



Commissioner for Children and Young People
Western Australia



Caring for the future growing up today

Involving Children and Young People

Participation Guidelines



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On request, large print or alternate format copies can be obtained from the office of the Commissioner for Children and Young People.

Message from the Commissioner



I am committed to promoting the wellbeing of children and young people in Western Australia.

A key way to achieve this is for organisations to involve children and young people in decisions that affect their lives, something known broadly as 'participation'.

By encouraging the participation of children and young people, your organisation can benefit through improved planning, the development and evaluation of policies, and the creation and delivery of effective programs and services.

As I have travelled around the State I have been impressed with the many positive examples of children and young people participating in their local community. Already there are some best practice examples of organisations such as local councils, schools, and government agencies that have initiated major participation projects with children and young people, and achieved positive outcomes.

We need to listen genuinely to children and young people, give careful consideration to their views and use their insights to inform our work in meaningful and respectful ways.

By doing so, we will demonstrate our respect for them as valued members of our communities and gain important information that will make our work and activities more relevant to children and young people.

These are guidelines to aid effective participation so it works well for children and young people and also for your organisation. I encourage you to use these resources to begin the process of listening to our kids.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michelle Scott". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a stylized "S" and "T".

Michelle Scott
Commissioner for Children and Young People WA

Introduction

The Western Australian Parliament, in passing the *Commissioner for Children and Young People Act 2006* (WA), has highlighted the importance of government and non-government agencies involving children and young people in decision-making that affects their lives. In particular, the Parliament has provided the Commissioner with the functions of:

- promoting the participation of children and young people
- encouraging agencies to seek the participation of children and young people
- developing participation guidelines to be used by agencies.¹

Including children and young people in decision making processes can benefit individuals, organisations and the community. Children and young people often have unique insights into issues, can offer creative solutions and their involvement can enrich decision-making processes and outcomes.

The involvement of children and young people, as citizens and users of services, can make sure our agencies and organisations are relevant to them. Their participation ensures what is provided is what is needed, and children and young people are more likely to support the outcome if they have been involved in developing it.

These guidelines are designed to assist your organisation, whether government, non-government or private, to involve children and young people in decision making about your services and activities. This information is not exhaustive, but is based on best practice and on the experience of others.

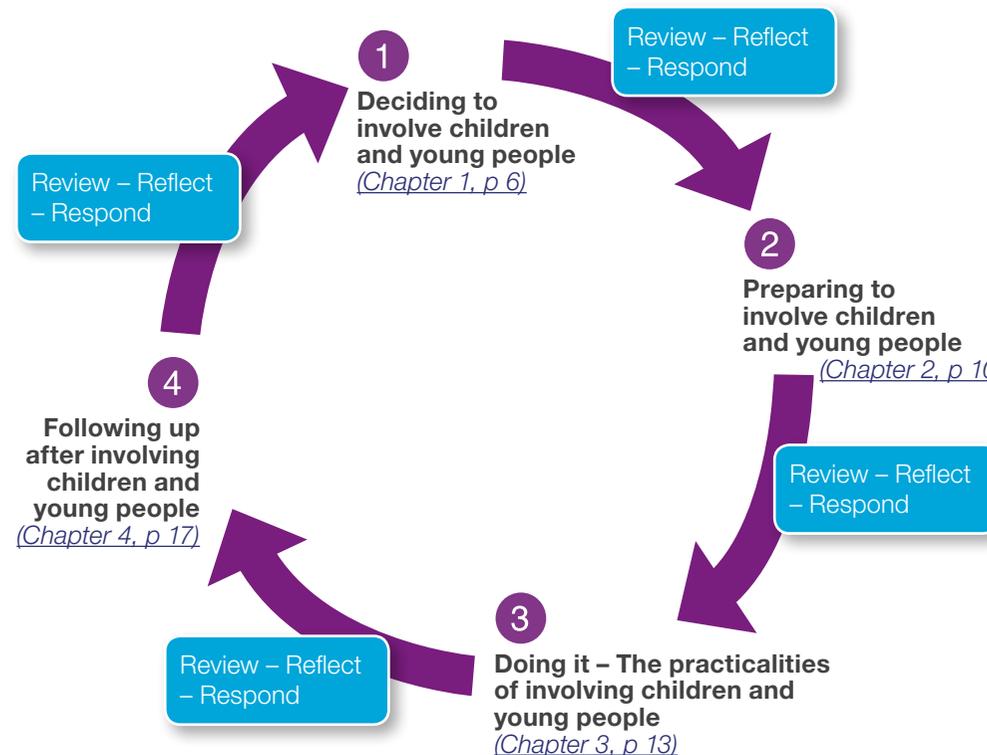
Note: There are hyperlinks to useful resources throughout these guidelines.



¹ Sections 19(b) and 20(1)(d).

