



An independent program evaluation  
conducted by Brendan Renkin  
May to July 2019.

# Mens Outreach Service Aboriginal Corporation: LifeCycle Youth Connect Program Evaluation 2019



Goal	Finding	Evidence
Youth Skill development	Through delivery of 60 sessions to over 535 young people, there is evidence of skill development, peer to peer learning, and peer to peer teaching occurring. Skills vary from simple to more complicated bicycle repair tasks.	Young people's survey responses Participant interviews Stakeholder observation
Young people's increased awareness of the availability of support and resources	Evidence of increased awareness and new knowledge. Additional benefit of service provider staff increasing familiarisation with other service providers, developing referral pathways.	Young people's survey responses. Participant interviews Stakeholder observation
Enhanced relationships between young people and adults working with youth	Clear evidence of improved relationships however varies across different communities depending on the level of involvement of program partners. Additional benefit of improved networks between program partners.	Young people's survey responses. Participant interviews Stakeholder observation
Increase in young people's self esteem	Clear evidence of improvement in self esteem	Young people's survey responses. Participant interviews Stakeholder observation
Increased health outcomes	Increased use, and changed patterns of use of bicycles	Stakeholder observation
Reduction in crime / anti-social behaviour	Anecdotal improvements noted by community members and police.	Stakeholder observation



### TOP 3 FINDINGS



Developed a strong reputation through delivery of 60 well attended and practical bicycle repair sessions for young people.



Provided an attractive engagement tool for young people, mainly 8 to 14-year old's, and clearly meeting identified program outcomes.



Established good partnerships with key stakeholders and community members.



### WHAT MAKES IT WORK



Young people in the Kimberley love bikes



Flexible approach to work and partnerships



Staff and partners work with young people to build trust and skills



## Summary

### Program Description

LifeCycle Youth Connect (LifeCycle) operates mobile bicycle repair sessions for young people in targeted communities across the West Kimberley. It began delivering sessions in September 2018 and has six goals that include youth skill development and increased self-esteem and health outcomes, increasing awareness of the availability of support and resources and enhancing relationships between young people and adults and reduction in crime / anti-social behaviour.

LifeCycle employs two staff who work in partnership with relevant local organisations to promote, host and assist. LifeCycle has taken a flexible approach and formed partnerships with a range of organisations including WA Police, ALIVE & Kicking Goals!, Broome PCYC, Derby Youth Centre and Aboriginal community schools and councils.

Sixty Lifecycle sessions have been held in 7 different communities, with over 530 young people attending.

### Evaluation Methodology

A process evaluation framework was used to explore and identify stakeholder and participant perspectives on the delivery and impact of the program. Data was collected through written surveys and interviews with young people, hour long interviews with 20 stakeholders, observations at 9 sessions held in 6 different locations and informal interviews with parents and guardians.

### Findings

- Bicycle use by young people aged under 14 years is high and is the main form of transport and outdoor activity
- LifeCycle has developed a strong reputation based on consistently delivering well attended bicycle repair sessions
- LifeCycle attendees are predominately aged between 8 and 14 years old, and attendance is around 30 percent of young people under 14 in the Aboriginal communities visited
- The program is clearly meeting the two goals of increasing young people's skills and self-esteem. Through the way staff deliver the program and the involvement of other service providers the program is increasing the awareness of resources available and enhancing relationships with adults. There is also some evidence of contributing to the longer-term goals of increased health outcomes and reduction in crime and anti-social behaviour

### Stakeholder Suggestions

Stakeholders were positive about the program and suggested more sessions with more staff or adults. Multiple stakeholders also suggested providing food and structured activities to maintain interest for young people while waiting and to try to attract parents.

### Recommendations

Mens Outreach Service Aboriginal Corporation continue to deliver the program as a successful way of engaging with young people aged under 14, and continue to explore opportunities to expand the program to other locations.

LifeCycle should consider more promotion on Facebook, developing an attendance plan, working to have more adults present during sessions, adding a structured activity to maintain interest during sessions and explore how to attract more parents.

## A note on terminology

In this report the term **'young people'** is used to refer to any person who attended the program to engage in bicycle repair. In order to preserve the anonymity of the adults interviewed (e.g. LifeCycle staff, WA police officers, employees of partner organisations and parents) this report will use the term **'interview participants'**.

## Program Description

LifeCycle Youth Connect (LifeCycle) is a program designed as a diversionary activity for Aboriginal youth aged 8 to 18 through the operation of mobile bicycle repair sessions across targeted communities in the West Kimberley. The program is run by Mens Outreach Service Aboriginal Corporation (MOSAC), an Aboriginal corporation formed in 2001. MOSAC are based in Broome and operate across the Kimberley. LifeCycle works in partnership with local communities and service providers to achieve six goals identified in the program design:

- Youth skill development
- Young people's increased awareness of the availability of support and resources
- Enhanced relationships between young people and adults working with youth
- Increase in young peoples' self esteem
- Increased health outcomes
- Reduction in crime / anti-social behaviour

The program builds on a history of other similar programs using bicycles as a tool to engage with aboriginal people in the Kimberley.

LifeCycle was funded through a \$188,260 grant from the Criminal Property Confiscation Grants Program from the Department for the Attorney General. A smaller grant from Lotterywest covered some of the cost of the equipment and evaluation.

LifeCycle was initially intended to start in July 2016 however due to internal organisational issues the program did not commence delivering sessions until September 2018. From August 2018 the program has been managed by the Men's



*The LifeCycle vehicle and trailer on the road*

Outreach Service Chief Operating Officer, and employed 2 staff members. LifeCycle has delivered sessions in 7 different locations.

LifeCycle staff use a dedicated vehicle and custom-built trailer to travel the large distances to the various locations where sessions are held. Staff are often required to stay overnight in remote locations as same day return travel is not feasible.

In each location staff have negotiated agreements with relevant local organisations to host Lifecycle sessions. In some communities this includes the police, local school and community council. In Broome sessions have been held at the Police and Community Youth Club and in Derby at the Shire run youth centre. In Bidadanga and Looma the local police station hosts sessions, in Djarindjin and Ardyaloon sessions are held in community council facilities. Dependant on availability, staff from these host organisations attend and assist to varying degrees and are the 'local champions' for the program. LifeCycle uses these local champions to make arrangements about when they will visit the community, where the sessions will be located and to assist spreading the word about upcoming sessions.

## Partners

LifeCycle has taken a flexible approach and attempted to form partnerships with a broad range of organisations depending on the delivery location.

