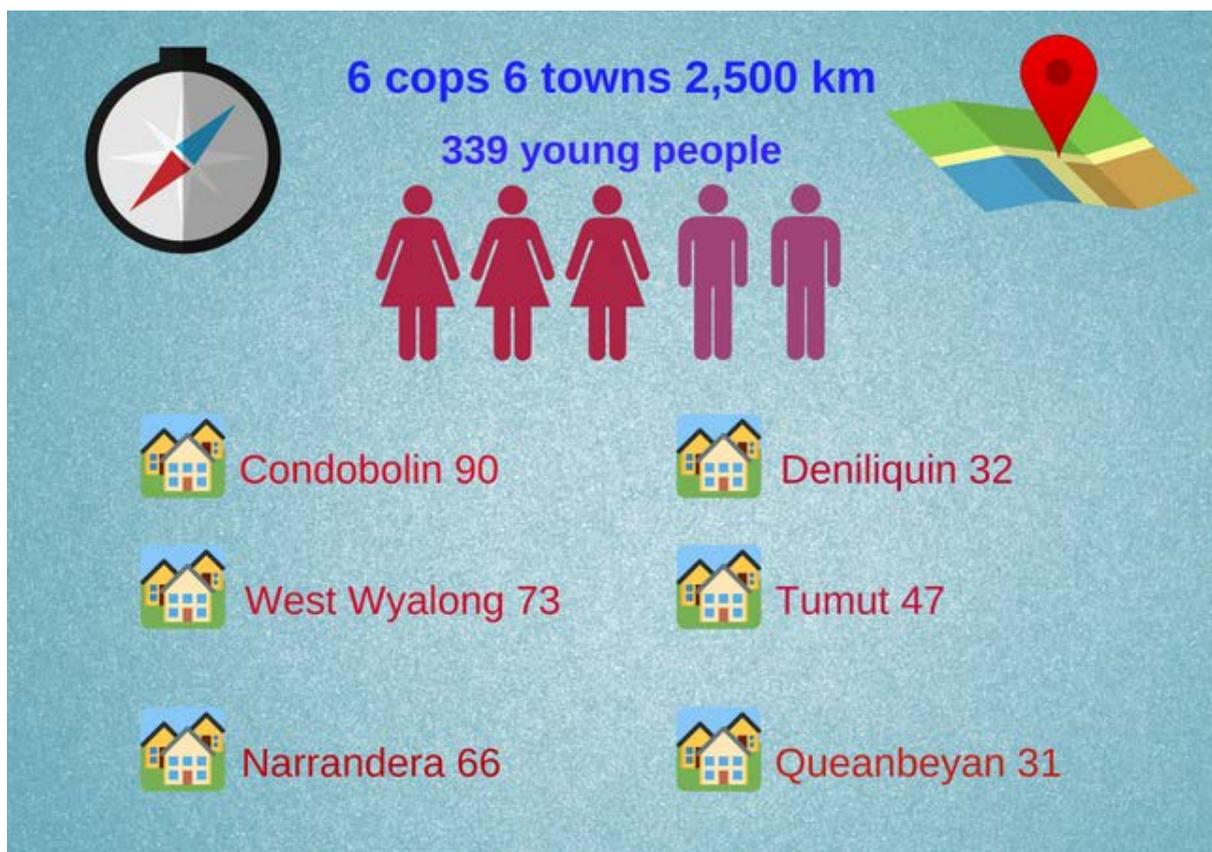


## Blue Light Goes West April 2018 Evaluation Summary

Police supervised youth Blue Light Discos are a well-known feature in many PCYC NSW clubs. Once a year, *Blue Light Goes West* conducts a tour of regional towns. This year in April 2018, PCYC NSW trialled taking the BLGW event to a new geographic region. The six new locations included Condobolin, West Wyalong, Narrandera, Deniliquin, Tumut and Queanbeyan. The team travelled between April 12<sup>th</sup> to April 21<sup>st</sup> to deliver the events; a distance of around 2,500 kilometres.



Sergeant Nicole Davis coordinated a staff team of six police officers. In two locations, Griffith and Wagga Wagga, the Club managers from the nearest PCYC club attended the events.

The levels of support and engagement from local Councils, businesses, media, other services and the general community varied from location to location. Three of the six Council stakeholders

contacted responded to a post-event survey and one council representative sent an enthusiastic “thank you” via email to the PCYC team.

