



Child and Youth Participation Framework

A framework of practice that embeds children's rights into everything the Queensland Family and Child Commission does



Queensland
Family & Child
Commission



Acknowledgements

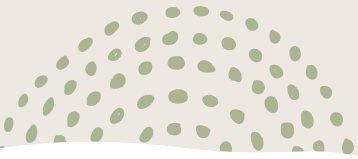
The Queensland Family and Child Commission acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Custodians across the lands, seas and skies where we walk, live and work.

We recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as two unique peoples, with their own rich and distinct cultures, strengths and knowledge. We celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures across Queensland and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

We acknowledge the important role played by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and recognise their right to self-determination, and the need for community-led approaches to support healing and strengthen resilience.

The QFCC acknowledges the special rights of children, which are recorded in the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UNCRC). The QFCC is guided by its 4 principles:


- the right of all children to survival and development
- respect of the best interests of the child as a primary consideration in all decisions relating to children
- the right of all children to express their views freely on all matters affecting them
- the right of all children to enjoy all rights of the UNCRC without discrimination of any kind.



“ Our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth should be heard, because despite being silenced in the past, now is our time to be heard and for our voices to be amplified. We as youth, are the next line of storytellers and fighters for justice. By speaking up and being heard, we can let the world hear our voice, our struggles and our concerns to create real, true and effective change because words is where change is started.

Jessy, Kabi Kabi female,
20 years, Youth Advisory Council

The QFCC would also like to acknowledge the young people who have worked closely with us over years to build this framework of practice.



About the Queensland Family and Child Commission (QFCC) and this document

The QFCC is a statutory body of the Queensland Government. Its purpose is to influence change that improves the safety and wellbeing of Queensland's children and their families. Under the *Family and Child Commission Act 2014*, the QFCC has been charged by government to review and improve the systems that protect and safeguard Queensland's children.

This framework has been prepared under section 23(1)(a) of the *Family and Child Commission Act 2014*. This section requires the Queensland Family and Child Commission (QFCC) to engage with, and take account of, the views of children, young people and their families. It provides an ongoing framework of practice to guide activities undertaken by the QFCC to uphold the rights of young Queenslanders.



The Queensland Government is committed to providing accessible services to Queenslanders from all culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. If you have difficulty understanding this report, you can contact Translating and Interpreting Service National on 13 14 50 to arrange for an interpreter to effectively explain it to you. Local call charges apply if calling within Australia; higher rates apply from mobile phones and payphones.

Contact for enquiries

Queensland Family and Child Commission
Level 8, 63 George Street
PO Box 15217, Brisbane City East QLD 4002

Email: info@qfcc.qld.gov.au

Website: www.qfcc.qld.gov.au

Attribution and licence

© The State of Queensland (Queensland Family and Child Commission) 2022.

This framework is licensed by the State of Queensland (Queensland Family and Child Commission) under a Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) 4.0 International licence. You are free to copy, communicate and adapt this framework, as long as you attribute the work to the State of Queensland (Queensland Family and Child Commission). To view a copy of this licence visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode>

Content from this document should be attributed as:
The State of Queensland (Queensland Family and Child Commission) *The Queensland Family and Child Commission Child and Youth Participation Framework*.

Copyright inquiries should be directed to the Queensland Family and Child Commission by email to: info@qfcc.qld.gov.au or in writing to PO Box 15217, Brisbane City East QLD 4002.

Contents

Executive foreword and pledge	2
-------------------------------	---

Foreword from the QFCC's Youth Advisory Council	4
---	---

Introduction and context	5
--------------------------	---

The Child and Youth Participation Framework	6
---	---

How we seek child and youth participation – <i>the model</i>	8
--	---

How we implement the framework – <i>the practice matrix</i>	14
---	----

Why do we seek youth participation – <i>the evidence base</i>	16
---	----

Why we work with others – <i>strategic links</i>	20
--	----

Legislative basis for the framework	21
-------------------------------------	----

Appendix 1 Child and Youth Participation Practice Matrix Template	22
--	----

References	24
------------	----

Executive foreword and pledge



Luke Twyford

Principal Commissioner
Queensland Family and
Child Commission



Natalie Lewis

Commissioner
Queensland Family and
Child Commission

For years, the QFCC has been actively seeking opportunities to work with children and young people on the issues that affect them. We have listened to them, involved them in our work, and co-designed projects and approaches with them. We have a Youth Advisory Council that advises us, and we have done our best to make sure the voices of children and young people are heard, loud and clear and acted on.