The participation cycle

The participation of children and young people will be enhanced if it includes the following steps which are described in corresponding chapters:



A complete list of resources and detailed information about the examples included in these guidelines can be found in [Chapter 5: Examples](#) and [Chapter 6: Resources](#).

The examples included in these guidelines are a small sample of the great work involving children and young people occurring around Western Australia. If you have a participation project that you would like the Commissioner for Children and Young People to hear about, phone (08) 6213 2297 or email info@ccyp.wa.gov.au.

Chapter 1: Deciding to involve children and young people in the work of your organisation

Message from a young person

Events like this [forum] are good – but only if the adults listen to what we have to say, otherwise it is pointless.

Young person attending 'Graffiti vs Urban Art' Forum (Public Transport Authority)

Step 1

Decide what you want to achieve

The benefits of involving children and young people are numerous and include:

- the creation of policies, programs and services which are more relevant and more likely to meet the needs of children and young people and improve their wellbeing^{2 3}
- improved outcomes for your organisation achieved in more efficient and cost effective ways⁴
- a better community now and for the future by engaging with the energy and creativity of a relatively silent but hugely important group in our community
- enabling children and young people to feel connected and that they belong, so they can experience a better quality of life and achievement.²

Example: Children's Manifesto, Wirrabirra Primary School

When staff began reviewing the school's values education they realised how important it was to speak to the students. Staff decided to survey students on which values were important to them including what makes a good school, teacher, student and class.



² *Working Together: Involving Community and Stakeholders in Decision-Making*, Western Australian Department of Premier and Cabinet, 2006, p5.

³ *Preventing Youth Disengagement and Promoting Engagement*. Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth, 2008, p36.

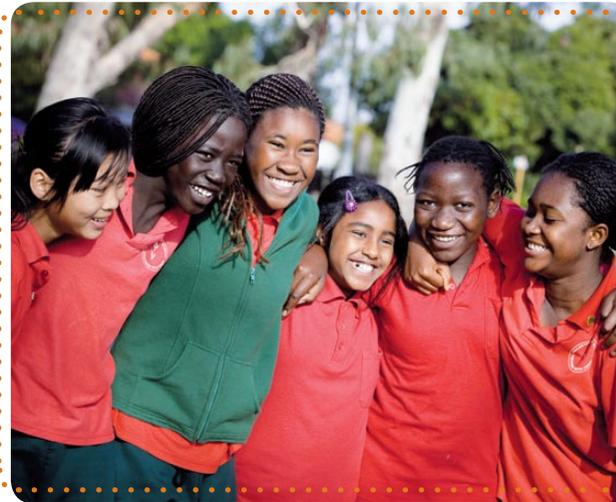
⁴ *Blast Off Guide One: Introduction to Participation*, The Children and Young People's Participation Consortium of Wales, 2007, p6.

To translate these benefits into tangible outcomes both for children and young people and your organisation, start with clearly defined goals and objectives that link the involvement of children and young people with the objectives of your project. Examples of project objectives include:

- To find out about children's patterns of recreation and engagement within their community (See example: [Child friendly city plan, p 22](#)).
- To explore how children and young people would like to see exhibitions and collections presented (See example: [xHIBIT aLBANY, p 26](#)).
- To examine how mental health services can be made accessible and youth friendly (See example: [Youth mental health, p 28](#)).
- To ensure educational materials and advertising campaigns connect with young people and influence their behaviour (See example: [Right Track campaign, p 24](#)).

For more information on the benefits of participation with children and young people, see:

- [Active Participation of Children in Your Organisation](#)
- [Blast Off Guide Two: Making the Case](#)



Step 2

Decide the extent of their involvement

Always consider involving children and young people from the beginning of a project. Questions to ask yourself include:

- What is your timeline? (Ensure there is time to incorporate children and young people's contributions *meaningfully* into the project.)
- Do you have sufficient resources (including staffing and budget)?
- Will all parts of the project be of interest to children and young people?
- What will be useful rather than incidental to the project results?
- Have you enlisted the support of key organisational decision makers?

Children and young people may be involved from the beginning, for specific parts of a project or at the evaluation stage. Be honest with children and young people about the extent of their involvement.

Example: xHIBIT aLBANY, Western Australian Museum

When planning its future direction the Western Australian Museum made a conscious decision to go further with community consultation than just developing a plan and seeking public comment. They decided to involve the community in a meaningful conversation from the very beginning. The Museum identified children and young people as a significant visitor group with unique perspectives whose ideas and involvement were very important.



