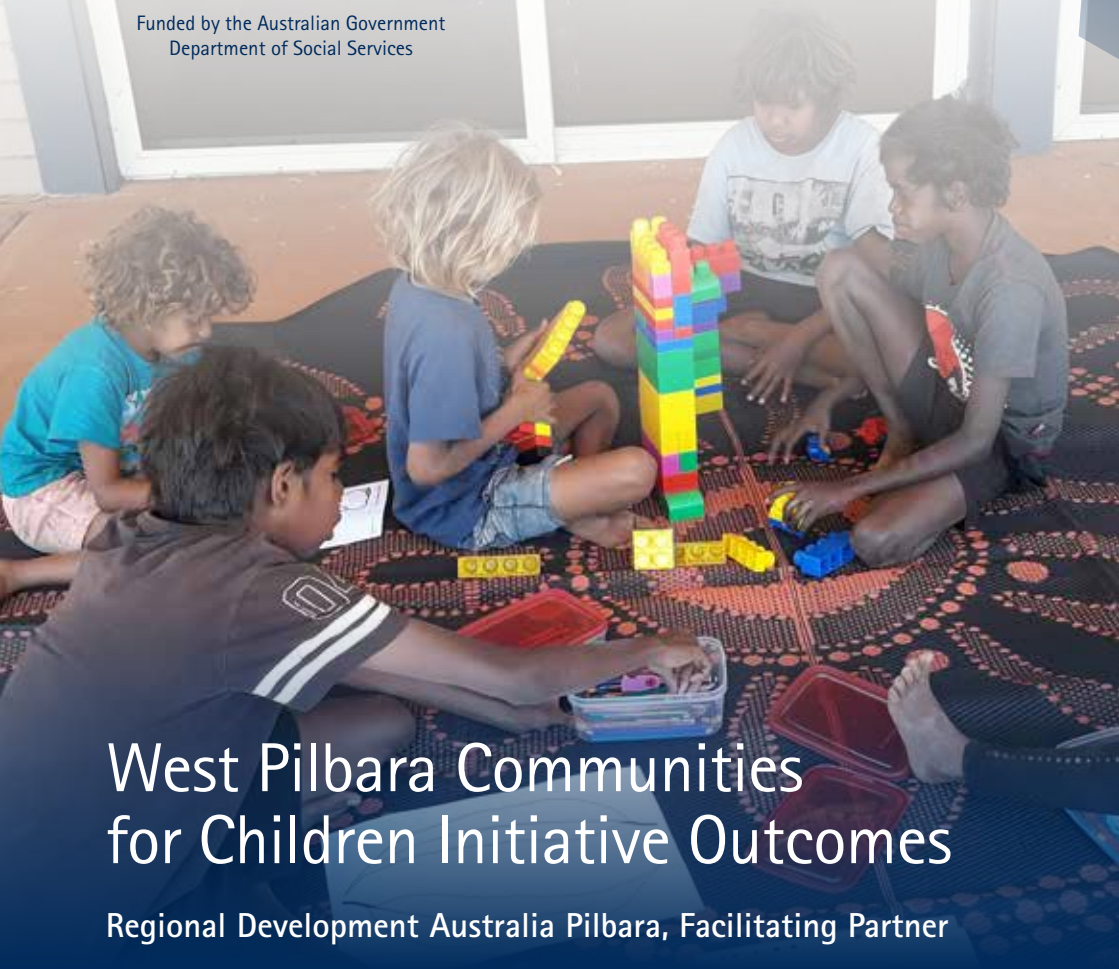




## West Pilbara Communities for Children

Funded by the Australian Government  
Department of Social Services



# West Pilbara Communities for Children Initiative Outcomes

Regional Development Australia Pilbara, Facilitating Partner

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The West Pilbara Communities for Children (WPC4C) Initiative is funded by the Department of Social Services. The Initiative was established to support the empowering of children, families and communities through innovative programmes in response to community needs.

