

## New level of support for vulnerable children

1 November 2018

**A new purpose-built child interview room within Anglicare WA's Broome office was officially opened today, offering a welcoming, non-confronting environment for young people to give forensic evidence in cases of sexual abuse.**

Funded by WA Primary Health Alliance, the idea came about following a discussion among Anglicare WA and the Kimberley Joint Response Team, formed three years ago by WA Police and Department of Communities, to explore how to best support Kimberley children, young people and their families during this complex time in their lives.

Anglicare WA's Regional Manager, Carina Cooke, said she expects up to three children a week to use the facility which is designed to be a simple, comfortable and non-stimulatory environment to help the young person focus on giving their evidence.

"This means children will no longer need to attend the police station to be interviewed, which can be a stressful experience for a child at the best of times, but especially in these circumstances.

"Our staff have been trained to support the young people and their families from the moment they arrive at our office and throughout the process," Ms Cooke said.

WA Police Kimberley District Superintendent Allan Adams said, "It is fully recognised the criminal investigation of child sex abuse matters can add to the trauma of the victim and their family.

"Significant work has been undertaken in the Kimberley by WA Police and the Department of Communities to reduce this impact through a caring and compassionate approach to all those impacted.

"The development of this fantastic new facility in Broome will further the positive progress in this regard," Superintendent Adams said.

Department of Communities District Director, Fiona Fischer said, "The interview space is child friendly and in a neutral location which provides a space for parents and carers to support the child prior to and following their interview.

"It also links the child and their family to support services which are important for their recovery.

"Feedback from children has been positive, indicating we have achieved our goal," Ms Fischer said.

The fit out was made possible by funding from the WA Primary Health Alliance, with the interview equipment provided by WA Police.

According to WA Primary Health Alliance Kimberley Regional Manager, Andy McGaw, this initiative is a great example of the collaborative, can-do approach of the Kimberley Joint Response Team and Anglicare WA.

“When Anglicare WA’s proposal came across my desk, I immediately saw the benefits and was happy to get the project underway as soon as possible,” Mr McGaw said.

WA Primary Health Alliance also funds Anglicare WA to raise awareness about sexual abuse in the Kimberley community as well as employ two counsellors to support victims or people at risk of sexual abuse, one based in Broome and the other in Kununurra.

This service has been made possible through funding provided by the Australian Government under the PHN Program.

**ENDS**

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**About WA Primary Health Alliance:** WA Primary Health Alliance oversees the strategic commissioning functions of the Perth North, Perth South and Country WA Primary Health Networks (PHNs). The WA PHNs are three of 31 PHNs established by the Australian Government nationally to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of medical services for the community. We work across the WA healthcare system with doctors, allied health professionals, hospitals and service providers to improve the coordination of care for people who are at risk of poor health outcomes. For more information, visit [www.wapha.org.au](http://www.wapha.org.au)