



Children and Young People's Participation in Catholic Communities

A Guide to Supporting & Engaging, Listening and Communicating with Children and Young People



CATHOLIC
DIOCESE OF
BROKEN BAY



Supporting & Engaging | Listening | Communicating



**Australian Human Rights
Commission National
Principles for Child Safe
Organisations
Principle 2**

Children and Young People are informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.

**NSW Office of the Children's
Guardian Child Safe Standards
Standard 2**

Children participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.

**Australian Catholic
Safeguarding Ltd
National Catholic
Safeguarding Standards
Standard 2**

Children are safe, informed and participate. Children are informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.



Acknowledgement Statement

We acknowledge the Aboriginal nations who have, over millennia, cared for the Country on which the Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney, the Diocese of Broken Bay and the Diocese of Parramatta serve. We pay our respects to Elders past and present. May we all walk gently and thoughtfully on Country.

Foreword

Together, the Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney, the Diocese of Broken Bay and the Diocese of Parramatta are committed to Safeguarding Children and Young People. This commitment is underscored by our faith in Jesus Christ and the teachings of the Catholic Church.

We are united in having zero tolerance to any attitude and activity that makes Children and Young People unsafe.

As leaders of the Catholic Church, we endorse the underlying principles and practices of participation expressed in this document. Our Catholic communities have a responsibility to all our Children and Young People to help them reach their full potential.

**Most Rev
Anthony Fisher OP**
Archbishop of Sydney

**Most Rev
Anthony Randazzo DD, JCL**
Bishop of Broken Bay

**Most Rev
Vincent Long OFM Conv**
Bishop of Parramatta



Children and Young People's Participation in Catholic Communities

“The Church wishes to listen to your voice, even your doubts and your criticism, make your voice heard, let it resonate in communities...”

Pope Francis at Krakow opening speech for World Youth Day 2016



Catholic communities value and celebrate ALL Children and Young People for who they are and the contributions they make. We as a community have an obligation to Children and Young People to uphold their human and spiritual rights and provide them with opportunities to actively participate.

The Right of Children and Young People to be heard and taken seriously is one of the fundamental Rights of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. This Right is embedded in the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, the NSW Child Safe Standards, the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards, and in Archdiocesan and Diocesan policies.

A Catholic community that champions the practice of **SUPPORTING & ENGAGING, LISTENING AND COMMUNICATING** with Children and Young People

is a community that encourages their participation. Children and Young People have much to offer, through their unique insights, talents and experiences. Their ability to participate develops as they build skills, knowledge and confidence in themselves and others.

When Children and Young People are provided with opportunities to be involved in decision making that directly affect them, it enhances their safety and wellbeing.

Workers in all Catholic communities are encouraged to **SUPPORT AND ENGAGE, LISTEN AND COMMUNICATE** with Children and Young People. These principles are the foundations for building and sustaining safe participation of Children and Young People. This is achieved by:

1. Providing ministries, services and programs that are relevant for Children and Young People including those who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, who are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and who have a disability;
2. Committing to zero tolerance to any attitude and activity that makes Children and Young People feel less safe;
3. Enhancing relationships between leaders, community members, Children and Young People; and
4. Creating a new perspective to invigorate renewal.



A Safeguarding culture for Children and Young People is fostered and sustained by ¹workers committed to living the Gospel by serving the most vulnerable. Our communities implement Arch/Diocesan policies, procedures and community standards that are Child and Young Person centred to lift barriers so their voices can be heard and their participation valued.

The term ¹‘worker’ used in the document refers to Parish and Agency Employees, Volunteers, self-employed contractors, Clergy and Religious Appointees required by the *Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 (NSW)* to have a Working with Children Check (WWCC) before engaging in Child-Related Work.

Support and Engage

To **Support & Engage** Children and Young People in our Catholic communities is to empower them, through positive and affirming experiences. Empowerment builds confidence in themselves and in the Catholic communities.

What should we do?

Empower

Help Children and Young People understand why and how they are being asked to participate and offer this information in a culturally diverse and age-appropriate way.

We can achieve this by fostering an environment that treats Children and Young People of differing abilities as valuable.

Respect

Trust is shown through genuine consideration and responses to the views of Children and Young People. This will show that our Catholic communities take them seriously.

We can achieve this by being workers who know how to respond appropriately to the views of all Children and Young People.

Affirm

Provide opportunities for Children and Young People to listen to others of their community to discover a shared view.

We can achieve this by providing workers with relevant resources that will support Children and Young People to express themselves.

What have the Children and Young People said...

“We feel supported and comfortable in our youth group. We call it our second home because we are comfortable enough to express our feelings and emotions to our peers and youth leaders. It’s a great place to learn more about God and ways of participating in our Parish”.

– Daniel & James, ages 13 and 16

Children and young people who are at risk often experience a sense of mistrust and helplessness. Thus, it is the role of the Catholic communities to engage and support them on the journey towards health, wholeness and transformation. Through positive and affirming experiences, they are empowered to live dignified, fruitful and rewarding lives. St John writes that fear is cast out by love (1John4:18). If by our engagement and support, their fear is replaced by confidence, then we will have succeeded in helping children and young people to make a new beginning of hope.

– **Bishop Vincent Long OFM Conv**

Listen

To **Listen** to Children and Young People in our Catholic communities is to be present, attentive and an active participant. Listening to Children and Young People, can encourage them to speak up, build their confidence and ensure our practices are informed by them.

