

## **INQUIRY INTO COMMUNITY CONSULTATION PRACTICES**

**Organisation:** Commission for Children and Young People

**Date Received:** 20 June 2025

The Hon Ryan Batchelor MP  
Committee Chair, Legislative Council Environment and Planning Committee  
Parliament of Victoria

Submitted via website: <https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/get-involved/inquiries/inquiry-into-community-consultation-practices/submissions>

Dear Mr Batchelor

### **Inquiry into Community Consultation Practices**

The Commission for Children and Young People (the Commission) welcomes the opportunity to provide this short submission to inform the Legislative Council Environment and Planning Committee's Inquiry into Community Consultation Practices.

The Commission is an independent statutory body focused on promoting and protecting children and young people's safety, wellbeing and rights. Our statutory functions include:

- providing advice to government about policies, practices and the provision of services relating to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people experiencing vulnerability
- providing independent oversight of Victoria's child protection, out-of-home care and youth justice systems
- conducting inquiries into services provided to children and young people
- overseeing two child safety regulatory schemes, the Child Safe Standards and the Reportable Conduct Scheme, designed to prevent and respond to child abuse in organisations.

Critical to performing our functions is platforming and sharing the views, experiences and expertise of children and young people on issues that matter to them.

This submission was prepared in consultation with the Commission Youth Council – a group of young people aged between 15 and 24, who come from all walks of life and have a range of lived experience, and who bring a diverse range of youth voices and expertise to the Commission's work.

### ***The need for meaningful engagement with children and young people***

*"Good consultations create a safe and welcoming space where young people feel comfortable expressing themselves without fear of being ignored or judged."  
(Commission Youth Council member)*

Government departments and agencies across all portfolios develop policies and design service systems that have a direct and significant impact on the lives of children and young people. It is critical that government hears directly from, and involves, children and young

people in consultation and decision-making processes. Children have a right to express their views in all matters affecting them,<sup>1</sup> under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, of which Australia is a signatory. Children and young people can also provide important and new perspectives, which can lead to better decision-making and outcomes - for children and young people, communities and service systems.

In recent years, the Commission has seen improvements in the work of some government agencies who have been seeking input from children and young people on policy reform and program design. However, despite this progress in some areas, children and young people are still often underrepresented in, or excluded from, many government consultation processes on decisions that affect their lives. When they have been included or involved, children and young people sometimes report an impression that their involvement was tokenistic because of how and when the engagement was conducted.<sup>2</sup>

*"Some consultations feel like they're steering participants toward a particular response, often through leading questions – which makes it seem like feedback is being collected for the sake of ticking a box rather than genuinely valuing diverse perspectives."*  
(Commission Youth Council member)

*"Viewing younger people as less educated on a topic because of their age."*  
(Commission Youth Council member)

*"For consultations to be truly effective, they need to be more than just ticking a box. They should empower children and young people by giving them real influence in decisions."* (Commission Youth Council member)

There is an opportunity for government agencies to play a stronger role in facilitating engagement with children and young people. This includes improving consultation practices to ensure they are accessible, safe and meaningful for children and young people.

*"Prioritising adult comfort creates obstacles and barriers to engaging with specific cohorts of children and young people."* (Commission Youth Council member)

*"In some sessions, the same few people tend to share, while quieter or newer participants sometimes don't get the space to contribute. Without a written option or gentle facilitation to guide the flow, it can feel like we're missing out on the full richness and diversity of everyone's perspectives."* (Commission Youth Council member)

It is important that when consulting, government agencies ensure they share the outcomes of their consultation with the children and young people who have participated in their processes. Sharing these outcomes helps to demonstrate to consultation participants that their time spent contributing to the consultation and the stories they shared were valued and taken into account.

*"I've been to a lot of amazing consults where I have felt like my story mattered - but at the end of the day I think... What's actually changed from that consultation? That's why closing the loop after talking with young people is so important - I want to know what sharing my trauma changed."* (Commission Youth Council member)

Many government agencies and government-funded organisations delivering direct services to children and young people also have an obligation under Victoria's Child Safe Standards

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<sup>1</sup> Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child>

<sup>2</sup> CCYP, 2025, *Child and Youth Engagement Framework*, p.6 and 17, available at: <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/assets/corporate-documents/Child-and-Youth-Engagement-Framework.pdf>

to ensure that 'children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously'.<sup>3</sup> These organisations are required to:

- have strategies in place to develop a culture that facilitates participation and is responsive to the input of children and young people
- provide opportunities for children and young people to participate and are responsive to their contributions, thereby strengthening confidence and engagement.<sup>4</sup>

Embedding these practices in organisational operations is critical to ensuring that children and young people are informing and guiding how services can best meet their needs.