Until now, we haven't had a clear structure that pulls all of this together. This document – the Child and Youth Participation Framework – does that. It explains our reasons; the details of our approach; and the connection to legislation, principles and plans.

It will be of great benefit to the QFCC, but we also hope it will help other organisations, providing them with guidance and direction on how to keep children and young people at the centre of all they do.

Upholding the rights of children is the responsibility of all adults, because while children and young people have the same general human rights as adults, they begin life dependant. They are citizens of the future, not possessions of parents or institutions. Many decisions being made by governments and organisations impact on them, and unintended consequences can have large impacts on them. Genuine youth participation is one way to combat this.

The QFCC recognises that children should be able to participate in decision making regarding issues that affect them. Under the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*, this is a right, not a privilege. We know that children and young people have a significant role to play in shaping economic, social and cultural success across Queensland, and that ensuring meaningful child and youth participation in the development of policy, programs and services is the right thing to do.

Our pledge

The QFCC pledges to lead the way and exemplify best practice in child and youth participation by engaging and advocating with young Queenslanders. We will continue to take a child rights affirming approach, and to make explicit commitments to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, who are over-represented in the child safety and youth justice systems. We will act on these commitments by:

Holding ourselves accountable at an individual, team and organisational level for ensuring the views and perspectives of young people influence our program of work

Prioritising meaningful participation from the children and young people who are most impacted by the work we do, including vulnerable communities across Queensland

Making sure the children and young people who generously share their time, experience and expertise feel safe and protected while doing so

Building the capacity of young people to participate and become agents of positive change in their lives and communities

Recognising and promoting children and young people as experts on their own life experiences, and actively respecting what they have to offer regarding issues and policies that impact on them and their communities

Identifying opportunities for children and young people to have their views heard by other organisations, and facilitating their participation where possible

Embedding approaches and concepts into our culture to help all QFCC staff undertake meaningful child and youth participation

Advocating for internal and external policy and practice that ensures the meaningful participation of children and young people in decision making across Queensland

Making this framework available to other organisations to help them encourage children and young people to participate in the work they do.

Foreword from the QFCC's

Youth Advisory Council

We are the Youth Advisory Council of the QFCC. We are committed to assisting the QFCC and young Queenslanders to be actively engaged in creating safe, purposeful and positive futures. We are young Queenslanders ourselves, and we collaborate with the Principal Commissioner, Commissioner and staff to influence all actions, projects and activities of the QFCC. We are from different areas of Queensland, and we have diverse backgrounds and lived experiences that guide our passion for change.



Queensland has metropolitan, urban, rural and remote areas, many of which hold significant cultural and historical value. Our home is a very liveable state with many opportunities for young people to pursue. But not everyone is able to take full advantage of these opportunities. Work still needs to be done to support the rights of all children and young people living here.

All young Queenslanders have the right to live happy, healthy and safe lives. We believe our rights are fundamentally the same as those of adults, but we need extra support, help and guidance to uphold our rights and support our growth. We should be able to make mistakes, grow and be ourselves, forming our own identities. We should be listened to, included in a meaningful way, and taken seriously, both now and in the future.

Talk to us, listen to our views, implement our ideas and support us in changing things that have negative impacts on our lives. We want to be involved in discussions and have the power to influence change. We want to be educated and helped to engage in topics and better understand issues, in order to develop more informed solutions.

We strive to be honest about our views and opinions and to keep youth perspectives at the forefront of QFCC work. We dedicate our time to amplifying the voices of other young people, to promote equity and fair representation. We want young Queenslanders to feel that their voices are heard by those making decisions that impact on our lives.



Introduction and context

Across the world, governments and organisations are developing and implementing strategies to increase the participation of children and young people within their organisations.

Involving children and young people in community, societal and institutional decision making builds a stronger and more inclusive society. Genuine youth participation sends a strong message that children and young people are active and engaged citizens, with relevant views and opinions.