Step 3

Decide what action you will take

When you decide to involve children and young people you are effectively entering into an agreement with them. They will be investing time, effort and commitment in your organisation. Before you ask them to be involved, your organisation needs to commit to and have a plan for acting on the involvement of children and young people. Questions to ask yourself include:

- What do you intend to do as a result of children and young people's involvement?
- What will you do with the advice/ideas children and young people give you? (Think about how much influence they can have.)
- What is realistic with the time and resources you have?
- What might prevent or limit action? (Think about previous work done by your organisation.)
- Can barriers to action be overcome? (If they can not then ensure your promises are achievable.)
- Do all areas of your organisation understand the commitment you will be making and are they prepared to support it?
- Is the action what children and young people would want?

To help you think through the issues raised by these questions, see:

- [Active Participation of Children in Your Organisation](#)
- [Do We Meet Your Standards? National Children and Young People's Participation Standards Self-Assessment Pack](#)



At this stage it's important to review and reflect on how you have decided to involve children and young people, and make any necessary changes for improvement.



Chapter 2: Preparing to involve children and young people in the work of your organisation

Message from a young person

Listen to what young people have to say, and if you promise you are going to do something, do it, otherwise their trust in adults diminishes.

Dianna Wright, Young Panel member, Children's Week Forum 2008: Making a positive difference in the lives of WA's children, Commissioner for Children and Young People WA.

Step 1

Prepare your organisation

Review how well your organisation is set up to support children and young people's participation. Questions to ask yourself include:

- Do strategic planning documents, policies and project plans describe their involvement?
- Do processes and resources support staff to build respectful, ongoing relationships with children and young people, to listen to their views and have it influence their work?
- Is your organisation prepared to seek and respond to feedback from children and young people about ways their participation could be improved in the future?

To help you think through these questions, see:

- [TAKING PARTICIPATION seriously: Sharing the stage](#)
- [Blast Off Guide Three: Participation Strategies](#)
- [Do We Meet Your Standards? National Children and Young People's Participation Standards Self-Assessment Pack.](#)

Example: Child friendly city plan, City of Subiaco

The children's views about what they liked in their community and what they thought should change contributed to the *Child friendly city plan* and directs the work of the City of Subiaco's Senior Project Officer for Children and Young People. To ensure children's opinions and ideas continue to contribute towards the City's planning and development, consultation guidelines and mechanisms are being developed.

Step 2

Consider who you will involve

Decide which children and young people should be involved and why. Think about:

- the community within which your organisation is based
- who your organisation provides a service to
- the groups of children and young people that your policies may impact.

Identify the organisations and adults you need to speak to before making contact with children and young people. Discuss your ideas with them and ask for their advice. If your organisation provides direct services to children and young people, your staff are often well informed. Other organisations that may have ideas to get you started include:

- [Office for Youth – ‘The Panel’](#)
- Local schools (is a partnership possible?)
- [Millennium Kids Inc](#)
- [Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia \(YACWA\)](#)
- A local youth advisory council (contact your local council or [Office for Youth](#)).

For more ideas on ways to involve children and young people, see:

- [Active Participation of Children in Your Organisation](#)
- [‘Conversations With Children’: A guide to accessing 9–12 year olds in settings other than mainstream for consultation](#)
- [Blast Off Guide Seven: Ensuring Inclusion](#)

Step 3

Choose methods and activities

Your choice of participation method needs to be appropriate to the age, background and capabilities of the children and young people you wish to involve. Where possible, involve children and young people in choosing the methods they prefer.

When choosing a participation method consider:

- the nature of the issue
- your timeframe and budget
- level of staff expertise and whether training is required
- its suitability for the age group
- whether it will be accessible to all
- the level of support from management.

For more detail, see:

- [Active Participation of Children in Your Organisation](#) pp 9–11 and 19–20



Examples of participation methods include focus groups, meetings, summits and advisory groups.

For a longer list of participation methods and their purpose, see:

- [Having Your Say: Public Participation in Government Decision-Making](#) p 8
- [Active Participation of Children in Your Organisation](#) pp 23–35

Successful projects adapt methods with activities suited to the interests and circumstances of children and young people.

For some more ideas, see:

- [Breathing Fire into Participation](#) pp 27–33 for ideas and help thinking about suitable methods for the time you have available.
- [Children's Agency in Communities](#) pp 23–25 for examples of participatory research methods.
- [TAKING PARTicipation Seriously: All aBoard!](#) for involving children and young people on boards and committees.

Example: Youth mental health, Mental Health Division

Workshops were designed to ensure young people felt comfortable sharing ideas and experiences involving sensitive subject matter. They were fun and interactive and included semi-structured interviews, brainstorming, role play, video interviews, photography, collage and graphic design.



At this stage it's important to review and reflect on how you have prepared to involve children and young people, and make any necessary changes for improvement.



Chapter 3: Doing it – the practicalities of involving children and young people

Message from a young person

Always know that children and young people are looking for someone who will really listen. Keep youth projects fun with a positive outcome for them, and listen.

Kennah Parker, Young People's Panel, Children's Week Forum 2008: Making a positive difference in the lives of WA children, Commissioner for Children and Young People WA.