### WA Police Service

The WA Police Service has been the key supporter of the program and regular meetings between senior police and LifeCycle have occurred. The program has worked closely with the Youth Crime Intervention Officers in Broome and Derby, who have assisted with identifying, finding and transporting young people. Police officers in Bidadanga and Looma have regularly promoted, hosted, attended and assisted during sessions.

### Police and Community Youth Centre Broome

The Broome PCYC hosts LifeCycle sessions held in Broome as part of school holiday programs. The PCYC staff have limited time to participate but do so occasionally and have also provided lunch on occasion.

The PCYC contains a gym, indoor basketball courts and outside basketball courts and a large concrete slab. Broome Police Youth Crime Intervention Officers have an office at PCYC. There are two staff at the PCYC, and as well as operating the gym, they run holiday and term projects for young people and supervise young people accessing the facilities outside of school hours. Staff at PCYC commented that they would like to see more co-ordination of holiday programs but find LifeCycle the most consistent organisation that runs programs.



*LifeCycle employee Arak Dann working with a young person in Bidadanga*

### ALIVE & Kicking Goals! (AKG)

AKG is a peer education based youth suicide prevention program. AKG staff have attended and participated in LifeCycle sessions run in Brome, Bidyadanga, Ardyaloon and Lombadina/ Djarindjin. AKG staff spoke positively about the program seeing it as a good tool for kids who might not otherwise engage with services. They reported that they have been provided with good prior notice about proposed dates and the coordination works well.

### Derby Youth Centre

The Derby Youth Centre is run by the Shire of Derby / West Kimberly, providing a place for young people between 11 and 17 years old to gather and operating programs for young people between 2 and 6pm on weekdays. The youth centre also hosts LifeCycle sessions on its front lawn and promotes these sessions in the community.

### Community schools and Community Councils

To a varying degree in different communities LifeCycle has also partnered with local community schools and councils to promote sessions in the local community, and in one case host LifeCycle session on their grounds. LifeCycle has also provided schools with repaired bicycles for them to use as rewards for student achievement. Due to time constraints and availability, no school representatives participated in the evaluation. Representatives from the two different community councils were supportive of the program and had actively worked to promote it in the community. They both indicated that they were trying to gather funds and support to construct riding tracks within their community and saw a key role for LifeCycle in these projects.

### Informal partnerships

LifeCycle has also worked on an ad hoc basis with different local organisations to increase and support the use of bicycles in communities. For example, in Bidyadanga the team worked with the local swimming pool supervisor to put together bicycles that were used as a reward for achievement.

#### **PROFILE: CHRIS FOX. OIC. BIDYADANGA POLICE STATION**

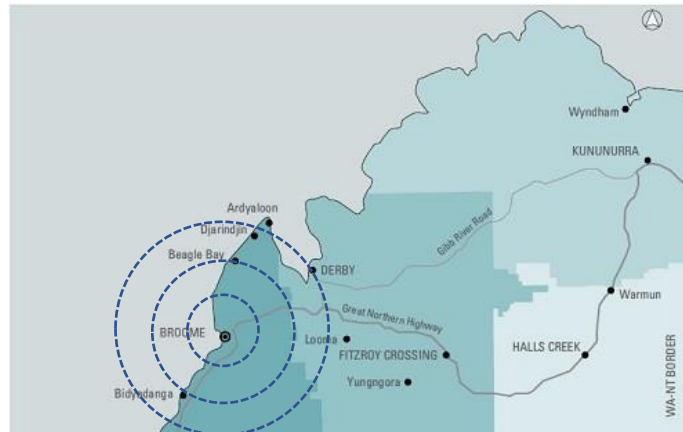
Chris Fox has been at Bidyadanga for 3 and a half years has worked hard to successfully engage with kids. Every afternoon the station's lawn is filled with kids and Chris was enthusiastic about LifeCycle from the moment the team first visited. He attends sessions whenever he can and uses his skills as a mechanical fitter to help get bikes back on the road. He thinks that kids love it because they learn new skills, get to be hands on and come away with something useable and fun – a working bike. The difference after a visit is plain to see, more kids riding bikes to school and forming bike groups to race around the community, which results in tired kids falling asleep at night rather than wandering the streets. It benefits kids, the community and improves community safety and Chris' only request is that they come to Bidyadanga more often.





## Program delivery

The program has held sessions in 7 different communities – the townships of Broome and Derby (221 km, from Broome) and 5 Aboriginal communities – Bidyadanga (196 km south from Broome), One Arm Point / Ardyaloon (218km north from Broome), Djarindjin / Lombadina, Beagle Bay on an unsealed road and Looma (272km north east from Broome). The venue of the sessions in each community varies depending on a range of factors, including facilities, involvement of locals or program partners and what else is happening in the community.



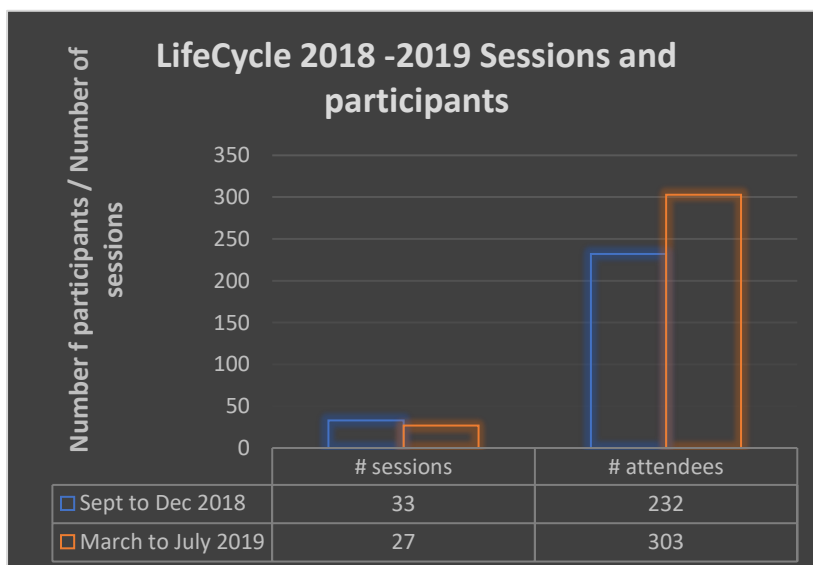
Map of the Kimberley region, circles are 100 km as the crow flies

	BROOME	DERBY	BIDYADANGA	LOOMA	DJARINDJIN	BEAGLE BAY	ARDYALOON
<b>POPULATION</b>	13,984	3,321	617	531	395	384	365
<b>INDIGENOUS</b>	21%	47%	90%	98%	79%	93%	92.5%
<b># UNDER 14</b>	3,259	787	187	178	111	130	128

Demographic statistics for selected communities from 2016 ABS Census. More details in Appendix 1.

