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Lucy casts her spell on wicked night of carols

Christmas star: Lucy Durack decorating the tree at her Sedgely home as she prepares for Carols by Candlelight in Supreme Court Gardens.



Linda Parri

SHE'S still on a high after stepping the road anthem for the Queen last month, but musical star Lucy Durack will hit the big notes again next month when she returns to Perth for the 10th Carols by Candlelight.

Presented by The Sunday Times and the Apex Club of Perth, the event will celebrate its 10th anniversary in Supreme Court Gardens on December 18.

Best known as the good witch Glinda in the record-breaking stage show *Wicked*, Perth-born Durack is thrilled to be on the bill for WA's biggest Christmas singalong.

"I love carols and I'm really excited. And I think that it's just a lovely opportunity to have beautiful big crowds and at such a wonderful venue," she said.

Durack said her entire family would be at the carols "with bells on" and she urged WA families to join the party.

Durack said she was honoured to find herself chatting to the Queen after performing at the Government House garden party last month.

"My sister and I were just walking down in front of where I was singing," Mr Durack said. "Her Majesty just came over and started talking to both of us. In our track, as she was approaching, we were thinking, 'Oh my gosh, oh my gosh, oh my gosh.' We couldn't believe it."

Durack is also frustrated for the lead part in *Lady Birdie* - *The Musical*.

"The audition process for the musical *Birdie* was a stage show but this week because I don't know who will all have one-on-one meetings with director Jerry Mitchell in Sydney ahead of the Australian premiere in October next year. During its first year on Broadway in 2007, the show earned the Tony Award nomination for Drama Desk Award for Best Musical and an Outer Critics Circle Award.

The 2011 WA Carols by Candlelight will start at 7.30pm. Gates will open at 6pm. Graham Maloney and Louise Member will host the event, which will include a fireworks finale.

Apes club president David Cremp said his family never missed the annual gathering.

"One year I had four generations of my own family here - my granddaughters, my mother, my children, plus my wife and I," Mr Cremp said.

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\$120k a day for jail kids

EXCLUSIVE
Emily Woulton

LOCKING up children in WA is costing taxpayers almost \$200,000 a day, as the number of juveniles held in detention continues to rise.

Over the past five years the bill for keeping young offenders behind bars has gone up 50 per cent, while the number of child inmates in an average day has increased almost two-fold.

It now costs taxpayers \$66743 a child each day to keep the state's young criminals in detention.

That compares with \$42236 last financial year - an increase of almost 50 per cent.

Five years ago that figure was \$45683 a child each day, but the number of kids, some as young as 10, being locked up on any one day has risen by 29 per cent.

Figures obtained from the Dept of Correctional Services analyse reports from the average number of kids currently in detention on any one day in WA is 1200, up from 109 in 2006-07.

More alarmingly, two-thirds (66.3 per cent) of those youths are Aboriginal.

And while the rate of return has gone down slightly - more than half of all juveniles released re-offend within two years of being released (51.45 per cent).

Statistics compiled by the Australian Institute of Criminology show WA had the second-highest rate of juvenile incarceration in the country. New South Wales, with a population three times that of WA, had the highest.

And while more than \$40 million has been poured into early intervention programs to target at-risk young people through the Regional Youth Justice Services, child advocates and charities believe more needs to be done.

Michelle Scott, Commissioner for Children and Young People, said too many young West Australians were still being locked up and many were being held on remand simply because they had nowhere else to go.

"Detention should be a last resort," she said. "When young people in detention are there on remand, or because there is no responsible adult to whom they can be released, not because they have been convicted of committing a serious crime."

Liamon Assala, acting director of Menzies Australia in WA, which runs three residential services for young people, said tackling WA's rising incarceration rates required a multi-agency approach.

"I can't say enough about looking at any alternative before incarcerating a child," she said.

"We know the cost of raising these services."

"It has been shown that detention is far more costly. We would advocate creative, innovative and new ways of supporting young people."

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