Step 1

Adapt how you work

Once you have chosen your participation method and activities it is important to adapt to children and young people's ways of working. Ways to do this include:

- using creative, engaging and fun presentations and activities
- asking children and young people to help plan activities
- encouraging and training children and young people to be co-facilitators or peer researchers
- presenting information in easily understandable ways suitable for different learning styles (for example, use everyday language, pictures and diagrams). Ask children and young people to write, edit or review it before distribution
- selecting child and young person friendly venues and facilities – children and young people can give good advice on this
- scheduling plenty of breaks and variation in activities
- seeking feedback from children and young people about what they enjoyed, what they would like to see more of and what could be better.

For more detail on the above and ideas on successful ways of working, see:

- [Active Participation of Children in Your Organisation](#) pp 40–51
- [TAKING PARTicipation seriously: Sharing the stage](#) pp 21–27
- [TAKING PARTicipation seriously: Conferences & events](#) pp 127–272

Example: Right Track campaign, Public Transport Authority

Fun, non-competitive activities ensured young people were challenged yet felt confident to have a say. They were involved in activities including snake handling, hip hop battles, debate, think-tank sessions, wheelchair basketball, leadership games, urban art, graphic design, and developing radio and TV interviews and commercials.

Step 2

Plan your communication

The success of any project depends on genuine and effective communication building relationships with those involved. This is particularly important for children and young people.

Giving information

Children and young people (and their parents/guardians) need easily understandable information about every aspect of their involvement, communicated openly, in an ongoing way throughout the project. Do they know:

- who you are and why you are doing the project
- what will happen as a result of their participation (for example, how much they can influence, the action that will be taken)
- what they will actually be doing (for example, which parts of the project, what activities they will be involved in)
- who will see/hear their contributions and what they will do with the information (including confidentiality)
- the timeframe and level of commitment required
- where and when it is happening

- who will take responsibility for keeping them safe/ supporting them
- that their consent (and that of their parent/guardian) is required?^{5 6}

To make information to children and young people appealing and understandable, see:

- [Blast Off Guide Four: Children and Young People Friendly Documents](#)
- [Blast Off Guide Five: Alternatives to Children and Young People Friendly Documents](#)



⁵ O Kane, K., *Do We Meet Your Standards? National Children and Young People's Participation Standards Self-Assessment Pack*, The Children and Young People's Participation Consortium for Wales, 2008.

⁶ *Active Participation of Children in your Organisation*, Western Australian Office for Children and Youth, 2008.

Getting Information

Before children and young people become involved you need:

- their consent (and their parent's/guardian's consent). Remember they can withdraw their consent at any time, even once they have started the activity. For an example of a consent form take a look at the [Commissioner for Children and Young People's Consent Form](#).
- to know whether they want to be contacted for feedback and the best way to do this
- an emergency contact
- information about any specific needs (eg dietary, access or communication).

For more information on the above, see:

- [Active Participation of Children in Your Organisation](#)

Example: Youth mental health, Mental Health Division

Participants signed a consent and release form, however it was also clearly explained to them that they could withdraw at anytime. They were verbally informed of the objectives of the session and were given the opportunity to ask questions. Sensitivity to the nature of mental illness and individual circumstances allowed flexibility for some young people not to participate in all consultations.

Children and young people need to be able to communicate with you in an ongoing way. Ways to do this well include:

- allocating a member of staff to inform, encourage and hear from children and young people (ensure they are accessible and have dedicated time for this role)
- planning formal and informal 'getting to know' time and activities
- planning ongoing communication in a way that suits children and young people's preferred communication styles and times
- ensuring key organisational decision makers hear from children and young people directly wherever possible.

These considerations are discussed in more detail in:

- [TAKING PARTICIPATION seriously: Sharing the stage](#) pp 29–31



Step 3

Ensure the experience is rewarding

Children and young people need to have fun, find the experience meaningful and benefit from it. Demonstrate how you value their time, effort and contributions. Respond to their views by taking action or helping them achieve something they consider important.

Children and young people like to take part in activities that:

- are challenging but achievable
- build knowledge and confidence
- make a difference
- are fun, safe and enjoyable
- take them seriously and treat them with respect.

Example: Children's Manifesto, Wirrabirra Primary School

Students explained how rewarding it was for them to make a difference and to be taken seriously:

I liked being involved because I'm helping my school to grow and be conscious about the school's environment.

It's good to know your ideas are being listened to and that you are making your school better.

Being involved made me feel that I was helping the school just by saying my opinion.

Wirrabirra Primary School Student Councillors 2009



After the activity:

- recognise them through certificates, accreditation or references
- reward them with vouchers, products, pre-screenings of videos, publications or similar
- acknowledge their contributions in publications. Children and young people should give their consent for this.