What should we do?

Attentive

Provide workers who are engaging with Children and Young People with Safeguarding and Child Protection Training to equip them with the skills to listen in a safe manner.

We can achieve this by ensuring Safeguarding and Child Protection Training information and Policy and Procedure documents are easily accessible.

Speak Up

Create environments where Children and Young People are listened to and are welcome.

We can achieve this by engaging workers who support a culture of participation and encourage Children and Young People to speak up.

Confidence

Identify opportunities for Children and Young People to participate in decision making processes where their voices can be heard and workers can learn from their insights.

We can achieve this by providing Children and Young People with feedback opportunities such as allowing them to engage with the Parish Pastoral Council or general community discussions.

What have the Children and Young People said...

“Having the opportunity to speak up and participate helps me to express opinions and be listened to”. – Matilda, age 14

At its heart, the call to ‘Listen’ is a call to make a choice for respecting the intrinsic dignity of every human person, this includes our Children and Young People. Many times throughout the gospels, we are shown Jesus’ profound love and respect for the little ones, especially the children who were brought to him. By Listening to Children and Young People, we are recognising their right to be heard and committing anew to their dignity.

“He who has ears to hear, let him hear.” Matthew 11:15

– Archbishop Anthony Fisher OP

Communicate



To Communicate with Children and Young People in our Catholic communities involves a two-way interaction that provides encouragement, allows expression, informs, and connects. Children and Young People will find their voice in a safe and supportive environment.

What should we do?



Expression

Explain to Children and Young People what the Catholic community is attempting to do and encourage them to provide their ideas, opinions and suggestions.

We can achieve this by seeking the thoughts and responses of Children and Young People in events in which they are involved.

Inform

Ensure printed material, online and verbal communication with Children and Young People is easily understood and age appropriate.

We can achieve this by steering clear of jargon whenever possible.

Connect

Relate with Children and Young People with respect.

We can achieve this by demonstrating that their contributions are valued.



What have the Children and Young People said...

“Kids sometimes have clouded views regarding their own safety or wellbeing but they should be able to confide in someone no matter the issue at hand, personally, when I don’t feel safe I feel like everyone is against me, I don’t feel comfortable and I feel pressured to not be my true self and put a ‘mask’ on. However, when I do feel safe, I feel relaxed”. - Jess, age 17

The word of life....this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us — we declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.

1 John 1:1-3

– **Bishop Anthony Randazzo DD, JCL**



By encouraging the participation of Children and Young People, subsidiarity can be actively lived out in our Church communities.

Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church #189

“The characteristic implication of subsidiarity is participation, which is expressed essentially in a series of activities by means of which the citizen, either as an individual or in association with others, whether directly or through representation, contributes to the cultural, economic, political and social life of the civil community to which they belong. Participation is a duty to be fulfilled consciously by all, with responsibility and with a view to the common good.”



Pope Francis, *Christus Vivit*, Christ Lives #14

Let us also keep in mind that Jesus had no use for adults who looked down on the young or lorded it over them. On the contrary, he insisted that “the greatest among you must become like the youngest” (Lk 22:26). For him age did not establish privileges and being young did not imply lesser worth or dignity.



Pope Francis, *Christus Vivit*, Christ Lives #38

Those of us who are no longer young need to find ways of keeping close to the voices and concerns of young people. Drawing together creates the conditions for the Church to become a place of dialogue and witness to life giving fraternity. We need to make more room for the voices of young people to be heard: listening makes possible an exchange of gifts in a context of empathy. At the same time, it sets the conditions for a preaching of the Gospel that can touch the heart truly, decisively, and fruitfully.



Listen

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Support & Engage

To Support & Engage Children and Young People in our Catholic communities is to empower them, through positive and affirming experiences. Empowerment builds confidence in themselves and in the Catholic communities.



Communicate

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Support Services

Archdiocese of Sydney, Safeguarding and Ministerial Integrity Office

P: (02) 9390 5810

E: safeguardingenquiries@sydneycatholic.org

W: www.sydneycatholic.org

Diocese of Broken Bay, Diocesan Office for Safeguarding

P: (02) 8379 1605

E: safeguarding@bbcatholic.org.au

W: www.bbcatholic.org.au

Diocese of Parramatta, Office for Safeguarding

P: (02) 8838 3419

E: safeguarding@parracatholic.org

W: www.parracatholic.org

CatholicCare – Archdiocese of Sydney

P: 13 18 19

W: www.catholiccare.org

CatholicCare – Diocese of Broken Bay

P: (02) 9481 2600

W: www.catholiccaredbb.org.au

CatholicCare – Diocese of Parramatta

P: (02) 8843 2500

W: www.ccss.org.au

Lifeline

P: 13 11 14

W: www.lifeline.org.au

Beyond Blue

P: 1300 22 4636

W: www.beyondblue.org.au

1800RESPECT

P: 1800 737 732

W: www.1800respect.org.au

Kids Helpline

P: 1800 55 1800

W: www.kidshelpline.com.au

Headspace

P: 1800 650 890

W: www.headspace.org.au

NSW Domestic Violence Line

P: 1800 65 64 63

NSW Child Protection Helpline

P: 132 111

W: www.reporter.childstory.nsw.gov.au

eSafety Commissioner

W: www.esafety.gov.au

References

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