Depending on the size of the community and distance to travel some sessions are held back to back over consecutive days and some sessions are single day. During school term sessions commence after school finishes, around 2.15 and finish at around dark. During school holidays sessions commence around 10am and finish around 4pm.

In the period September to December 2018, the program held 33 sessions, with 232 participants in 5 different communities.



From February 2019, Derby and Looma were added as locations. In 2019, 27 sessions were held with 303 participants. The reduced numbers in 2019 was due to the combination of communities being inaccessible during the Wet season and prolonged illness of both staff members.



## Evaluation Methodology

A process evaluation framework was used to explore and identify stakeholder and participants perspectives, perceptions and engagement in the program as a means of understanding the impact as measured against the 6 program goals.

Data was initially collected through written surveys provided to attendees at LifeCycle sessions. including young people, LifeCycle staff and staff of partner organisations. LifeCycle staff collected attendance lists by asking young people who had their bicycles repaired to write down their name and sign the attendance sheet.

Subsequently as an independent evaluator I attended Lifecycle sessions held in Bidgydanga (3 sessions), One Arm Point / Ardyaloon (1 session), Djarindjin – Lombadina (1 session), Derby (1 session), Looma (1 session) and Broome (2 sessions). I observed the sessions, interviewed young people and parents, and from time to time participated in repair work.

I also conducted hour long interviews totalling 35 hours with people associated with the program including Men’s Outreach Service staff, community members, 7 WA police force members, community council staff, community council chairperson, parents, youth workers and teachers. These interviews occurred in private and interview participants were informed that their responses would inform the evaluation. However, to encourage candidness the informant’s names would not be attributed to any comments. A full list of interview participants is included in Appendix 2.

A draft copy of the report was provided to Men’s Outreach Service staff for review before the report was finalised. A plain language statement will be provided along with a video of program participation.

## The Evaluator

Brendan Renkin has qualifications in Law, International Community Development and Linguistics. He has lived in the Kimberly for 10 years and worked for various Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organisations throughout the Kimberley in governance, strategic planning, program development and implementation, and monitoring and evaluation.







## Findings

### Context

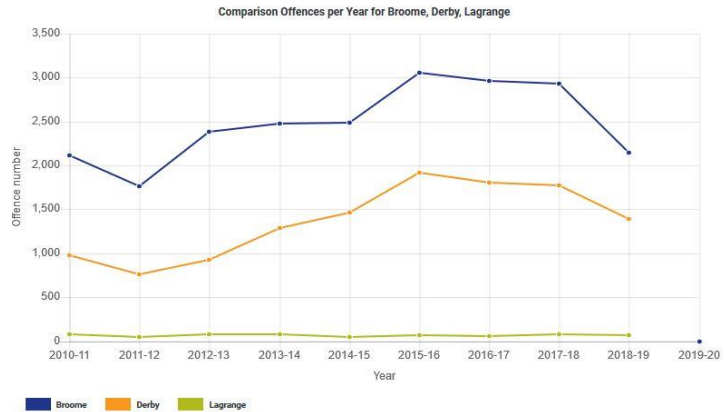
The program operates in two very different contexts - town based sessions (Broome and Derby) and Aboriginal community based sessions. These contexts have a significant effect on how many, which and why young people attend and the impact of the program.

In Broome and Derby, attendance fluctuates from very low numbers to very high numbers, and police officers have assisted by identifying and providing transport for young people to attend. Given the large overall populations in these locations

young people have access to a larger number of options in terms of acquiring bicycles, repairs and other activities or programs. In both Broome and Derby there are frequent public expressions of concern about the amount of youth crime and anti-social behaviour. The WA police have identified a significant number of Priority Prolific Offenders (PPO) who reside in these locations and developed a program working with PPOs on an individual basis. In these locations, comments from interview participants indicated that a significant number of young people are affected by family and domestic violence and do not have a safe place to go at night.

In the Aboriginal communities that LifeCycle visits, police offence statistics show a much lower total number of offences and offences per capita. However, there were differing opinions about the level of involvement of young people in criminal and anti-social behaviour, and several comments from interview participants about the increased impact of such behaviour in small, interconnected communities but noted that young people generally have at least one safe house to go at night. Attendance numbers at Lifecyle sessions are more consistent with young people attending themselves or parents dropping them off.

Comments from interview participants suggest there are few other activities or programs available.



Historical overall offence rates for Broome, Derby and Bidyadanga (LaGrange) taken from <https://www.police.wa.gov.au>. Note that rates as absolute numbers and per capita are much higher in Broome and Derby



Staff, young people, police and parents busy at a session in Bidyadanga

In both contexts bicycle use by young people appears anecdotally to be quite high, with many young people and interview participants observing bicycles the main form of transport for most young people, including getting to school or visiting swimming locations. However, the low density and distance between different suburbs in both Broome and Derby, and the availability of alternative

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*“Bicycle use by young people is very high...I’m overwhelmed by the number of bikes...some days I can’t get to any of the doors at the centre because they are blocked by bikes...I literally pick up bikes and drag them to get in the door.” (Youth Worker)*

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transport does seem to reduce the overall percentage of young people who use bicycles for transport in Broome and Derby. For young people aged over 14 years almost all comments from interview participants indicated a very low use of bicycles and a transition to motorbikes when possible.

### Frequency and timing

The program has held 60 sessions across 7 different locations in the period from September 2018 to July 2019, including a temporary suspension of sessions during January and February. There was also a further interruption to the delivery of sessions in 2019 attributable to staff illness. Despite these interruptions interview participants identified that LifeCycle has developed a reputation for consistent program delivery. This is particularly so in Bidyadanga and the Dampier Peninsula communities and is reflected in the attendance numbers. Some interview participants and young people indicated they would like to see the program visit more often, however they generally agreed that a regular monthly visit would be enough to meet the bicycle repair needs in their community.

During school term, sessions are timed to commence with the end of school to avoid attracting truant students and to attract as many students as possible on their way home from school. This appears to be an effective strategy. With each session usually running for up to 4 hours it also facilitated young people returning home to notify their parents and then attend with a bicycle and in some cases their parents.

### Audience and attendance

The attendance numbers are based on children signing an attendance sheet for each session, once their bicycle has been repaired. The age of the young people attending sessions was not been systematically recorded. However, the age range of those attending is predominantly 8 to 14 years old, with a smaller group aged under 8, confirmed by LifeCycle staff and other stakeholders. Children aged over 14 years did not participate in the program. Stakeholders identified that the older children did not like to mix with younger children, may not be active during daylight hours or were more interested in motorbikes. Despite some variance across locations, approximately 75 percent of attendees were male, and 25 percent were female.