### The six priority areas of the WPC4C Initiative are as follows:

1. **Transition to School:** The Initiative promotes strength based partnerships with parents or guardians, who require additional support to effectively work with their children to achieve social and emotional wellbeing, build secure attachments and develop resilience.
2. **Families:** Programmes funded through the Initiative provide a range of parenting support initiatives, which are considered an effective way to improve the health and wellbeing of children, young people and families.
3. **Connections between children and adult services:** The Initiative supports a collaborative approach to understand any gaps in service delivery and connect with other services in the Early Years sector. This will facilitate better interactions between services, gain access to vulnerable families and children as well as connect to other community partners and the broader service networks.
4. **Sense of belonging and participation:** The Initiative facilitates the purchase of evidence-based programmes that promote participation of vulnerable families and children in their community and offer resources to meet particular needs of families and children.
5. **Health and wellbeing:** The diverse programmes under the Initiative, support opportunities for families and children to participate together to promote health and wellbeing. Particular focus is on the development of positive attachments, better understanding of child development and child rearing strategies.
6. **Suicide awareness and prevention:** The programmes available under the Initiative create the opportunity for families and children to attend activities that enhance school readiness, create a sense of belonging, and support achievement in learning and development potential. Whilst offering strategies to maintain social and emotional wellbeing.

This year the Initiative, through Regional Development Australia Pilbara, funded seven Community Partners to deliver 14 parenting programmes and children's activities across the West Pilbara.

The information provided in this booklet offers a snapshot of the outcomes of the programmes and activities delivered through the West Pilbara Communities for Children's Initiative.

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# Aboriginal Biodiversity Conservation Foundation Limited (ABCFL)

## Ranger for Life Programme (R4L)

The Ranger for Life (R4L) programme, which commenced in August 2016, empowers aboriginal families and enhances traditional values through delivery of on-country environmental education activities to children aged four to eleven years old. R4L aims to improve the value aboriginal families place on education by reducing the risk of children becoming disengaged. The programme's bush classrooms, excursions, after school and lunch time activities improve performance and emotional instability faced by some aboriginal children who may be struggling in the present education system.

In Term 4 of 2018, there was one student whose story clearly highlights the value and impact that the Ranger for Life programme has on its participants. This student from the Wakuthuni Community had been identified by the Tom Price Primary School Principal and Aboriginal Islander Education Officer as completely disengaged (100% non-attendance) and at risk of never returning to school. The ABC Foundation staff began a relationship building process with the young girl and her family, including donating a school desk, purchasing stationery supplies and creating a folder of resources for her to

practice her writing in the safety of her home. Each Friday, ABC Foundation staff would collect the student and engage her in a bush classroom at Wakuthuni Community which included use of bespoke ABC Foundation resources for basic numeracy and literacy practice. At the end of the school term, the ABC Foundation was able to encourage this young student back to school via bush classroom and lunch activity visits and to attend the R4L after school programme as a reward for her school attendance. The young girl now has a renewed enthusiasm for school which the ABC Foundation hopes will continue into the new school year.

Another highlight for the Ranger for Life programme was receiving the donation of two brand new BMX bikes from Rio Tinto. These bikes had been part of a team building exercise and were donated along with two vouchers to purchase helmets. The BMX bikes were used as a prize for the end of the school term and rewarded to two students who displayed R4L values of RESPECT for elders, country, peers and themselves. It was also attached to attendance and good behaviour at school. This produced a wonderful outcome with students actively vying for the prize.

# Empowering People in Communities Inc (EPIC)



## Discovering Relationships Using Music, Beliefs, Emotions, Attitudes and Thoughts (Drumbeat)

The name DRUMBEAT is an acronym for Discovering Relationships Using Music, Beliefs, Emotions, Attitudes and Thoughts. It is a programme for children aged eight to eleven years old that uses hand drumming as a way for participants to explore and engage connections between making music together as a group and development of healthy relationships. The primary aim of the programme is to increase self-esteem and develop social and emotional skills.

