

## CHILDREN'S VOICES ACTIVITY

### Information Sheet

As the primary organisation for the prevention of child abuse and neglect in Australia, NAPCAN understands the importance of listening to children, and recognizes that everyone has a part to play in keeping children safe. Community groups, individuals, families, local agencies, schools, clubs, local councils and early childhood services can all work together to build communities that are strong and safe for children.

The Children's Voices Activity is inspired by Sharon Bessell's research, which highlights the importance of including children in community consultation and actually *acting* on this feedback. Bessell's *Children, Communities and Social Capital in Australia* research project highlights two (2) very strong messages:

1. Children want to be involved in discussions about how to make communities good places for people of all ages to live.
2. Children have a lot to say and have great ideas.

Bessell's research also highlights the key reasons for having conversations with children about their local communities:

- Children experience the world differently from adults.
- Adults cannot guess what is important for children without asking them and listening to the answer.
- Children may have priorities that adults prefer not to think about.

However, while we know that listening to children is important, we also know that engaging children in community consultation can be challenging.

The aim of this activity is to provide a simple tool to help community organisations and groups to start listening to, and acting on, the views of children and young people.

A critical part of this project is to make sure that this feedback is actually used to inform decisions in the community, school or organisation. You can also work out ways that children can participate in what happens next. Can they help decide on priorities? Can they be involved in making some of the changes?

**Importantly, it's not just about listening, but actually *doing* something – and keeping children involved and informed as much as possible.**

## How can I get involved in the Children's Voices Activity?

The Children's Voices Activity is a simple tool to support collecting, and responding to, the views of children.

The activity sheets are designed to be used by any organisation or individual that engages with children, including schools, early childhood centres, parents and carers, clubs and youth groups.

1. Read through this information pack.
2. Download the Children's Voices Activity sheets. Print as many as you need. We have two sheets: one asks children about what they like best, and the other asks what they would like to change. You can use the sheets for any subject area you like e.g. community, school, program or organisation.
3. Use the activity sheets to facilitate a conversation with the children. This can be in small groups, as a large group or class, or even individually.
4. An important part of this project is to make sure that feedback is actually used to inform decisions in the community, school or organisation. Consider how you can pass feedback on to those people who make decisions, e.g. the school principal, local shire/council, coordinator of a club or program. Talk with the children about how you can share their ideas - and involve them in the process.
5. NAPCAN would love to hear about your work. Feel free to share your findings and experiences with us via [contact@napcan.org.au](mailto:contact@napcan.org.au).

# In words or pictures, tell us what you like best about your \_\_\_\_\_

*Hey kids!*

Did you know you have a right to have your say in things that are important to you?

(Insert subject area here, e.g. school, town, community, club or program)

Name and contact details (optional):

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## Tips for adults:

- The main role of the adult is to LISTEN and recognise that children are experts about their own lives.
- If possible, work with the children in small groups to start a conversation about things that are important to them. Use this worksheet to record ideas.
- You can either write/draw the suggestions on the page, or ask the children to do that themselves.
- Older children may prefer to do this individually. You may need to ask younger children about their drawing and record their story.
- Once you've collected the children's views, pass them on to the people who make decisions, e.g. local shire or council, school, club or organisation. Tell the children how you want to share their ideas, and keep them involved in the process.

It would be great if you could let NAPCAN know about your project! [contact@napcan.org.au](mailto:contact@napcan.org.au)

# In words or pictures, tell us what you would change about your \_\_\_\_\_

(Insert subject area here, e.g. school, town, community, club or program)

*Hey kids!*

Did you know you have a right to have your say in things that are important to you?

Name and contact details (optional):

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