*LifeCycle staff member Godfrey Perkins deep in conversation with two budding mechanics*

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*"I am surprised because kids have come that I haven't seen here before...including some kids who are Priority Prolific Offenders...I didn't think they would be interested in a bicycle program...but you won't see older kids turn up if they see younger kids there."*

(Youth worker)

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For sessions run in Aboriginal communities the number of attendees is consistent, with many repeat customers. Each session averages approximately 30 percent of the total permanent population aged between 4 and 14 years old. The sessions run in Broome and Derby have much higher fluctuating numbers, with some days attracting a handful of participants and others up to 35 young people.

An interview subject also noted that they had observed that LifeCycle was a good engagement tool for younger kids who often get pushed out of the way, and for finding new groups of kids that don't engage with adults through the usual sports programs.

### Locations

The portable nature of the equipment used by the LifeCycle program means that it can effectively hold sessions in any location. Lifecyle staff have developed and maintained strong working relationships with the partners that host them in each different community. Staff are also flexible and open to suggestions from local community members. The program has changed locations based on recommendations from locals to increase attendance and awareness. The portability also allows for sessions to be held in conjunction with other events. For example, a session was held during the Ardyaloon Family Day event which increased attendance and awareness across the community, particularly for parents.

LifeCycle has also used its partnerships with WA police to hold sessions in the police stations at Bidadanga and Looma. Both these locations are central, well known, frequented by young people, and provide ideal places to host sessions. Similarly, in Djarindjin and Arydaloon, partnerships with school and community council staff have allowed sessions to be held in prominent locations that are frequented by young people.

In Derby the Youth Centre is a central hub for young people, including the 63 young people who ordinarily reside at the nearby Aboriginal community of Mowanjum. However, the Youth Centre itself has recently seen a reduced attendance rate and so has suggested that the LifeCycle session be transferred to the local basketball courts during the very well attended community basketball competitions run on Monday afternoons and evenings.

In Broome, sessions have been held at the PCYC, a location that is frequented by some young people in Broome, with great indoor and outdoor facilities for bicycle repair and riding, including a recently

### PROFILE: WOZZY DAVEY CHAIRPERSON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Wozzy is the chairperson of the Ardyaloon community. Almost every kid in the community has a bike and uses it to go to school, fishing and swimming spots. The lack of tools and equipment and the harsh conditions in the community mean that without Lifecyle bicycles quickly become unrideable. When kids have a bike it is so much easier to go to school, and he sees them riding everywhere. The community is trying to construct a BMX track and Wazzy hopes that LifeCycle continues and expands to support kids riding bikes in the community and on the new track.



created BMX track. The Broome based WA Police Youth Crime Intervention Officers (YCIO) also have an office at the PCYC. However, the PCYC is located at the far end of the Town Beach area in Old Broome, some 2 kilometres from the Anne Street residential area, 3 kilometres from the Reid Rd/Cable Beach residential area and 10 kilometres from the Broome North residential area. Whilst when available YCIO and community liaison officers do drive around to collect kids they know, the location appears to contribute to young people not attending on their own initiative. When police are not available attendance can be minimal. Some interview participants suggested that the program look at alternative locations in Broome to combat this issue.

### Promotion and Notification

Various methods have been used to promote the sessions in different locations, including:

- Initially meeting with potential partners, including schools, to explain the program, offer assistance and looking for a suitable site
- Printed flyers with details completed by locals and posted in the community
- Announcements at school assembly by school staff
- Promotion by word of mouth in communities before arrival
- Facebook posts by program partners



Notices at the Derby Youth Centre

LifeCycle has relied largely on local partners to promote the date of sessions, which can be problematic due to difficulties with contacting people in communities, turnover of staff, competing priorities and reliability of local partners. On several occasions LifeCycle staff have made repeated efforts to notify people about the upcoming session with participants only becoming aware when they see the team arrive in the community.

A small number of interview participants indicated that more notice about the date of sessions as an improvement, and almost all interview participants suggested that the program should use Facebook as it was the principal means of sharing news.

### Reputation

LifeCycle staff and the vehicle were well identified in all locations, with parents and children beginning to come to the site as soon as LifeCycle staff parked the vehicle in a community. In a number of communities both adults and children know the staff by name or as the 'Bike Men' and spontaneously provided updates about what has been happening since the last LifeCycle visit. LifeCycle staff have provided calendars of when they will attend to relevant stakeholders and call with a few days advance notice to advise their attendance or non-attendance. This works more effectively in some communities but it appears to be a delicate art in finding the right time to remind community contacts about an upcoming trip so they are prepared when LifeCycle arrives in the community. Several interview participants gave feedback that they would like more notice and suggested the Facebook notices were the most effective way of sharing news in communities.

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*"They are very reliable, they are here when they say they are going to be here and they let us know when they are not able to come.*

*(Youth Worker)*

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Staff have developed strong relationships with the young people who attend through their familial connections, partnerships with community champions and ways of working with young people. All feedback received about staff was positive, and they had been observed working well with young people and being deep in conversation on a regular basis. The presence of an Aboriginal staff member who is known by or related to many of the attendees was regularly identified by interview participants as contributing to the strong relationships with young people.

## Program Goals

### SUMMARY

The program design identified 6 goals of the program. During the evaluation process interview participants were asked directly and indirectly about each of the goals. For goals 1 to 4 (Skills, Awareness, Relationships, Self-Esteem) without exception all interview participants indicated that they themselves had a positive gain or they had directly seen this occurring for participants connected with LifeCycle sessions.

In relation to goal 5 (Health), most interview participants had observed an increase in the patterns of bicycle use after LifeCycle sessions, particularly in communities where it is more readily observable. There is a large body of evidence to support the positive health benefits of increased physical activity.

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*“LifeCycle staff have a great way of working with kids, they seem to enjoy it as well. They have technical knowledge and take the time to explain what they are doing at their level and get the kids involved.”*

(Service Provider)

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In relation to goal 6 (Crime-Anti social behaviour reduction) there are differing opinions about whether participation in program had or could have any impact on what is seen as a complex and multi-dimensional issue. There was some anecdotal evidence of the reduction in general night time activity of young people residing in Aboriginal communities when there was an increased use of bicycles in the community. However, in Broome and Derby interview participants rejected such a connection and suggested that bicycle use was not in itself sufficient to impact on the involvement of young people in criminal or anti-social behaviour but needed to be part of a broader approach.

