

Intensive Family & Community Intervention 2022-2023

PROPOSED PILOT PROJECT

Community Vision: Unity, Humanity, Nature.
'A connected community across leaders, cultures and generations'; 'A future for every young person.'

OVERVIEW

Carnarvon is the regional centre of the Gascoyne region, with an average combined population of approximately 9,046 and is located 902kms north of Perth, WA. Like many other regional communities across the state, Carnarvon is currently under siege by a rapid rise in youth crime, violence and antisocial behaviour in and around the town. The safety and wellbeing of the whole community is being compromised by daily acts of threatening, violent and antisocial behaviour, theft, property damage and vandalism being committed by a cohort of unruly at-risk youth, some 8 years old and younger. Many residents, especially vulnerable people, and businesses in the community are exhausted, frustrated and fed-up with the lack of law and order, intervention, accountability and justice. Vigilante retaliation poses a real and imminent threat in Carnarvon as tension, unrest and discord builds towards breaking point across the community.

As the Local Government Authority, the Shire of Carnarvon is experiencing extreme scrutiny and pressure to take action on behalf of local residents to address youth crime and antisocial behaviour in the community. The Shire has engaged with stakeholders from the local community as well as State Government agencies to develop and implement place-based solutions where possible. The Shire also participates as a stakeholder in the Carnarvon District Leadership Group and has supported the efforts led by the Dept. of Communities to extend the trial of the T120 program in Carnarvon. However, the limited resourcing and satellite service delivery of this program out of Geraldton is already presenting with gaps and flaws in its effectiveness and capacity to maximise impact and change with local families in crisis.



Figure 1: IFCI Target Groups

Escalating incidents of violence and break-ins committed by at-risk youth in Carnarvon have led the Shire to host a crisis response meeting with key community representatives to discuss and develop a local intervention strategy to address youth crime and antisocial behaviour. The discussions and outcome from this meeting have informed the development of the *Intensive Family & Community Intervention (IFCI)* which incorporates and integrates (a) an *Intensive Family Intervention Task Force*; and (b) an *Intensive Family Intervention Support Program*.

In every instance the purpose and intent of the *IFCI* is to act, uphold and protect the human rights of vulnerable at-risk youth, support families to overcome cycles of disadvantage; and maintain community safety and wellbeing.

In presenting this concept, the Shire would like to emphasise that in no way is the *IFCI* intended to further penalise, disempower, or compromise a family's right to self-determination. Furthermore, it is imperative to recognise and acknowledge that to date, attempts to address the entrenched and multilayered complexities of social disadvantage for families in Carnarvon have been unsuccessful and ineffective, this mainly due, but not limited to, the high levels of disengagement by families in crisis and the gaps in effective service delivery.

The *IFCI*, led by the *Intensive Family Intervention Task Force* will be required to provide intensive wrap around and mandated intervention support that will concentrate on three (3) priority areas:



Figure 2: IFCI Priority Areas Summary

The Shire is aware that the *IFCI* is a completely new and different approach to addressing crime and social disorder; and anticipates it may be condemned for being too radical. However, the Shire firmly believes that radical and extreme action is necessary and is the only plausible intervention option left to support community's grappling with families in crisis and curb reckless youth crime and antisocial behaviour.

PROPOSAL

The Shire is proposing Carnarvon become a trial site to pilot the *Intensive Family & Community Intervention (IFCI)* over the next two (2) years commencing early-mid 2022; and recommends the *Intensive Family Intervention Task Force* is formed and led by the Dept. of Communities to manage and implement the *IFCI* and the *Intensive Family Intervention Support Program*; and is jointly supported by the WA Police, Housing Authority WA, Dept. of Health, Dept. of Justice and Dept. of Education WA.



Figure 3: IFIT Engagement Strategy

The Shire recommends that through the *IFCI* and the Task Force, the Courts exercise its powers to enforce mandated intervention and support opposed to formal charges so that families and/or at-risk youth can be placed, supported and case managed through the *Intensive Family Intervention Support Program*.

It is envisaged that any at-risk youth or family coming into contact with a Task Force agency will initiate a mandatory follow up and assessment by the Dept of Communities; and if deemed necessary, referred to the Courts to mandate a formal placement on the *Intensive Family Intervention Support Program* for a minimum of six (6) months.

It is critical that all Task Force agencies mandatory report and refer families and at-risk youth at first contact; and the *IFCI* secures strategic collaboration, investment and resourcing for the whole duration of the pilot period to enhance tangible social impact outcomes and change.

To adequately deliver the *Intensive Family Intervention Support Program*, the Shire has identified that the Dept. of Communities will need increased resourcing to support a team of 14 fulltime staff.

