed by Bunbury people were similar to concerns she has heard when visiting other areas of the State.

"Bunbury people told me the lack of transport options makes it hard for young people living in and around Bunbury to get to activities and services.

"They also said short-term, inflexible funding makes planning and developing services for children and young people difficult.

"I have been calling on the State Government to increase both the amount of funding and the length and flexibility of funding agreements to better support young people.

"However, people I met with in Bunbury said they believe local governments have a key role to play in planning and providing services for young people, and I agree with them."

Ms Scott said she believed collaboration between agencies was key so it was very pleasing to hear about successes of mutli-agency groups during meetings with the Bunbury Early Years Network and with community representatives with an interest in issues affecting youth, including the Investing in Our Youth Committee.

Ms Scott also visited Kingston Primary School, Djidi Djidi Aboriginal School and the South West Aboriginal Medical Service.

"All, of these organisations run many fantastic programs and I saw the benefits first hand during my visit – happy, healthy children.

"Djidi Djidi School in particular is achieving outstanding results including high attendance rates, connection with language and culture and developing kids' pride in their school and education.

"It is important though for governments to support families and communities to care for children and young people so we are not reliant on the goodwill and extra effort of a relatively small number of people.

"This is a message I am regularly expressing to decision makers."

Michelle Scott was appointed the Commissioner for Children and Young People in December 2007.

The role of the Commissioner is to improve the wellbeing of the more than 500,000 children and young people across the State, by working in partnership with them, their families, the community and government.

The main way she does this is to work towards influencing laws, programs and services that affect children and young people.

ENDS

TRIM 09/2557