## Youth Skill development

Based on the interview and written responses of young people, the responses of interview participants who have been present during sessions and my direct observations, there is clear evidence of young people developing bicycle repair skills and developing a new familiarity with the name and purpose of tools. None of the young people I spoke to have tools at home or access to tools anywhere else, many were unfamiliar with the name or the purpose of most tools.



The level of repair work varied greatly, from simpler tasks like replacing punctured inner tubes, to more complex tasks like taking apart, regreasing and repacking bearings.

In their written responses participants self-identified having learnt to remove wheels, change tubes, repair brakes, how to put on and adjust gears, the effects of rust and how to remove it, how to put

spray on chains and how to add seatbelt webbing to reduce punctures. Similarly, in interviews respondents identified a range of skills they had learnt and expressed frustration that they did not have access to tools and parts between LifeCycle sessions.



*Young people in Bidadanga showing each other how to carry out repairs*

LifeCycle staff adopted an inclusive and didactic approach to repairing. I observed staff regularly asking younger people to assist or complete tasks and to collect tools or replacement parts. Young people were regularly quizzed as to why tasks were being done and were always provided with explanations. Frequently participants would immediately request that the seatbelt webbing be added to the new tube to protect it from punctures.

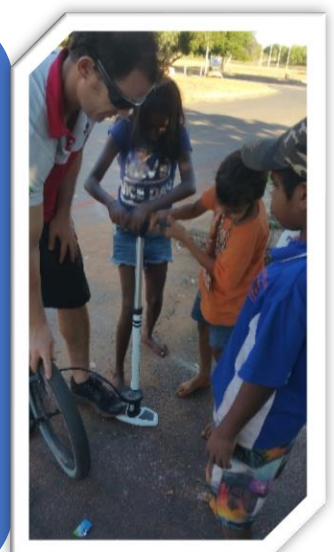
Additionally, I observed several young people in multiple locations using the skills they had learnt to assist their peers and instruct them on how to carry out the necessary repair. This ranged from helping identify tools when requested, to more complex tasks such as replacing a punctured tube or adjusting brakes and gears.

There is also some evidence of the development of more general life skills, including persistence, problem solving and patience. In the written survey responses participants self-identified that they had learnt:

- That trying different ways to get the wheel loose worked in the end
- I can take something old and no good and make it new again
- I need to take the wheel off before I can change the tube
- Never give up, even when it's not working
- Talking is required to fix things
- I know how to do it because I watched the others
- Now I know how to fix a flat tyre, if I have the tools then I can take it off, put in the ribbon, put the wheel back on. With a pump I can make the bike go again

### **PROFILE: BRENDAN DWYER, ARDYALOOON SCHOOL TEACHER**

Brendan Dwyer grew up in the Kimberley, became a teacher so he could live here and has been at Ardyaloon for 4 years. He acquired a fleet of fat bikes for the school which led to chronically truant students waiting for him at 6am to go riding. He is a keen supporter of LifeCycle, both promoting it in the school and attending and repairing bikes. He believes that kids in remote communities are excellent problem solvers and the skills they learn fixing bikes can be applied in a lot of areas, including maths and physics, and lead to a viable career. Brendan thinks that riding and repairing bikes builds confidence, helps gives kids a routine and can be great stress relief for all involved.





## Young people's increased awareness of the availability of support and resources

Achievement on this goal is hard to assess given that it is based on the awareness of young people themselves, and the range of support and resources is constantly in flux. The phenomena of Aboriginal communities being subject to a large number of external service providers who do not have local staff visiting to provide services is well known. Studies have shown some Kimberley Aboriginal communities can receive visits from over 80 different service providers during a 12 month

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*“Lifecycle is a good opportunity to have conversations with kids because often they are working one on one together with kids and have built a relationship with them and are achieving something together. Kids are open to talking if they feel comfortable and the circumstances are right.”*

(Youth Worker)

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period. This has led to the creation of community navigator positions in some communities including Djarindjin, with workers employed to help community members navigate the array of potential services on offer. In this context it is often the personal relationship that a community member has with employees that creates the awareness of a service.

Many of the young people attending LifeCycle sessions more readily identified individual staff members rather than the service they worked for. In the small number of introductory conversations between young people and service provider staff I overheard, young people were more interested in the ways that the workers fit in to their family and social networks rather than who they worked for or why they were attending the session. In the locations where police officers were more involved most young people had an existing relationship with the police officers – they knew them by name and engaged in conversations freely.

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*“The sessions are a good engagement tool, especially for younger kids who are usually pushed out of the way, especially if they don’t play sport.”*

(Youth worker)

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During interviews with partner organisations several mentioned that they had met young people who had not previously engaged with their service or programs, particularly those services that primarily used sport-based activities as an engagement activity. For some of these young people the relationships formed during LifeCycle sessions increases their awareness of support and services that are available.

An additional benefit is the introduction and familiarisation that has occurred between service providers involved with the program. Interview participants said that they had become aware of, and met staff from, different service providers for the first-time during LifeCycle sessions. Staff had a chance to speak to each other about the work they do and these conversations have led to:



Two participants grateful to be back on the road

- Direct referral to between different partners of the LifeCycle program
- New opportunities for partners to provide engage with young people and provide services – for example new program delivery in a remote school
- Opportunities to get to know service provider staff that work with in other contexts.

Further successful attempts to include other service providers in LifeCycle sessions may help to increase this benefit.

Additionally, interview participants reported that they met and developed relationships with workers from other services, which led directly to young people being referred to a service.



### Enhanced relationships between young people and adults working with youth

All the participants and interview participants who had observed the LifeCycle staff working commented on the way that they had developed strong relationships with the young people they worked with over the 10 months the program had been running. The combination of

- Recognition and familiarity and consistent interactions with Lifecycle staff;
- The opportunity for young people to engage one on one with an adult and jointly complete a task together that produced an immediate practical outcome – a working bicycle;
- The informal nature of the program, with young people free to come and go, explore the available tools, and spend time with their peers;
- The attitude and approach of the staff towards young people, in encouraging them to have a go and engage in conversation;

make the sessions an ideal opportunity for young people to build healthy relationships with adults.