Term 3 of 2018 marked the start of DRUMBEAT sessions in Karratha and there was a lot of interest in the programme, with the places for 10 students filling quickly and a waitlist created. This first class was very successful, and the children really enjoyed the sessions.

On the final session family members were invited to come along to watch a performance by the children which comprised of a series of songs and complex rhythms that the group had been practicing for weeks. After the show the children were awarded a certificate, and everyone celebrated with an afternoon tea.



## Friends for Life

Friends for Life is a programme for children aged eight to eleven years old which teaches participants life skills and ways to cope with difficult situations. In 2018, there were four participants in the Term 3 sessions of the programme run at the Karratha Family Centre, with positive feedback reported by the programme's facilitator, the participants' parents and their school teachers. For example, of the four children, there was one boy who was quieter and more reserved than the other children, so the group worked together to identify common interests which were then used in ice-breaker activities thereafter. At the conclusion of the programme the boy's mother reported that she had not anticipated much change to come from a short eight-week programme but that she had in fact noticed some positive small changes which she was happy with. She has since enrolled in the Tuning into Kids programme, which is a parenting programme that compliments Friends for Life.

Another parent contacted the Friends for Life facilitator after the completion of the programme to report that her daughter had really enjoyed it. The mother had met with the girl's teacher and learned that she seemed to be socialising better at school, listening

to others and was generally happier than what she had been. She also recently got her first merit award from this school for good teamwork in Science. The mother concluded that her daughter had indeed benefitted from the programme and hoped she would take what she had learned into high school in 2019.

The highlight of the sessions for all the children was their work as a group around the theme of bullying. It was initially intended to be a brief conversation, but the topic resounded with some of the kids and they began to openly discuss their experiences, sharing their emotions and consoling each other. The programme facilitator noted that they were empathetic and encouraging, and it was heart-warming to see them come together as a group and each take turns talking and listening without being prompted. The children then chose to complete their session on the topic by creating posters and performing a skit about bullying.



## Fun Friends

The Fun Friends programme helps guide the social and emotional development of children aged four to seven years old by providing strategies to support them to approach life challenges with confidence, to build empathy towards others and to create friendships. The programme teaches skills that nurture a child's development during these crucial early years, giving them the ability to excel and smoothly transition into school life. In 2018, Fun Friends was held in Dampier in Term 3 and Karratha in Term 4.

Many parents in Dampier had noted the struggle of travelling to Karratha to attend programmes for their children, so the Dampier offering was well-received by local families as it better enabled them access to the programme and reduced feelings of 'missing out' on the opportunity to participate. The children in the group ranged from a child that had just turned four to one that was turning eight at the beginning of 2019, so there was a noticeable difference in maturity levels across the group. Initially, the youngest of the group showed little interest in participating in some of the activities, while the older children seemed disinterested in including him. However, a positive result of the sessions was that as the sessions progressed, the older participants took on board the message of inclusion and actively encouraged the little one to join in.



In the Karratha group, there were four boys and one girl enrolled in the programme. Initially the girl was disappointed with not having any fellow female participants to interact with, but she quickly became comfortable around the boys and her mother reported that she was enjoying the programme and keen to attend each session. There were also several reports of positive outcomes for the boys in the group. For example, there was one who has an ill parent and there had been concerns about the boy's behaviour as a teacher had indicated that he was acting out in class. On completion of the programme the child's mother reported that his teachers had seen a marked improvement in his behaviour and willingness to participate in activities, and that he was more level-headed and rational at home. Another parent praised the programme's facilitator for her kind and approachable manner, noting her child had loved attending and talked positively about the activities he had engaged in. The mother further commented that she had hoped her son would gain more confidence and be able to interact well with other children he didn't know, and that this had indeed happened. One of other boys was said to have enjoyed the programme so much that he turned down an outing with his father so as not to miss a session!