The QFCC wants all young Queenslanders to be connected with their communities and to be respectfully included in and influence the decisions being made about them. To act in their best interests, we apply an approach that affirms child rights, and involve youth participation in all our activities.

This framework outlines how we give children and young people genuine opportunities to participate in decision making, to give full effect to the realisation of their rights.¹ It demonstrates our commitment to connecting with them, supporting them in sharing their views, amplifying what they tell us, and influencing decision makers with their ideas. It has been co-designed with a core group of Youth Advocates who have been instrumental in the establishment of the new child and youth participation approach, model and elements.

This framework also explicitly supports our commitment to the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and families. It does this by establishing clear actions and accountability for embedding culturally safe and responsive practices throughout our work.

The Child and Youth Participation Framework



The Queensland Family and Child Commission Child and Youth* Participation Framework (the framework) provides an overarching structure for an approach that affirms child rights across all of our work. While the aims, intent and processes have been in place for some time, the framework brings them together and provides guidance for the future.

It is also designed to help other organisations in setting up their own processes for involving children and young people in their work. In particular, the appendices in this document are easy to customise to individual circumstances.

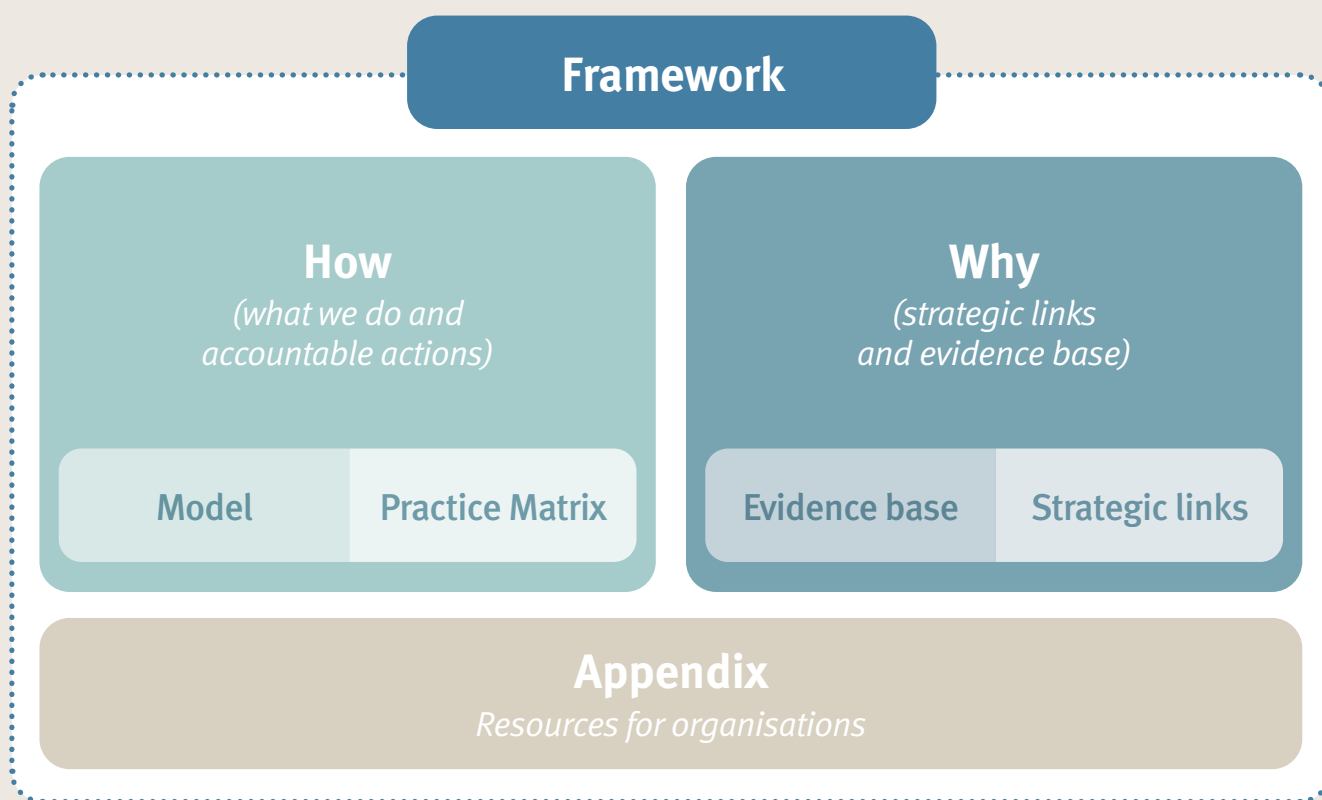
The framework focuses on the *how* and the *why*. The different components are explained in the following pages, along with some background.