### ***The Commission's approach to engaging with children and young people***

*"People actually listening to my opinion and not jumping in with things they think would influence it." (Commission Youth Council member)*

*"Our approach meets young people where they're at and treats young people as knowledge holders." (Commission Youth Engagement Project Officer)*

The Commission is working to weave the voices, experiences and ideas of children and young people through all its work. We are developing ways to embed this engagement in our operations, by partnering with children and young people. This includes:

- establishing and developing the Commission Youth Council, which is actively informing how we do our work and leading youth engagement activities
- employing young people to help advise the Commission, facilitate engagement with children and young people and support the Youth Council
- promoting the voices of young people through our *Youth Voices* platform that features written pieces by young people on issues that matter to them<sup>5</sup>
- engaging directly with children and young people to inform our systemic inquiries
- supporting the South Sudanese Australian Youth Justice Expert Working Group and its Youth Advisory Group, which brings together the voices and lived experiences of South Sudanese Australian and African heritage young people in Victoria
- building the capacity of Commission staff to strengthen engagement practices in our operations
- Youth Council members speaking at events and sharing speaking roles with Commissioners at forums, meetings and in media interviews. For example, in 2024 the Commissioners and two Youth Council members provided evidence to the parliamentary inquiry into the state education system in Victoria.<sup>6</sup>

To guide this work, the Commission and Youth Council developed a *Child and Youth Engagement Framework*.<sup>7</sup> The Framework provides a good practice approach to engaging with children and young people. While it is a guide for the Commission, the Framework is also now publicly available for other organisations and agencies to use. It includes twelve principles to guide engagement with children and young people, as well as practical engagement tools and resources to support effective and meaningful consultation practice.

<sup>3</sup> Child Safe Standard 3, further information is available at: <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/child-safe-standards/the-11-child-safe-standards/standard-3/>

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

<sup>5</sup> <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/children-and-young-people/youth-voices/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/news/society/eduhearingsend/>

<sup>7</sup> CCYP, 2025, *Child and Youth Engagement Framework*, available at: <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/assets/corporate-documents/Child-and-Youth-Engagement-Framework.pdf>

*"I was 14 when I first engaged with the CCYP, through consultation for The Same Four Walls systemic inquiry and continued to contribute to inquiries conducted by CCYP including In Our Own Words and Let Us Learn. Not only did CCYP give me an opportunity to use my lived experiences to influence positive systemic change, but I also felt like I finally had a safe space to share my story – that's why I went from being consulted to doing the consulting." (Commission Youth Engagement Project Officer)*

As the Framework notes, the Commission has access to spaces – such as organisations and agencies designing policies and delivering services – that many children and young people (particularly those who are experiencing marginalisation or disadvantage) do not have access to. The Commission has a responsibility to 'invite children and young people into spaces where they aren't expected to be seen and to challenge the broader community to include the voices of children and young people who have experienced disadvantage.'<sup>8</sup> We encourage government agencies and organisations to consider their responsibility when conducting consultations on issues that affect children and young people, and when working with or for this group.

The Commission, in partnership with the NSW Office of the Children's Guardian and the Australian Centre for Child Protection at the University of South Australia, has also developed the *Empowerment and participation*<sup>9</sup> guide to support organisations to empower and involve children and young people in line with the Child Safe Standards.

The Commission encourages the Legislative Council Environment and Planning Committee to consider these resources, and the opportunities they present for government agencies to develop policy and programs that reflect the diverse needs of children and young people through deliberate and genuine engagement.

The Commission also encourages the Committee to hear directly from children and young people and other underrepresented groups from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences, to inform this inquiry.

Thank you for considering the Commission's submission. If you require any further information, please contact Rouel Dayoan, Director, Strategy and Engagement (email: [rouel.dayoan@ccyp.vic.gov.au](mailto:rouel.dayoan@ccyp.vic.gov.au) or phone: 0417 023 343).

Yours sincerely



Leanne Barnes  
**Chief Executive Officer**

19/06/2025

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<sup>8</sup> CCYP, 2025, *Child and Youth Engagement Framework*, p.9

<sup>9</sup> CCYP, 2021, *Empowerment and participation: A guide for organisations working with children and young people*, available at: <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/assets/resources/Empowerment-and-Participation-Guide/CCYP-Empowerment-and-participation-guide-for-web.pdf>