## Tuning into Kids

Tuning into Kids is a parenting programme which aims to impart helpful ways of teaching children the skills of emotional intelligence, the ability to understand and control emotions, as well as being able to communicate to others about how they feel. In Term 4 of 2018 there was a small group of parents that attended the six-session programme in Karratha. In this group each of the attendees understood the concept of emotional coaching but some expressed that it was difficult to incorporate their newly acquired skills into their daily life.



The positive impacts of the programme can be seen in the story of one parent who, early in the sessions said she struggled to regulate her own emotions, so she found talking with her children about their emotions strange and uncomfortable. In the final session this parent shared with the group that a 'feelings' handout from session two was regularly being used in her home, where the children would point to the feeling face that best suited the emotion they were feeling at that time. This would then open the channels for discussions around the feeling and what events had happened to make the child feel this way. This parent spoke of the fact that although she was still struggling to adopt the emotional coaching parenting style, she recognised that she had never spoken with her children about their emotions and feelings on this level before and she was feeling more connected to them emotionally by completing this activity each day.



### Drumbeat

In speaking with participants' families and asking them what they felt the benefits were from attending this programme, the majority responded that the increase in self-confidence and resilience in their children was very apparent. Parents also enjoyed the fact that the children were able to learn a new skill (drumming) while tackling some quite serious issues. The programme was rated excellent by all parents involved.



### Parent-Child Mother Goose (PCMG)

Parent-Child Mother Goose is an evidence-based programme that strengthens attachment and interaction between parents or carers and their young children by introducing them to the pleasure and power of using rhymes, songs and stories together. Through the programme, parents gain skills and confidence that help them create positive family patterns during their children's crucial early years. At the same time, children benefit from enjoyable, healthy early experiences with language and communication.

Over the last six months of 2018, lots of new LOTE families (families who speak Languages Other Than English) came into Karratha Community House, and these families are the focus of the Parent-Child Mother Goose programme. The initial approach is often made by the husband, and then when the mother

and children start coming to the sessions it becomes evident that there is very little English and limited means to communicate. The PCMG programme therefore employs the use of songs, rhymes and stories to communicate as they are universal in any language. The programme's facilitators reported that in a short amount of time, the programme successfully enables participants to interact with each other in the sessions even if they are from different ethnic backgrounds, and their confidence starts to grow. Participants in the programme equally reported positive outcomes, including that they enjoyed the opportunity to socialise with other mothers, meet different people and make new friends, while their children liked getting out of the house, engaging in the programme's activities and have become more confident around other children.

## Drumbeat

At PCYC, Drumbeat involved 10 one-hour structured sessions with a group of 10-12 participants and with themes including developing self-responsibility, values, emotional expression, identity, peer pressure, harmony and teamwork.

In the 2018 PCYC Drumbeat group, one participant experienced huge progress in his personal development through the programme. This young boy has diagnosed severe Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) and during the first two sessions he did not participate but observed the entire session. By the end of session three, he sat with the programme for half an hour. At session four he sat with his peers to participate. He then went on when his peers started to get distracted, to tell the group to listen and participate. This a huge achievement for this participant and shows that the programme can engage with difficult children and help them learn even simple skills like sitting still and listening. Another success was with the Year 3 class who decided that their performance would be at their school assembly in front of the entire school. This was a huge step, as initially most of the participants presented with shyness and lacking confidence. Alongside their PCYC facilitators, all 10 participants got up on stage and their performance was well received by their peers and teachers.

## Footy Fundamentals

Footy Fundamentals is a planned and structured Early Years AFL (Australian Football League) programme for children aged between two and five years. The aim of the programme is to teach and develop fundamental movement skills in a fun and safe environment, incorporating AFL Football, and using multisport equipment. PCYC delivers this programme in three different age group sessions tailored appropriately to the age and mentality.