For more detail on the suggestions in this section, see:

- [TAKING PARTICIPATION seriously: Sharing the stage](#) pp 33–42
- [Do We Meet Your Standards? National Children and Young People's Participation Standards Self-Assessment Pack](#)

Wherever possible seek advice from children and young people themselves about the type of activities they would enjoy and how they would like to be recognised.

At this stage it's important to review and reflect on the practicalities of involving children and young people, and make any necessary changes for improvement.



Chapter 4: Following up after involving children and young people

Message from a young person

When asked how the teachers showed students their ideas were being taken seriously:

They used them as examples and they spent a very long time explaining and talking to us.

Wirrabirra Primary School Student Councillor 2009

Step 1

Give them feedback

To develop and maintain a respectful and ongoing relationship with the children and young people who are participating in your project provide them with frequent, meaningful and timely feedback and updates.

Provide feedback from the beginning through a two-way conversation using methods preferred by children and young people. Ask them how they would like to be contacted with feedback and how they would find it easiest to provide you with theirs. Important feedback includes:

- acknowledging their attendance and work they completed
- acknowledging their contributions
- explaining changes (including delays) to the plan
- updating them about the project's progress
- allowing them to review documents that record their views

- responding to queries, requests and suggestions
- describing how their views influenced your work including any actions taken and decisions made
- your responses to their feedback.





To keep your feedback process on track, develop a plan which includes a (frequent) schedule of dates and the methods used, then monitor by keeping a record of when and how feedback was actually given. Be realistic about what is achievable and then be reliable by following through.

When providing feedback during workshops and activities, make sure you:

- respond to every child and young person's view
- value each contribution
- acknowledge and respond to their feedback.

For more detail on giving feedback, see:

- [Do We Meet Your Standards? National Children and Young People's Participation Standards Self-Assessment Pack](#)

Example: *Children's Manifesto*, Wirrabirra Primary School

During development four representatives from each class were asked if they were happy with the draft *Children's Manifesto* and their feedback was included. Feedback to students occurs at school assemblies and in class discussions with their teachers. The school has taken action on many of the students' suggestions, for example: construction of a vegetable garden, improved toilet facilities, new lunchtime activities, shaded areas with seating and duty teachers wearing bright vests so the children can see them. Students say having their ideas included in the *Manifesto* and seeing them acted on are how they know they were listened to.



Step 2

Get their feedback

Asking children and young people for feedback about what it was like to be involved in your project will improve your participation activities in the future, meaning better results for children and young people and your organisation. Consider this to be part of your organisation's continual improvement process.

Seek feedback during workshops and activities by:

- taking note of children and young people's body language and behaviour
- asking them what they thought about it
- reviewing at the end of the activity.

Use their feedback to adjust what you are doing as you are doing it, for example change the activity, the pace or have a break.

For activities for many different purposes, see:

- [Active Participation of Children in Your Organisation](#) Appendix 2
- [TAKING PARTicipation seriously: Conferences & events](#) pp 127–272

Ask children and young people for feedback after a workshop or activity and also at the conclusion of the project:

- what went well, what they enjoyed
- what could be done differently
- if they feel they were taken seriously and treated fairly
- if they feel they were listened to
- what they think of the action or outcomes.

All relevant staff in your organisation should hear children and young people's feedback in a way that is constructive and leads to better ways of working.

For more detail on getting feedback, see:

- [Do We Meet Your Standards? National Children and Young People's Participation Standards Self-Assessment Pack](#)
- [TAKING PARTicipation Seriously: Checking the Scoreboard](#) pp 43–70

Step 3

Making sure you've delivered

It is important to deliver on what you agreed on in the beginning. Children and young people have given time, energy and commitment to your project and it is important to them.

Be prepared to:

- show evidence to children and young people of what you have done or the ways their views have influenced decision making
- explain delays that may have occurred or reasons why something different has happened.

Formally monitoring and evaluating your project, and children and young people's involvement in it, will improve your processes. Importantly, it will also demonstrate how children and young people's involvement has assisted your project to achieve its intended outcomes.

For ideas and activities to help you evaluate your project, see:

- [Blast Off Guide Eight: Monitoring and Evaluation](#)
- [Are You Listening?](#)

Example: Hedland Youth Leadership Coalition (HYLC)

A workshop with young people identified their issues, priorities, needs and aspirations. Youth events (in particular hip hop) and employment for indigenous young people were two of the top issues raised. Subsequently HYLC developed projects to address these priorities. They formed partnerships and secured funding to create *Hedland Hip Hop Projects*, which took hip hop to four Pilbara towns and satellite Aboriginal communities. To address the issue of employment for indigenous young people HYLC formed a partnership to create *Swim for Life – Indigenous Bronze Medallion*. So far 14 indigenous young people have secured casual and part-time employment as life guards.