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*“The only way to work with kids is to develop trust...most kids don’t have enough relationships with adults where time is invested...any opportunity where adults can build trust leads to stronger relationships and provides an opportunity for kids to open up about their worries. I have examples of where kids disclose information to youth workers that have eventually led to the prosecution of paedophiles. 99% of successful disclosures that lead to prosecution of people harming children have come from the involvement of kids...in programs and activities.”*

WA Police officer

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### PROFILE: LOCAL SOLUTIONS TO LOCAL PROBLEMS

Communities across the Kimberley are plagued with the dreaded bindii (Soliva pterosperma) also known as double G’s. They cause havoc on bicycle tyres and tubes – particularly the thin tyres and tubes that most new bikes come with. Even the specially made ‘thorn-resistant’ tubes provide little protection against bindii punctures. However working with kids the LifeCycle team has come up with an innovative solution – using seatbelt webbing to line the tyres as an added layer of protection. The innovation has had such a positive effect that when kids come in to have a puncture fixed they request the webbing be added, and they have become masters at fitting it themselves.





These interactions appear to deepen over time as young people have further developed trust in staff. Bicycle repair is the starting point for conversation, but discussion regularly progresses to more personal matters such as community news, family updates, challenges at school and personal wellbeing.

When staff from other service providers attend, such as WA Police, AKG and local teachers, this dynamic remains, and young people were observed to be deep in conversation with adults about their life whilst repairing a bicycle together.

The opportunity to develop enhanced relationships is challenged by:

- The small number of adults present and the large amount of repair work required, particularly when there are many bicycles to be repaired
- The one on one nature of many tasks and discussions
- The high level of concentration required by both staff and young people involved in repair tasks
- The distractions and interruptions from other young people who are waiting for their turn

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*“LifeCycle is a space for kids to have a yarn and build relationships with adults. Kids feel comfortable in the informal environment. Kids can really open up and share a lot of information if they feel comfortable.”*

(Youth Worker)

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*“The LifeCycle team is effective because of the way they are, they are easily able to engage with the kids and the kids know them and develop trust seeing them coming back regularly.”*

(Parent)

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*A slower trickle of participants allows staff to take more time yarning with young people*

The small number of staff, particularly when there are no partner services present, can lead to young people losing interest in having to wait and wandering off. Staff can also become distracted by multiple, cascading interruptions and struggle to keep up with the competing demands of 20 to 30 young people. Two interview participants noted that they were surprised with the amount of hard work and concentration that was required, and the pressure to get repairs done and reduce the wait restricted the ability to engage with young people. Various interview participants suggested that attracting more partners that could have staff present would open up more time for conversations between staff and young people. Some interview participants also suggested a structured activity for young people who were waiting to maintain interest and reduce interruptions.



### Increase in young people's self esteem

There is strong evidence that there are both immediate and more long increases in young people's self esteem associated with the program.

Young people themselves identified feeling more confident to attempt to fix their bicycle themselves, with one young participant clearly articulating her dream to become a bicycle mechanic.

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*"When I was younger I dreamed of being the person who fixes bikes...now I know the tools and how"*  
10-year-old female

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*"it's like bush mechanics with bicycles...at first you watch them and you are worried, they are really going to town on it, but then you see they are quite effective...it gives them a lot of confidence"*  
(Service provider)

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The new skills also led to an increased ability to overcome a setback and to persist in finding a solution for some young people. Several bicycles presented for repair had already been repaired several times by the young people themselves.

Responses from young people and interview participants identified that access to a functioning bicycle facilitates:

- An immediate and sustained increase in the use of bicycles by young people
- Young people forming friendship groups or 'bicycle gangs', providing an opportunity for supportive peer relationships
- An increased sense of self potential and personal achievement - young people spoke about riding to distant locations that they initially didn't think they could make
- A greater sense of autonomy – in some communities young people forgo travelling to school in the bus and choose to ride to school on their bicycle. As one young person commented "life is better on a bicycle"
- Access to more distant recreational places, such as swimming and fishing locations, increasing the number of self-led activities open to young people

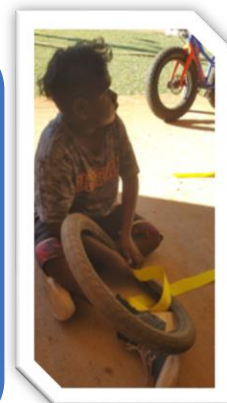
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*"The program is particularly good for girls...fathers and uncles will take the boys out regularly fishing and hunting and leave the girls behind...so the girls are most keen about getting on a bike and riding because it gives them some autonomy..."* (Service provider)

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### PROFILE: PATRICK

Patrick goes to the Bidadanga Remote Community school and is good at fixing bikes but hasn't had one for a while because his got wrecked. As a reward for his 100% attendance during term 2 the local police gave him a new bike. Lifecycle helped set up the bike and thorn proof the tyres, and now Patrick can be the fastest in the bike gang on the flash treadly (bicycle).



In the Aboriginal community context a number of interview participants noted that they had directly observed or had feedback from school staff that there was an increase in school attendance related to the repair of bicycles by LifeCycle. Additionally, some of the parents interviewed explained that they found it easier to get children motivated to go to school in the morning if there was a working bicycle available to ride.

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*“I have noticed after visits that the kids are coming together, riding around together forming little groups...where before we didn’t really see that. We used to see bullying...but we don’t see as much of that now, it used to be one of our big challenges.”* (Parent)

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### Increased health outcomes

The short duration of the program (12 months) and the complex nature of health makes it impractical to objectively assess any increased health outcomes. However, research does show that “the epidemiological rationale for a focus on physical activity (PA) among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) people is compelling. PA programs have significant potential to benefit ATSI people and their communities through their contribution to reducing chronic disease, improving physical and mental health and well-being, and improving social factors such as community connectedness.”<sup>1</sup>

There is good evidence to suggest that the program leads to increased use of bicycles and changed patterns of use.

Interview participants based in Aboriginal communities all stated that after a LifeCycle session there was a significant and noticeable rise in the presence and use of bicycles in the community by young people. This included the number of children

riding to school, the formation of ‘bike gangs’ and the increased visiting of more distant recreational spots. This was also the case for interview participants based in Derby. Responses identified that this was particularly important given that young people tended to gravitate towards inside activities such as video games during the Wet season and it was a challenge to encourage them outside again during the Dry season.

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*“Sometimes I ride my bike out of town when I want to get away...I follow the walk that we do for my grandfather and it makes me feel better*

10-year-old male

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*“If the bike isn’t going then I struggle to get him out of bed for school...But with a bike, he beats me up and races the bus to school.”* (Grandparent)

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On this basis it is reasonable to assume that the program is contributing to an increase in physical activity by young people, however a more detailed assessment is required to quantify the contribution of the program.

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<sup>1</sup> Shilton, Trevor & Brown, Wendy. (2004). Physical Activity among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities. Journal of science and medicine in sport / Sports Medicine Australia. 7. 39-42. 10.1016/S1440-2440(04)80276-7.