The framework provides the QFCC with ways to influence the development and evaluation of state and national strategies affecting children and young people. We will use it to amplify the voices of children and young people and to continue to be an authoritative source of advice and expertise on issues affecting their rights, safety and wellbeing.

We also promote our framework as best practice to the organisations we work with and support. It is also relevant to other current and future partners who have a role in achieving positive outcomes for children, young people and their families in Queensland.

** While the United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child (UNCRC) applies to children (defined as those under 18 years old), the QFCC applies it to children and young people (also referred to as 'youth'), including up until the age of 25.*

Figure 1: The Child and Youth Participation Framework



How we seek child and youth participation – the model

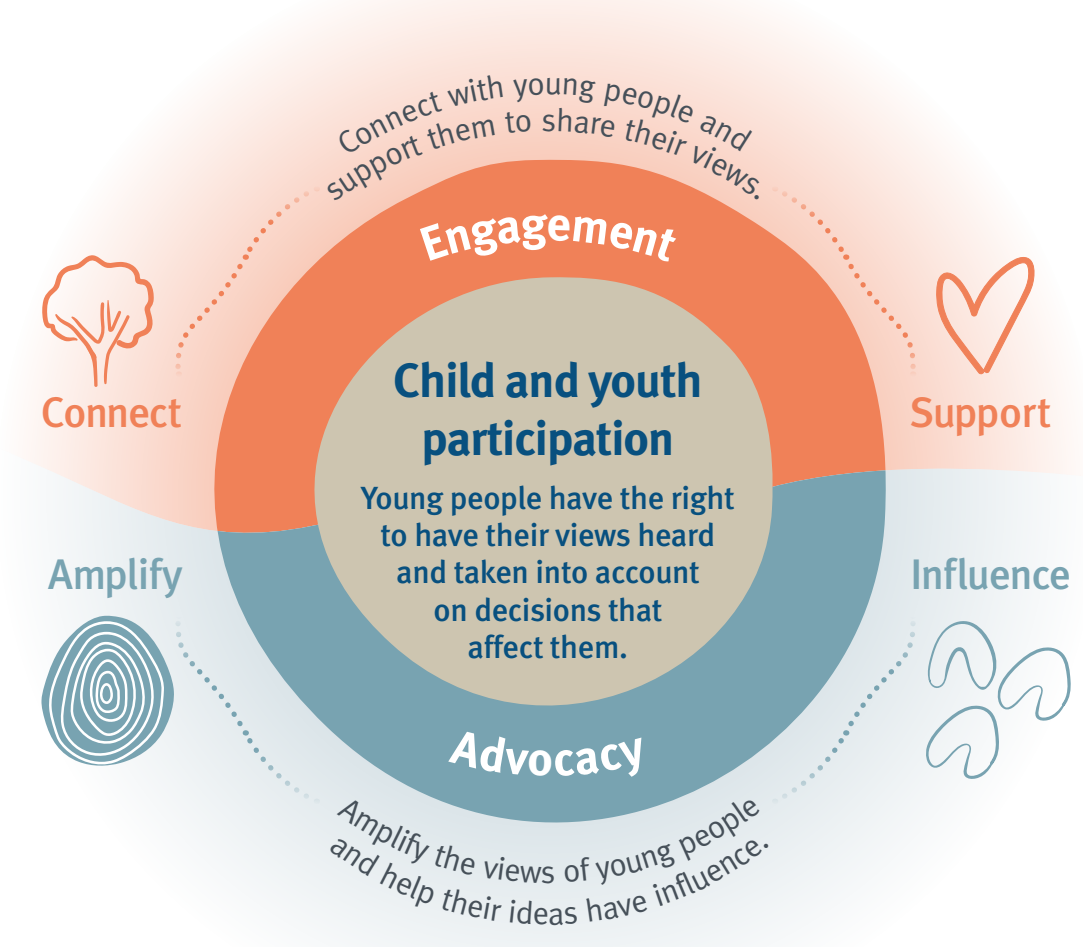


Figure 2: The QFCC Model of participation

The QFCC has developed the *QFCC Model of Participation*, based on research, concepts from the UNCRC and the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations. It expands on our pre-existing guiding principles (see ‘Background to the model’). It is recognised by other organisations and by children and young people as a best practice example of child and youth participation in Queensland.

The 2 key approaches the QFCC has adopted and combined to establish meaningful youth participation are *engagement* and *advocacy*. They are each important practices in youth participation that produce genuine results for young people in their own right. When these two approaches are applied and work together, we achieve more genuine and mutually beneficial youth participation.

Engagement with young people involves proactively seeking out opportunities to **connect** with them, and providing appropriate **support** to help them express their views in meaningful ways

Advocacy for the views of young people involves taking steps to **amplify** what they say and ensuring their views **influence** decision making.

The 4 key practices of youth participation applied within this combined approach at the QFCC are:

Connect by creating opportunities to hear the views of young people in ways that work for them. This involves being proactive and adaptable, and creating an approach that is safe and suited to the young people you want to hear from.



Key considerations when **connecting** with young people are:

- setting intentions – knowing who you’re focusing on and why
- understanding influence – ensuring they know what they will be able to influence
- identifying the cohort – welcoming young people into an appropriate environment
- being youth friendly – not just duplicating adult processes and structure.

Support young people by putting processes and mechanisms in place to ensure they feel welcome, safe and confident in expressing their views. This involves offering a tailored approach that meets the needs of the young people who are participating.



Key considerations when **supporting** young people are:

- co-designing with them – involving them in the planning and development stages