At this stage it's important to review and reflect on how you have followed up with children and young people, and make any necessary changes for improvement.





Chapter 5: Examples

Contents

- [*Child friendly city plan*](#): Developing a local government plan for children 0 to 12 years.
- [*Hedland Youth Leadership Coalition*](#): Young people ‘making a difference’ in their community.
- [*Right Track campaign*](#): Developing public education campaigns with young people.
- [*Children’s Manifesto*](#): Involving primary school students in developing a school plan.
- [*xHIBIT aLBANY*](#): Seeking children and young people’s views about museums.
- [*Youth mental health*](#): Seeking young people’s views on mental health services.



Child Friendly City Plan

City of Subiaco

The City of Subiaco decided to include children and young people more actively in their strategic planning processes and, inspired by UNICEF's *Child Friendly Cities*, to develop a *Child Friendly City Plan*. *Child Friendly Cities* value children as active citizens and important contributors to the planning and development of a city.

The City consulted with a wide cross-section of children and families including families of children 0 to 5 years,



children 5 to 11 years from local primary schools and an after-school care facility, and young people (13 years) from a local secondary school. An arts-based enquiry method involved children in imaginative play, drawing, drama and discussion and their opinions and ideas were recorded through photography, digital recording and field notes.

The children's views about what they liked in their community and what they thought should change contributed to the *Child Friendly City Plan* and directs the work of the Senior Project Officer for Children and Young People. Implementation continues, for example, children wanted an increased number and greater diversity of school holiday activities so the City has plans to expand its school holiday program.

Consultation guidelines and mechanisms are being developed to ensure children's opinions and ideas continue to contribute towards the City's planning.

As part of the community consultation process, a child friendly consultation was recently held with children and young people to seek their input into the re-development of the City's strategic plan.

The City of Subiaco is taking steps towards being recognised as a *Child Friendly City* by UNICEF.

Hedland Youth Forum

Hedland Youth Leadership Coalition (HYLC)

The Hedland Youth Leadership Coalition (HYLC) was formed in August 2007 as an independent coalition of indigenous and non-indigenous young people wanting to 'make a difference' in the Hedland community. HYLC members are involved in policy consultation and development, community events and project work based on a community action leadership model emphasising:

- Service to community.
- Youth led solutions.
- Partnering for development.
- Individuals empowered as 'community change agents'.

In March 2008 HYLC members facilitated a workshop with young people aged 12-17 years to identify their issues and priorities, needs and aspirations. They then facilitated and co-presented at the Hedland Youth Forum where these views were communicated to youth and community stakeholders. Two of the top issues raised in these forums were youth events (in particular hip hop) and employment for indigenous young people.

Youth events were considered an important issue in part because most organised sport and activities in the town did not encourage the active participation of indigenous children and young people. Since HYLC identified hip hop as a major interest for young people in Hedland and the wider Pilbara they have secured funding and formed partnerships to develop *Hedland*



Hip Hop Projects, bringing hip hop to four Pilbara towns and satellite Aboriginal communities. HYLC, in partnership with WA young achievers, has implemented the "Hood Hip Hop" projects that currently run on Saturday morning teaching the young Aboriginal community the art of Hip Hop.

Similarly, since employment for indigenous young people was identified as a significant issue HYLC has formed a partnership to create *Swim for Life – Indigenous Bronze Medallion*. Subsequently 14 indigenous young people have secured casual and part time employment as life guards.

HYLC has had considerable involvement in developing the *Hedland Youth Development Framework* and the *Hedland Youth Development Plan* and then subsequent implementation. In this way young people have a strong ongoing voice in strategic policy development and indigenous young people's involvement is facilitated and their voices are heard.



Right Track campaign

Public Transport Authority and Millennium Kids Inc

The Public Transport Authority (PTA) was concerned about a rise in trespass, graffiti and similar behaviour on the Armadale train line. To ensure their educational materials and advertising campaigns were connecting with young people and influencing their behaviour the PTA worked with Millennium Kids Inc to review the *Right Track* campaign.

Young people provided feedback which resulted in the PTA reshooting the educational DVD to include young people and their train experiences, changing advertisements to reflect youth language, and young people mentoring other young people on the Armadale line.

The PTA believes the resulting campaign materials were more effective because young people were involved.

Due to the success of the *Right Track* campaign young people were consulted in a series of *youth2youth* workshops prior to the opening of the Mandurah train line. Fun, non-competitive activities ensured young people were challenged yet felt confident to have a say. They were involved in activities including snake

handling, hip hop battles, debate, think-tank sessions, wheelchair basketball, leadership games, urban art, graphic design and developing radio and TV interviews and commercials.

Information from the *youth2youth* workshops has been used in ongoing campaigns including *youth2transitofficer* meetings, *Tag on Tag Off But Don't Tag the Trains*, safety and anti-graffiti messages, and positive travel messages.