At present, the Shire is aware there is up to 15 or more known at-risk youth regularly presenting and committing criminal offences in public and residential spaces around Carnarvon; and between 20-30 households with families in crisis that these at-risk youth and other vulnerable young people are directly connected to. The proposed *IFCI* is an absolute must in supporting families in crisis to increase their capacity to overcome the impacts of social disadvantage, reduce and divert at-risk youth from criminal and antisocial behaviour; and maintain community safety and wellbeing.

Phase 1: Development & Consultation		Phase 2: Roll Out		
Codesign IFCIS Framework & Scope <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop the Intensive Family & Community Intervention Strategy (IFCIS) inclusive of the Intensive Family Intervention Task Force and the Intensive Family Intervention Program. 	Community Consultation & Finalise IFCIS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct statewide information and community consultation workshops to enable public review and comment on the draft IFCIS. Finalise the IFCIS and rollout implementation. 	Intensive Family Intervention Task Force <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish and roll out the Intensive Family Intervention Task Force: Dept. of Communities (Lead Agency), WA Police, Housing Authority WA, Dept. of Health, Dept. of Education WA and Dept. of Justice. 	Intensive Family Intervention Support Program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish team and office. Roll out the Intensive Family Intervention Support Program. 	Youth Safe House <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and secure site for Youth Safe House. Plan and set up Youth Safe House. Set up team and commence operations.

Figure 4: Shire of Carnarvon – Implementation Plan (Draft)

In the interim, while the *Intensive Family & Community Intervention (IFCI)* proposal is being considered, the Shire has reviewed and identified what local place-based action it can continue to lead, as follows:

INTERIM ACTION PLAN		S*	M*	L*
1. At-risk Youth	1.1 School Holiday Program available.	●		
	1.2 Reopen Shire Youth Hub.	●		
	1.3 Recommence Shire Night Patrol.	●		
	1.4 Establish Youth Safe House (old primary school site).		●	○
	1.5 Establish an Alternative Youth Intervention & Diversion Facility & Program.			●
2. Families in Crisis	2.1 Ongoing referral and provision of local support services.	●		
	2.2 Lobby for the Basics Card or Cashless Debit Card.	●	○	
	2.3 Establish a Men's Crisis Accommodation.		●	○
3. Community Safety & Wellbeing	3.1 Impose community curfews.	●		
	3.2 Impose Alcohol Restrictions during high-risk periods.	●		
	3.3 Lobby for increased allocation of Police Officers over holiday period.	●	○	
	3.4 Lobby for the Ban Drinkers Register.	●	○	
	3.5 Lobby for allocation of 2 x Police Officers to Youth Engagement.		●	○

S* - Short Term, M* - Medium Term & L* - Long Term

Figure 5: Shire of Carnarvon – 2021/22 Interim Action Plan

PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS

PRIORITY 1: AT-RISK YOUTH

RATIONALE:

In Carnarvon, at-risk youth are presenting as the most vulnerable and disempowered victims in their families and the wider community as it is evident their basic human needs and rights are neglected. There are multiple issues impacting on the stability and security of their home. Many lack a consistent and responsible adult to care, nurture, support and provide for them. They have no control or ability to improve their situation and environment, so they function in survival mode from a very early age without any structure, routine, boundaries or accountability. Their health, safety and wellbeing is frequently compromised on a daily basis; and there are also grave concerns of predatory exploitation as at-risk youth are being exposed and have access to alcohol and substance misuse.

IDENTIFIED NEEDS:

- 1.1 Protect the human rights of at-risk youth.
- 1.2 Meet the basic needs of at-risk youth – food, shelter, sleep, love, security, etc.
- 1.3 Increase the health, safety and wellbeing of at-risk youth.
- 1.4 Increase opportunities for positive engagement with at-risk youth.
- 1.5 Increase alternative education and diversion programs for at-risk youth and those with special needs.
- 1.6 Reestablish family and community values, morals, connection, belonging and pride in at-risk youth.
- 1.7 Access to age-appropriate health and wellbeing services/treatment, i.e., Counselling, Clinicians, etc.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1(a) Engage and support at-risk parents/families through a court mandated *Intensive Family Intervention Support (IFIS)* program.
- 1(b) Reengage at-risk youth and those with special needs in alternative education and diversion programs, activities and events.
- 1(c) Establish and operate a facility to host alternative education and diversion programs, activities and events.
- 1(d) Establish and operate an age-appropriate Youth Safe House in Carnarvon.
- 1(e) Assign 2 x Police Officers as Youth Engagement Officers.
- 1(f) Increase access to age-appropriate trauma informed healing, recovery and clinical treatment and facilities.