- minimising any risk – assessing and mitigating risks and document processes regarding confidentiality and privacy
- creating safety – providing qualified support people
- having appropriate engagement activities – tailoring activities to suit the age and maturity of those who are involved, and allowing them to control them
- providing compensation – providing age-appropriate compensation.

Amplify by promoting the views of young people in an accurate way. This involves understanding how, what and where young people want to share, and making sure it is done in respectful, safe and culturally appropriate ways.



Key considerations when **amplifying** the voices of young people are:

- asking young people – asking them if they want their views shared and how they want to share them
- understanding nuances – not always expecting individual young people to speak on behalf of all young people, and making sure they cannot be identified by their views
- not filtering – not diluting or distorting what young people say
- sharing your experience of youth participation – telling stakeholders about your experiences in working with young people, and providing feedback to Aboriginal and Torres Strait elders and communities.

Influence by incorporating the views expressed by young people into decision-making processes in meaningful ways. Young people’s views should be taken seriously, with feedback provided when any action is or isn’t taken.



Key considerations to support young people in **influencing** change are:

- incorporating young people’s views – advising them about action taken as a result of their contributions
- keeping young people informed – following through on committed action and providing clear updates
- honouring reciprocity – recognising the work of young people by giving them copies of publications to which they’ve contributed and involving them in promotional activities if they are interested
- establishing direct connections – connecting young people with decision makers in organisations and the community
- involving them more than once – helping young people to remain an important part of your organisation.

Many approaches to decision making feature youth participation, some of which include youth councils, consultation with young people, and forums where a single youth voice is featured as representation of a wider group of young people. The challenge for decision makers is to engender genuine youth influence by converting engagement with young people to an advocacy agenda that produces actual outcomes.

When youth participation is embraced by a whole organisation, young people will be included in and considered at all levels of governance, activities, and (in the case of those who are 18 or over) employment. The QFCC is committed to embedding youth positions across all levels of the organisation, to ensure we take every opportunity to integrate youth perspectives.

See Figure 3 for the range of youth participation opportunities across the QFCC.

Every opportunity we create for young people to express their views and have them genuinely listened to is important. We all have a vital role to play in upholding the rights of young people and acting on what we hear.