There is considerable time, resources and effort put into pre-planning, logistics and coordination for the event with contributions from PCYC staff from State Office and Police personnel.

Data was not captured on the number of parents and community members attending the events. Anecdotally, parent attendance varied at locations, but overall was low. When police had face to face contact with local community members they always suggested that any child under 5 should be accompanied by a parent. Where an event was held in a Licenced premise there was higher parental attendance, as often they went in and out of the disco.

- Children as young as 2 years old and up to 17 years old attended
- The highest attendance rate was between ages **7 to 14** years
- On average more girls attended than boys, except for Tumut where slightly more boys attended

## Youth survey summary

A total of **253** surveys were collected from young people (a 74.5% response rate).

*When asked about talking to the police, more young people felt “very relaxed” speaking to police (54.5%) than those that felt “OK” or “a bit nervous” (45.5%)*

*What youth activities are needed in your community? There were **240** responses. Many wanted both discos and a range of outdoor activities including: **157** said more discos/dance comps/Karaoke/singing/theme discos; **81** said more sports (touch footy, rugby/NRL/AFL, netball, basketball, gymnastics, BMX/bikes/skate comps, water sports/swimming, boxing, rock wall climbing); **15** said more activities with police – such as footy comps.*

## Event Highlight

In one town the police met a mother and son and spent some time encouraging the shy young person to engage with police. They were invited to attend the disco the following night, (which they were unaware of) and they said that they would think about it. The following evening, they did in fact attend, and brought another community member and her children along (who introduced herself as a member of the local council). Both families had a wonderful night and were excited to engage with the police. Recently, the mother of the young boy forwarded a lovely card and photographs to BLGW staff thanking them for the positive impact police had on her son.

## Police Staff Feedback

*“There were a lot of highlights throughout BLGW that it's hard to pin down a specific one. If I had to identify one thing that really summed up the trip it would be the first disco in Condobolin. Having not done the trip before I had very little idea of what to expect, and the response was outstanding. For probably the smallest town that we went to the numbers were great and the participation was excellent. We would have had close to every kid in town there and they all seemed to love it.*

*It was also one of the smaller and more run down venues, but the effort put in by the local community to do up the hall and make it as good as possible meant that we had the scope to really execute the disco well. It was the first disco, and obviously there were a few teething problems, but by and large it was an awesome experience. From a policing context, the response from the kids was*

*great. They had some misgivings at first but it was great to see the kids all open up and become more comfortable with the blue uniform even over the course of a couple of hours. I felt that it helped me to see how important our role is in breaking down barriers between police and the community, because where that barrier exists it makes all of our jobs so much harder! “*

Joel MCMULLAN, Senior Constable, Youth Case Manager, Blacktown PCYC

*“We had such a positive experience with community members in the towns we visited. A large number of parents approached us and expressed how great they thought the night was and that they loved seeing the police interacting with their kids in a positive way. A group of female young people (from Tumut) had never been to a disco as their school has never put one on. They were telling us how great the event was and expressed that they would love this to be a regular event.*

*This was an absolutely awesome experience, although exhausting at times. Working with a group of police who have the same positive outlook on Community Policing was very rewarding. The overall positive community engagement was very rewarding, speaking to people in the street, speaking with local community members and seeing their positive reactions to what we were doing in their town was great. Seeing the young people enjoying themselves and having that positive interactions with Police on the night of the discos was great. Working in a different environment with Officers from all over the place (both the tour team and officers from the stations in the town).*

Amanda JONES, Senior Constable, School Liaison Police, Metro West Zone, Youth Command

## Summary of Challenges

There were a number of challenges both operationally and in terms of communication in the lead up to, and during the event. None of the challenges were insurmountable and each was addressed as it was identified to ensure a fun and safe event was delivered to young people in each township. Challenges included variable levels of support from Local Area Commands, local PCYC clubs and Local Councils, community and volunteers; venue access, food and drinks; publicity and promotion and access to technology.

## Post –Event Debrief

Using the data available from the surveys, staff feed-back and operational experience, a post-event debrief identified both the successes and areas for improvement for the next Blue Light Goes West tour.

## Next Steps

A set of recommendations is currently being considered by the PCYC NSW CEO and the NSW Police Youth & Crime Prevention Commander. If you are interested in our Blue Light Goes West events, please contact our PCYC State Office on **02 9625 9111** and you will be referred to the right person.