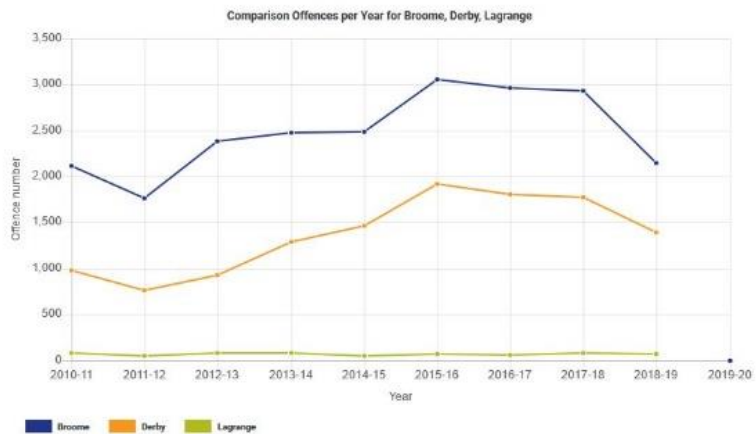
## Reduction in crime / anti-social behaviour

The short duration of the program (12 months) and the complex and multi-dimensional nature of the cause and reporting of crime and anti-social makes it impractical to objectively assess any impact the program may have had.

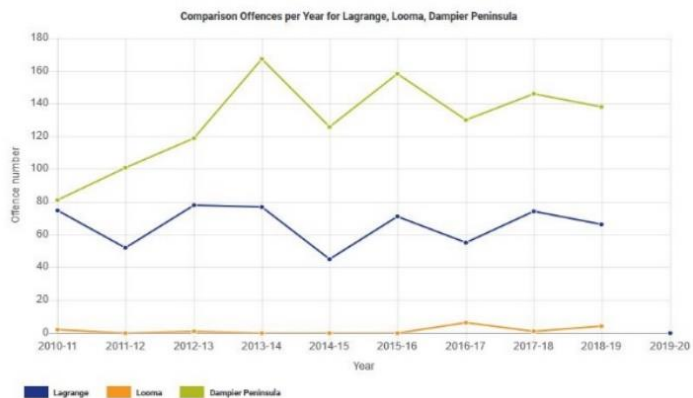
It is important to note the two different contexts within which the program operates as mentioned previously. A basic analysis of the overall offence rates as recorded by WA Police show a significant difference in the absolute number and per capita number of offences over the entire 2010 to 2019 period. It is also important to note that the age of criminal responsibility in Western Australia under the Crimes Act is 10 years old, however some young people aged 8 years are involved in criminal or anti-social behaviour. Unfortunately age based offence statistics are not readily available.

In the Aboriginal community context, there was comment from multiple interview participants about the reduction in general night time activity of young people residing in Aboriginal communities when there was an increased use of bicycles in the community. It was proposed that an increase in physical activity, combined with attending school appeared to tire out children, most of whom had a safe place to sleep each night.

*“Crime is endemic, it affects so many people ...locals aren’t happy about it. There needs to be a sophisticated solution with more pre-emptive activities...more programs like this [LifeCycle], intervention programs that engage kids in a positive light, give them the ability to build confidence and sense of identity...it’s one thing that can contribute to a wider program”* (Service provider)



Historical offence figures for selected locations in the west Kimberley taken from the WA Police website. Bidadanga is known as LaGrange. Note the significant difference in total numbers between Broome, Derby and Bidadanga.



Historical offence rates for Bidadanga (LaGrange) Looma and the Dampier Peninsula communities. Note the relative low total number compared to Broome and Derby

In contrast, in Broome and Derby multiple interview participants rejected such a connection and suggested that the amount of bicycle use was not enough to wear out kids and impact on the multiple and complex factors correlated with youth offending. In this context LifeCycle was seen more as one aspect of an overall strategy, working with program partners to engage young people and increase safety in their home.



## Stakeholder Suggestions

All of the interview participants were asked if they had any suggestions about how the program could be improved, and the most popular responses are grouped and discussed below.

### *More staff or adults present*

Multiple interview participants noted that the repair work in itself could be very demanding when large numbers of young people attended. In these circumstances it was observed that it was almost impossible to have in depth conversations with young people, and staff of partner organisations that were present felt that they too had to focus solely on getting the bicycles fixed.

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*“it was very intense, there was a flood of bicycles, it was hot and humid and there were flies everywhere. The amount of bikes they fixed, it was a real grind.”* (Youth worker)

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The suggested responses included having more staff or other adults who assisted present and providing structured, group activities for the young people who were present and waiting for their turn to repair their bicycle. Similar programs that operate in the APY lands in South Australia conduct riding education as a part of the program and complete the session with races around tracks.

### *Food brings a crowd*

Multiple interview participants suggested that the LifeCycle sessions should involve providing cold water and food for the young people attending as this would encourage them to remain during the entire session. It was also suggested that food or a BBQ during or at the end of a session might also encourage young people and hopefully more parents to attend.

### *More often*

Multiple interview participants suggested that the LifeCycle team visit more often, and this was most common in the communities that had not been visited as regularly. Interview participants suggested that one visit per month would best match the demand for repair in the community.

### *Local person and local workshop*

Multiple interview participants suggested that the program would be enhanced if young people could access tools and replacement parts between sessions. This proposal has been trialled previously by LifeCycle staff and has proved problematic – tools and equipment were damaged and stolen, access by community members and the transience and reliability of the identified local person was unsatisfactory.

Currently bicycle repair tools are available at the Derby Youth Centre, but the lack of time for staff to assist and supervise young people carry out repairs results in them being infrequently used.

### *Motorbike repair*

Multiple interview participants suggested that in order to attract younger people aged over 14 that the LifeCycle program offer a motorbike repair service. This was confirmed by LifeCycle staff who had received numerous enquiries to fix motorbikes or quad bikes. LifeCycle staff advised that the amount of specialised equipment required to repair motorbikes was not practical for a small-scale operation.

## Recommendations

MOSAC continue to deliver the LifeCycle program given its success in engaging young people, and explore developing partnerships in more Aboriginal communities where the program has the highest attendance rates.