Wirrabirra School – Children’s Manifesto

Wirrabirra Primary School

When Wirrabirra Primary School staff began reviewing the school’s values education they realised how important it was to speak to the students. Staff decided to survey students on which values were important to them, including what makes a good school, teacher, student and class.

Staff placed a strong emphasis on helping students understand the survey’s topic and purpose. Although the same questions were asked of all children from Pre-Primary to Year 7, teachers adapted their explanations to their students’ level. Younger children were assisted individually with the survey. From the



beginning staff spent time ensuring students had a good understanding of what could realistically be achieved in their school.

The school decided to develop a *Children’s Manifesto*[#] based on the survey responses and involving all the children in the school. Class activities including recipes, booklets and posters were used to develop students’ original ideas. Common ideas were turned into headings with Year 6 and 7 students developing explanatory statements. Finally four representatives from each class were asked if they were happy with the draft *Manifesto* and their feedback was included.

Feedback to students occurs at school assemblies and through class discussions with their teachers. The school has taken action on many of the students’ suggestions and revisits the *Manifesto* each year to plan for future improvements. Some of the changes that have occurred since the *Manifesto* was initiated are: construction of a vegetable garden, bird aviaries, a chicken coup, improved toilet facilities, new lunchtime activities, shaded areas with seating and duty teachers wearing bright vests so the children can see them easily. Students say having their ideas included in the *Manifesto* and seeing them acted on are how they know they were listened to.

[#] Manifesto – a public declaration of intent to act.



xHIBIT aLBANY

Western Australian Museum, Millennium Kids Inc and the Commissioner for Children and Young People WA

When planning its future direction the Western Australian Museum (the Museum) made a conscious decision to go further with community consultation than just developing a plan and seeking public comment.

They decided to involve the community in a meaningful conversation from the very beginning and identified children and young people as a significant visitor group with unique perspectives whose ideas and involvement were very important.

The Museum was keen to look at new ways of exhibiting as well as ensure it met the interests and expectations of the community.

The first pilot was launched in April 2009 with a project titled xHIBIT aLBANY. Created in partnership with the Commissioner for Children and Young People and Millennium Kids Inc, more than one hundred children and young people participated in the project which aimed to identify how young people liked to experience and engage with museums and their displays.

The workshops included students from schools throughout the Great Southern region including Albany Primary School, Albany Senior High School, Denmark Senior High School, Great Southern Grammar, Katanning Senior High School, Kojoonup District High



School, Mount Manypeaks Primary, North Albany Senior High School, Southern Edge Arts, Wellsted Primary School, Woodbury Boston and Yakamia Primary School.

Millennium Kids Inc trained fifty young people as facilitators who led a workshop with over seventy other kids to explore their views and ideas about museums.

At the workshop, they discussed what they liked, disliked and wanted to change about their community. They then discussed what interested them and the way they would like to see these ideas presented in an exhibition.

Over the following weeks all the young people shared their ideas through an [online blog](#) as well as talking with community members to share their own inspirations and unique concepts for displaying and communicating information.

The young people presented their plans and objects to the Museum's exhibition designers, who worked with them on how their exhibitions could be displayed.

Some of the themes and concepts developed by the young people in this exhibition will be incorporated into future projects by the Western Australian Museum, Albany.

All the ideas of the children and young people involved were showcased in a public exhibition at the Western Australian Museum, Albany.





Youth Mental Health

Mental Health Division of Department of Health Western Australia and Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia

The Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia (YACWA) conducted consultations with young people to hear their views about how to make mental health services accessible and youth friendly. Young people attending a mental health service, substance abuse program, or an alternative education facility were approached to participate.

Participants signed a consent and release form, however it was also clearly explained to them they could withdraw at anytime. They were verbally informed of the objectives of the session and were given the opportunity to ask questions. Sensitivity to the nature of mental illness and individual circumstances allowed flexibility for some young people not to participate in all consultations.

Workshops were designed to ensure young people felt comfortable sharing ideas and experiences involving sensitive subject matter. Key considerations were creating a safe place, developing trust and considering young people's abilities and boundaries. By holding a series of weekly workshop sessions, trusting relationships were built, leading to more candid discussion in later weeks.

The workshops were fun and interactive and included semi-structured interviews, brainstorming, role play, video interviews, photography, collage and graphic design. They highlighted key considerations for mental health services when planning and delivering services to ensure young people are not deterred from accessing them.

Chapter 6: Resources

[Active Participation of Children in Your Organisation](#)

A guide to children's advisory groups and other participation mechanisms. (Department for Communities, Western Australia)

[Active Participation of Children in Your Organisation](#)

Appendices

(Department for Communities, Western Australia)

[Are You Listening?](#)

A toolkit about involving children in an organisation's evaluation processes.