A key element of the 2018 Footy Fundamentals programme was the introduction of a nursery rhyme that was incorporated into each session and sung along with movement. This provided a chance for the children attending the session to discover new language, utilise their memory and have a connection to the programme. This song now gets the programme positively moving and the children are excited and well engaged. Another constructive component of the programme was incorporating a "Breathe, Blow, Cough" activity to one of the sessions where it was observed that a lot of the young children were presenting with runny noses. This involved getting the children to take a deep breath and blow their noses, followed by coughs to clear the chest. Participants were also given packs to take home which included tissues, sanitiser and balloon, as well as information for the parents.



## Kids Safe Space

The Kids Safe Space programme consists of Wednesday night sessions for the youth of Roebourne aged five to twelve years of age to access a safe environment and participate in positive, structured activities during high-risk times for antisocial behaviour. The sessions also provide a platform for the young people to learn vital life skills and knowledge such as good personal hygiene and cooking skills. Additionally, the programme enables external agencies the opportunity to engage with the young people in one specific area, and correct referral that allows for individual issues to be addressed in a timely manner.

In 2018, PCYC had observed a high increase of children engaging in smoking, with some as young as eight, and staff were continuously submitting correct referrals for these identified children. PCYC therefore linked in with Mawarnkarra Health Service – Tackling Indigenous Smoking (TIS) team using the opportunity and platform of the Kids Safe Space programme to successfully engage and educate these children. The TIS team attended

the Wednesday session every fortnight, using a hands-on and play based format in the education sessions, in order to get the children more engaged and participating better. Through visual props, card games and other education activities, the children learned about the chemicals in cigarettes and the health impacts of smoking. During each session children made comments like “that’s gross” or “I can’t believe that”. As a result of their learnings, the children started to peer on peer educate and to call their peers out if they had started smoking.

Another distinct component of the Kids Safe Space programme has been juicing of fresh fruit. At PCYC lots of the children come with fizzy drinks, so the Centre offers juicing for all young people as a healthy drink option. They have access and selections to create and make their own delicious drinks. On several occasions there have been lines waiting their turn to create their own juices. In conjunction, a poster was created by the young people of all the healthy foods vs. unhealthy foods available – this poster is now displayed in the centre and regularly becomes a topic of discussion with participants.

## Safe Space School Holiday Programme

The Safe Space School Holiday Programme consists of night sessions during school holidays for the youth of Roebourne aged five to twelve years of age to access a safe environment and participate in positive, structured activities during high-risk times for antisocial behaviour. The sessions also provide a platform for the young people to learn vital life skills and knowledge such as good personal hygiene and cooking skills. Additionally, the programme enables external agencies the opportunity to engage with the young people in one specific area, and correct referral that allows for individual issues to be addressed in a timely manner.

The highlight of the July 2018 school holidays was having the Indigenous Hip Hop Project come into PCYC to work with the children in preparation for the Children NAIDOC Talent Show. Each child was worked with individually, and in a group, to build self-esteem. Sixty children positively, and regularly, attended the workshops. On the night of the Talent Show, children were given the option of entering, and with 25 entries – more than originally anticipated – the event reached maximum capacity. Performances were fantastic and well received by the crowd. This event attracted over 110 community members to watch the children perform and it was wonderful to see the smiles on the children's faces once they noticed their parents in the crowd.



## Circle of Security

The Circle of Security Parenting (COS-P) programme aims to assist and support young, vulnerable families to reflect, learn and apply healthier patterns of interaction in a community based, safe and supportive environment. For the July to December 2018 period, three COS-P programmes were delivered in Karratha over six weeks, and for the first time this included one men's only group programme. Programme evaluation results indicate that all participants were satisfied, with improved confidence in their parenting style and how they rate their parenting skills. The COS-P programme momentum continues to increase with high attendance at the sessions, the continued growth being attributed to word-of-mouth and positive feedback in the community.