PRIORITY 2: FAMILIES IN CRISIS

RATIONALE:

In Carnarvon there is unfortunately a number of local families who live in an extreme cycle of dysfunction and crisis embedded in poverty, insecurity, homelessness, intergenerational trauma, incarceration, substance and alcohol misuse and family & domestic violence. These multilayered issues are intergenerational and systemic which have further compounded without any form of healing, recovery, support and intervention. Intensive and mandated intervention and support to parents and families in crisis is critical to assist and strengthen their capacity to break the cycle of disadvantage, increase their engagement and overcome the challenges impacting on them. Investing in the parents/families to make changes, will ultimately lead to improving the situation and circumstances for at-risk youth.

IDENTIFIED NEEDS:

- 2.1 Support parents/families in crisis to address their basic needs, especially housing.
- 2.2 Disengagement of at-risk parents/family's needs to be address.
- 2.3 Access and coordination between services and agencies supporting shared client/s.
- 2.4 Service providers need to be culturally competent to better meet the needs of clients.
- 2.5 Access to healing, recovery and clinical support services and programs.
- 2.6 Need support services, facilities and programs for men, including a Men's Crisis Accommodation facility.
- 2.7 The Basic Card/Cashless Debit Card needs to be applied supported by Money Management and Parenting programs.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2(a) Engage and support at-risk parents/families through the *Intensive Family Intervention Support (IFIS)* program.
- 2(b) Review and streamline access to crisis support, especially housing, health and welfare for at-risk parents/families.
- 2(c) Increase coordination of support services and agencies working with at-risk parents/families under the IFIS program.
- 2(d) Set culturally responsive service benchmarks to evidence cultural competence of service providers/staff.
- 2(e) Increase investment and resources into services, facilities and programs for men, especially Crisis Accommodation.
- 2(f) Increase culturally appropriate money management and parenting programs to support at-risk parents/families, including introducing the Basic Card/Cashless Debit Card option for income support payments.
- 2(g) Implement a transition to work plan for at-risk individuals engaged in the *IFIS* program.

PRIORITY 3: COMMUNITY SAFETY & WELL-BEING

RATIONALE:

The proposal of an *Intensive Family Intervention Task Force* consisting of key State Government Agencies and led by the Dept of Communities with partner agencies the WA Police, Housing Authority WA, Dept of Health, Dept of Justice (Courts and Juvenile Justice) and Dept. of Education WA. The primary objective and purpose of the Task Force will be to manage engagement and implementation of the *Intensive Family Intervention Support Program* to family in crisis and at-risk youth. The Task Force will also be responsible for overseeing an internal service delivery review and audit across all state government led and funded services, facilities and/or programs/projects; and, addressing the gaps in services in response to community needs.

IDENTIFIED NEEDS:

- 3.1 More accountability and consequences for parents/families and youth offenders, especially through the Courts.
- 3.2 Increase in support for victims of crime.
- 3.3 Early intervention, diversion and prevention programs and services for at-risk youth.
- 3.4 Afterhours community curfew.
- 3.5 Address alcohol, drugs, family violence and social needs impacting on parents/families in crisis, especially housing.
- 3.6 Increase coordination and collaboration amongst service providers and agencies.
- 3.7 Additional resources for Police, especially allocation of two Officers to youth.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 3(a) Establish the operation of an *Intensive Family Intervention Task Force*, led by Dept of Communities.
- 3(b) Increase employment for an additional 14 new staff members to the *Intensive Family Intervention Programs*, led by the Dept. of Communities.
- 3(c) Select pilot sites across WA for *Intensive Family & Community Intervention*, including Carnarvon.
- 3(d) Engage and support at-risk parents/families through the *Intensive Family Intervention Support (IFIS)* program.
- 3(e) Enforce a community curfew after hours.
- 3(f) Allocate 2 additional funded position to Police to work with youth.
- 3(g) Increase funding and resources for youth programs, including a Youth Safe House.
- 3(h) Adopt a 'Circle Sentencing' model in the court proceedings with victims, Aboriginal elders and family members.
- 3(i) Provide a funded Victims Support program and service to victims of crime.
- 3(j) Allocate funding for specialised education and training programs for community members and service providers.

CONCLUSION

The Shire of Carnarvon is committed to act in the interest of the whole community by working in collaboration with State and Federal Government as well as all other key stakeholders to maintain community safety and wellbeing. In proposing the *Intensive Family & Community Intervention (IFCI)*, the Shire of Carnarvon seeks to lobby and secure increased support and investment to address the needs of families in crisis and at-risk youth. The concept of the *IFCI* is based on a family centred strength-based approach that aims to nurture and support a process of healing and recovery, strengthen capacity and self-determination of individuals and families; and foster long-term social impact and change across the whole community. The Shire of Carnarvon acknowledges the proposed *IFCI* will need to be further discussed and reviewed in more detail to determine how this new approach can be developed to meet all legal, practical and ethical requirements to before progressing. However, if the proposed *IFCI* is not supported, the Shire of Carnarvon is keen to work with State and Federal Government and other key stakeholders to explore other viable options that will assist in addressing the increasing rates of youth crime and antisocial behaviour.