LifeCycle consider:

- Utilise Facebook and other social media in addition to poster templates and telephone and notification with community partners;
- Develop an attendance plan to expand attendance, including scheduling sessions to coincide with community events such as adhoc family days or ongoing basketball competitions to maximise attendance;
- Providing drinking water and healthy food options for young people attending.
- Ensuring that there is a minimum of 3 adults in attendance to allow for staff to meet the repair work and skill development with young people, and more in depth conversations with the young people who attend;
- Adding a structured activity for young people during the LifeCycle sessions that maintains the interest of young people. Possibilities include rider education, model part assembling and disassembling, bicycle races;
- Explore options to attract more parents, including providing food such as a BBQ at the end of a session;
- Developing an ongoing activity for periods during sessions when there is low attendance, such as a rubbish tip bicycle strip, rebuild and keep activity, to attract young people who don't have bicycles, encourage participants to keep returning, develop broader range of repair skills and smooth out repair activity levels during sessions;
- Collecting and recording data more systematically, including the age of participants, returning participants and the date and involvement of project partners in sessions.

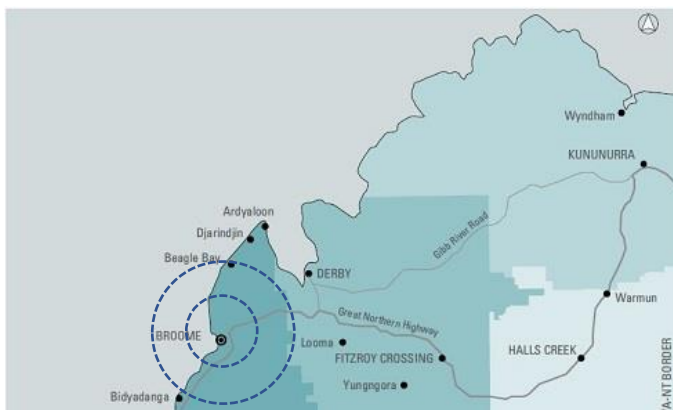


*LifeCycle employee Godfrey Perkins working with a young person and his parent on a bicycle.*

## Appendix 1

### Background to region

For those unfamiliar with the Kimberley the sheer size of travel distances should be noted, with driving at night generally prohibited for safety reasons. Travel to communities on the Dampier Peninsula is often not possible during the Wet Season (November to March) as heavy rain makes the road unpassable. Similarly, the weather during this time can make doing mechanical work outside only possible for short periods of time and requires frequent breaks and rehydration.



Map of the Kimberley. Landcorp

### Communities

Lifecycle has held sessions in 7 different locations, two are in-town – Broome and Derby, and five are in Aboriginal communities Bidadanga, One Arm Point / Ardyaloon, Djarindjin / Lombadina, Beagle Bay and Looma. A brief description of each location follows.

#### In town locations

##### Derby

Has a total population of 3,321 people, 47.2 percent are indigenous and 787 or 23.7 percent are under the age of 14, compared to the WA and national average of 19 percent. The median weekly household income is \$1939, compared to WA average \$1595 and national average of \$1438.

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*Because of harsh conditions stuff like bicycles are easily damaged or broken and there isn't really anyone that kids can take the bikes to get fixed, so often bikes will be abandoned...some kids are incredibly creative in coming up with DIY fixes, however often bikes are simply abandoned.*

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The LifeCycle sessions are held on the lawn in front of the Youth Centre which is in the centre of Derby close to the public swimming pool. The Youth Centre staff have recently suggested attending Monday night basketball instead.

##### Broome

Has a total population of 13,984 people, 21.4 percent are indigenous and 3259 or 23.2 percent are under the age of 14, compared to the WA and national average of 19 percent. The median weekly household income is \$1593, compared to WA average \$1595 and national average of \$1438. Broome has two bike shops and a Target store that sell bicycles.



The LifeCycle sessions are held at the Police and Community Youth Centre during school holidays, which is located near to the Town Beach area in Old Broome.

## Aboriginal community locations

### *Looma*

Has a total population of 531 people, 98 percent are indigenous and 178 or 23 percent are under the age of 14, compared to the WA and national average of 19 percent. There is a community store in that sells bicycles however they are basic models without any modifications for the conditions in the community. The median weekly household income is \$855, compared to WA average \$1595 and national average of \$1438.

The LifeCycle sessions are held at the back of the police station in an undercover area which is adjacent to the football oval.

### *Bidyadanga*

Has a total population of 617 people, 89.9 percent are indigenous and 187 or 39.7 percent are under the age of 14, compared to the WA and national average of 19 percent. There is a community store in that sells bicycles however they are basic models without any modifications for the conditions in the community. The median weekly household income is \$850, compared to WA average \$1595 and national average of \$1438.

The Bidyadanga sessions are held on the lawn in front of the police station, which is ideally located opposite the swimming pool and between the school and the shop and main group of houses in the community.

### *Djarindjin – Lombadina*

Has a total population of 395 people, 79.2 percent are indigenous and 111 or 28.4 percent are under the age of 14, compared to the WA and national average of 19 percent. The median weekly household income is \$812, compared to WA average \$1595 and national average of \$1438.

The sessions are held in a small open sided community hall, opposite the community store and adjacent to the community council building.

### *Ardayaloon (One Arm Point)*

Has a total population of 365 people, 92.5 percent are indigenous and 128 or 36.4 percent are under the age of 14, compared to the WA and national average of 19 percent. There is a community store in that sells bicycles however they are basic models without any modifications for the conditions in the community. The median weekly household income is \$821, compared to WA average \$1595 and national average of \$1438.

Sessions have been held outside of the high school gate and in the car park in front of the community store. The Ardayaloon community stores sell bicycles however they are often sold out and customers need to wait until the next supply truck arrives.

### *Beagle Bay*

Has a total population of 348 people, 88.9 percent are indigenous and 130 or 39 percent are under the age of 14, compared to the WA and national average of 19 percent. There is a community store in that sells bicycles however they are basic models without any modifications for the conditions in the community. The median weekly household income is \$843, compared to WA average \$1595 and national average of \$1438.



## Appendix 2 List of interview subjects

### **Lifecycle and MOSAC Staff**

Gil Butt, Godfrey Perkins, Arak Dann, Sarah Macnee

### **WA Police Officers**

Jodie Parker (Constable) YCIO, Ben Dearing (Senior Constable) YCIO, Kylie Swale

Monica Lee (Community Relations Officer)

Tony Jeavons (Inspector), Les Andrews (Sen Sgt) Broome OIC

Chris Fox Bidyadanga OIC

### **Service Providers**

Brendan Dwyer – OAP School

Belinda Sampi – Djarindjin Community Council

Wozzy Davies – Ardyaloon Community Council

### **Youth Workers**

Lee – Derby Youth Centre

Annie and Jake – Broome PCYC

Kevin and Zeke – ALIVE & Kicking Goals!

### **Parents and Grandparents**

Various parents from Bidyadanga, Ardyaloon, Djarindjin and Broome