Participants' feedback on the programme highlights a variety of different positive impacts that they experienced in their parenting and family life. One parent reported being much calmer and consequently a significant change in his children's behaviour, stating he wished he had done the programme sooner and that he had recommended it to his work colleagues. Another parent described how COS-P had helped with identifying emotional triggers and reflecting on what works and doesn't work for them. The parent reported realising the value in being more



level headed, being with the kids more, and understanding what is really happening when they are struggling. It was further noted that the kids had perceived a difference too, and that it was reassuring to learn that good parenting is getting it right 30% of the time, not 100%. Similar sentiments were conveyed by another parent, who further added that it was reassuring and empowering to have gained a deeper understanding of children's emotional reactions. She also reflected on the value of having completed the programme with her husband as they were able to hold each other accountable, talk about how the new learnings have helped change a situation or an outcome because of the way it has been addressed, and bounce off each other through the journey.





## Parent-Child Mother Goose – (PCMG)

V Swans Ashburton delivers the Parent-Child Mother Goose (PCMG) programme to children aged between zero to four years of age and their family members, caregivers, and friends, from the V Swans "Powerhouse" youth and community centre in Onslow. In 2018 the programme facilitators kept the schedule of the programme the same for a longer period to allow people to learn the songs, rhymes and stories better. Consequently, participants reported that they are using the songs and rhymes at home and some of the children can sing the songs without prompts. New songs and stories were also added to the existing schedule to evoke slow change and learning, also allowing people to request something they wished to re-visit.

In 2018, the standout success of the V Swans Ashburton PCMG programme was that of a three-year-old girl attending with her mother since her family arrived back to Onslow from New Zealand. This child had not been involved in the programme before and was slow to socialise, lacking self-confidence with other children and singing. Once she started to speak it was evident that her language was lacking, she invented sounds to fit in her

speech and her language levels were assessed by a visiting speech pathologist as behind for her age. This pathologist sat in on a session and was excited about the benefits that the PCMG programme could offer to children with deficiencies in speech. The little girl has been a regular attendee at PCMG and in the last two weeks of the programme begun correctly singing the "Lullaby" which is the longest and most complex song in the programme. She knows all the words and actions and her mother told staff that she taught the song and actions to her older sister (six years) with the pair now regularly singing it together at bed time.





## Exploring Together

Exploring Together is a short term, multi-group early intervention programme for children aged between six to twelve years of age, who are at risk of developing serious emotional and behavioural problems. The programme aims to enhance children's self-esteem and peer relationships, increase resilience, decrease problematic behaviour, address parenting issues and parent's own difficulties, improve parent-child and teacher-child interactions and strengthen the family unit. Two Exploring Together programmes were delivered in the second half of 2018, one in Roebourne and one in Karratha.

In the Roebourne group, the programme made a positive impact on a grandmother who has custody of her grandchild and had wanted to attend with her grandson to improve their relationship. She wanted to learn strategies on how to deal with withdrawn behaviour that the child was presenting, also to learn how to communicate with him and have an open and trustful dialogue. The grandmother's primary concern was her grandson's school attendance. Through the games that were implemented in the programme, staff discussed with him the importance of school for his future. In addition, they discussed how it is important to trust and listen to the advice that his grandmother gives him. The grandmother started to notice some improvement in the child's behaviour and in their communication. She advised that her

grandchild's school attendance had improved since their involvement in the programme.

In Karratha, there was a mother in the group who had expressed concern about her son's anxiety and reported that after the first term of the programme she saw a big improvement. She noticed that her son was less worried and was ready to deal with new situations or with regular activities such as going to school or attending rugby. The mother noted that at the beginning of the programme, it was hard for her to change little things, but using the strategies she had learned through the programme had helped him a lot. She added that he is now more relaxed and happier to attend school. Furthermore, the family attended the programme for a second time with the father also participating, because of the progress he observed his son had made, and the big improvement in the relationship between the mother and son.





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**An Australian Government Initiative**

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