(Cambridgeshire Children's Fund, England)

[Blast Off Guides One to Nine](#)

Good practice guides on a number of topics based on the experience of participation workers in Wales.

(The Participation Consortium, Wales)

[Breathing Fire into Participation](#)

Ideas and help to think about suitable methods for the time you have available. (Funky Dragon, Wales)

[Children's Agency in Communities](#) (pp 23–25)

Gives examples of participatory research methods and how they have been used.

(NAPCAN/Social Justice Social Change Research Centre/Benevolent Society)

['Conversations With Children': A guide to accessing 9–12 year olds in settings other than mainstream for consultation](#)

Useful ideas on ways of approaching groups of children other than in schools (not fully current).

(Department for Communities, Western Australia)

[Do We Meet Your Standards? National Children and Young People's Participation Standards Self-Assessment Pack](#)

Provides details of standards to guide organisations' participation practice.

(The Participation Consortium, Wales)

[Having Your Say: Public Participation in Government Decision-Making](#) (p 8)

Describes different participation techniques, their goal and the promise being made to participants.

(Auditor General for Western Australia)

[TAKING PARTicipation seriously](#)

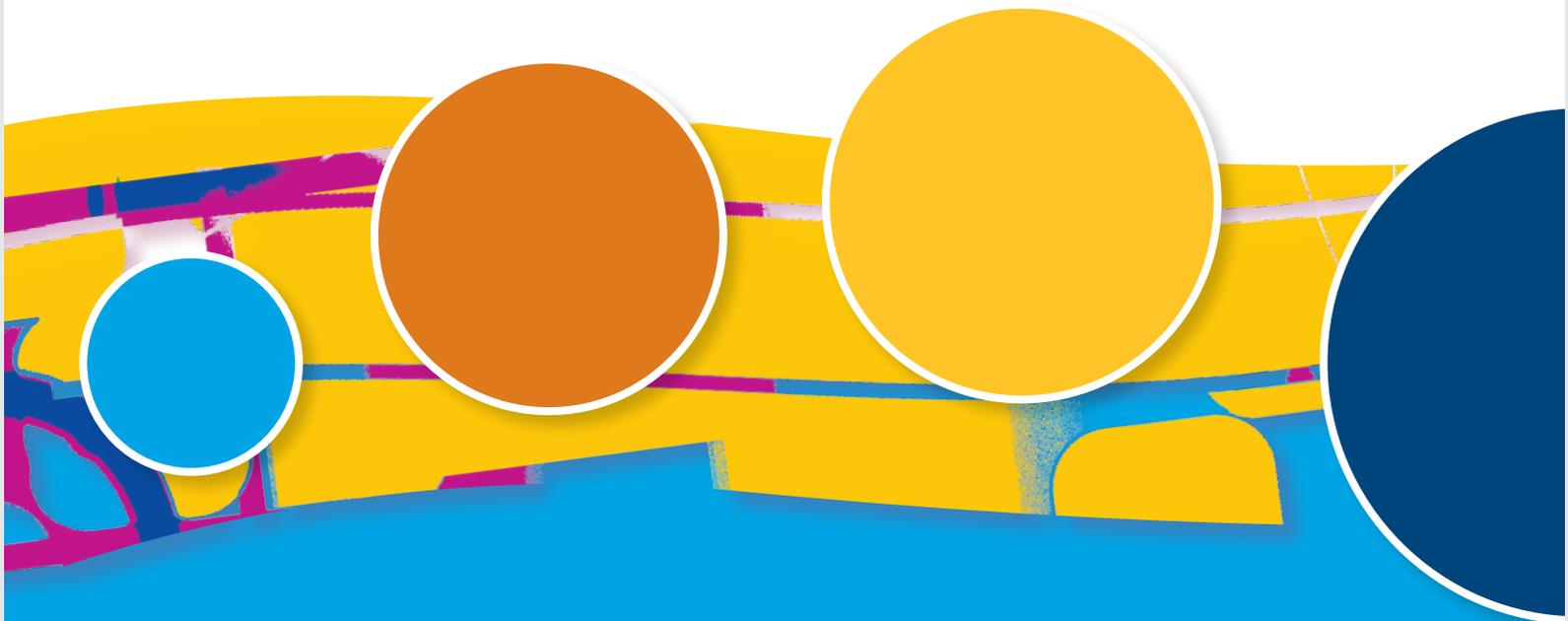
A practical resource kit of eight publications about involving children and young people in different areas including events, committees, case planning.

(NSW Commission for Children and Young People)

[Consent Form](#)

An example for seeking the consent of children and young people to participate.

(Commissioner for Children and Young People WA)



Commissioner for Children and Young People
Ground Floor, 1 Alvan Street, Subiaco WA 6008
Telephone 08 6213 2297 Facsimile 08 6213 2220
Freecall 1800 072 444

ccyp.wa.gov.au