



Promoting Children’s Participation in Australian Family Law research project

1. Project overview

This project will support the practical implementation of children’s right to participation under Article 12 of the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child* in Australia’s family law system. It will explore children and young people’s experiences and understandings of participation in different family law decision-making processes; and collaborate with children and young people as lived experience experts to co-create a Children’s Participation Toolkit. The Toolkit will serve to: (1) educate and empower children and young people with information about their right to participate in family law decision-making; and (2) build the capacity of family law professionals and parents to support children to exercise this right meaningfully and safely.

2. Recruitment of children and young people

We seek your support to recruit children and young people to participate in two research activities:

1. **A 90-minute interview** with a researcher about:
 - their experiences of participation in the family law system following their parents’ separation.
 - their ideas for promoting children and young people’s right to participate in family law decision-making, including their feedback on existing child participation mechanisms.
2. **A 90-minute workshop** with the research team and other children and young people to test and refine a Children’s Participation Toolkit that will be developed based on their ideas from their interview.

Children and young people who meet the following criteria are eligible to participate:

- are 10 to 21 years of age; **AND**
- are based in New South Wales, Queensland or Victoria; **AND**
- whose parents have separated and have engaged with the Australian family law system since at least 2019 – such as via family court proceedings, mediation, family dispute resolution (FDR) or another form of dispute resolution facilitated by a family law professional; **AND**
- whose parents’ engagement with the family law system has been finalised (such as via consent orders, final court orders, or a parenting plan).

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Children and young people are NOT eligible to participate if:

- their parents' family law matter is yet to be finalised (that is, dispute resolution or court proceedings are in progress); **AND/OR**
- there is an anticipated issue of safety or risk arising as a result of the child or young person's participation in the project.

We will be guided by your professional expertise and knowledge of the child or young person's circumstances regarding whether an anticipated issue of safety or risk is present. In making this assessment, please consider any factors that may make participation in the research contrary to the child or young person's best interests at that time, such as ongoing risk of family violence or harm.

3. Sharing the research opportunity

If you identify children and young people who meet the above eligibility criteria, we ask that you share the attached flyer with them. The flyer contains information about the project and prompts interested children and young people to scan the QR code or use the URL link to learn more. They will then be directed to a Google Form, which contains further details, including a short video describing the project. You are welcome to share this flyer however you prefer, such as via email, during an in-person or telephone session, or through their parent or guardian.

4. The informed consent process

Young people aged 16 to 21 years will be able to provide their own consent to participate in this research. Children and young people aged 10 to 15 years will require the co-consent of one parent or guardian who has sole or shared parental responsibility for them, *in addition to* their own consent.

5. De-briefing and check-in support

We will work with you to provide each participant the opportunity to have an informal debrief or 'check in' following their interview and the workshop. This step serves to ensure that each participant can, in a safe space and with a familiar person, discuss any thoughts, feelings or unexpected emotions that may have arisen. The timing of the first debrief will be scheduled when the interview time is confirmed, to provide certainty for the child or young person that this additional support has been put in place.

6. Research team

This project is led by Southern Cross University and has been approved by Southern Cross University's Human Research Ethics Committee (Approval number 2024/033). Members of the research team are:

- Lead Investigator: Dr Georgina Dimopoulos
- Co-investigators: Dr Meaghan Vosz, Ms Holly Aitken, Ms Helen Walsh, Ms Eliza Hew

If you have any questions or would like more information about the project, please contact Dr Georgina Dimopoulos at georgina.dimopoulos@scu.edu.au.

We thank you for your support of this research.