For full details about the QFCC model and how to adopt a similar participatory practice, please refer to the [QFCC model of participation](#) and the [Youth Participation quick start guide](#).

Figure 3: QFCC Youth participation opportunities





Background to the model

In developing our model, we considered 2 existing, well-regarded approaches: Hart's ladder of participation and Lundy's model of participation.

We also took into account known barriers to participation, and factored in our existing principles for overcoming these. This was because young people have been reporting that the principles have been producing meaningful youth participation opportunities.

These are briefly explained in the following pages.

Hart's ladder of participation

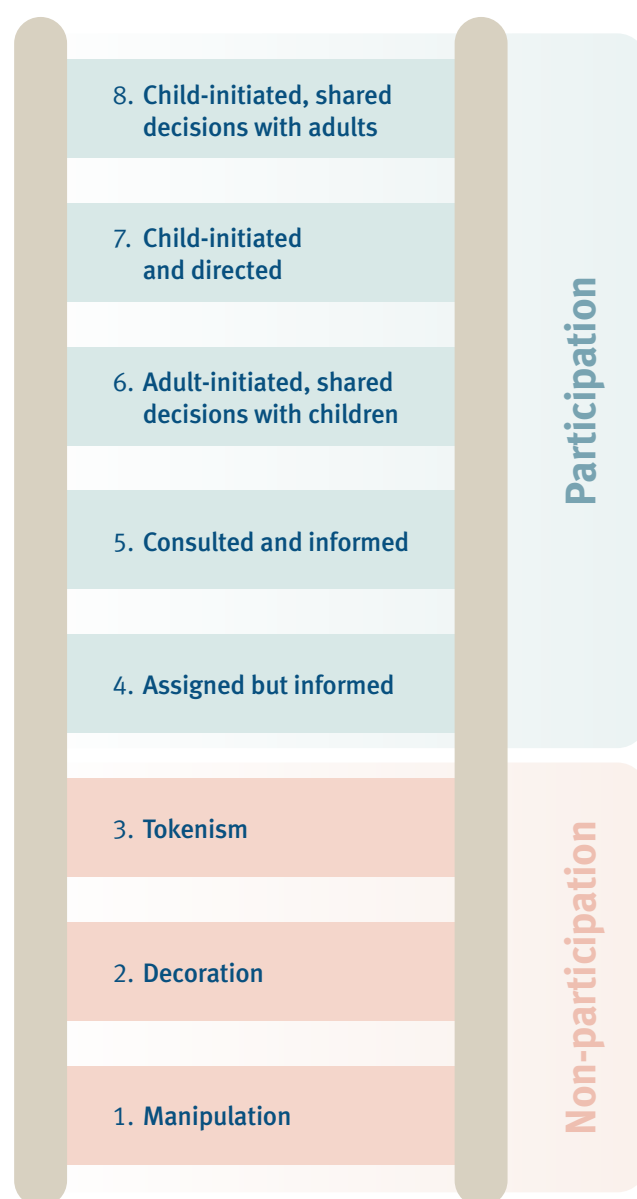
Robert Hart's *Ladder of Participation*² is broadly recognised as the most influential model of youth participation.

It introduces 8 rungs of participation, 3 of which – 1. *manipulation*, 2. *decoration*, and 3. *tokenism* – are referred to as 'non-participation'. These are the lowest rungs on the ladder of participation and are considered to not meaningfully satisfy the concept of participation, which is defined as 'the process of sharing decisions which affect one's life and the community'.

The remaining 5 rungs of participation are described as 'genuine' models of participation. They are: 4. *assigned but informed*, 5. *consulted and informed*, 6. *adult-initiated, shared decisions with children*, 7. *child-initiated and directed*, and 8. *child-initiated, shared decisions with adults*. These are considered to allow (to varying extents) self-directed participation and provide opportunities to participate in different phases of a program or project (in line with the age and ability of the child).

The eighth rung sees young people initiating ideas and adults being invited to join in, leading to equal youth/adult partnerships. While not always achievable in the context of government processes, this is the type of participation the QFCC strives for.

While Hart's Ladder of Participation articulates the 'why', it doesn't provide the 'how'.



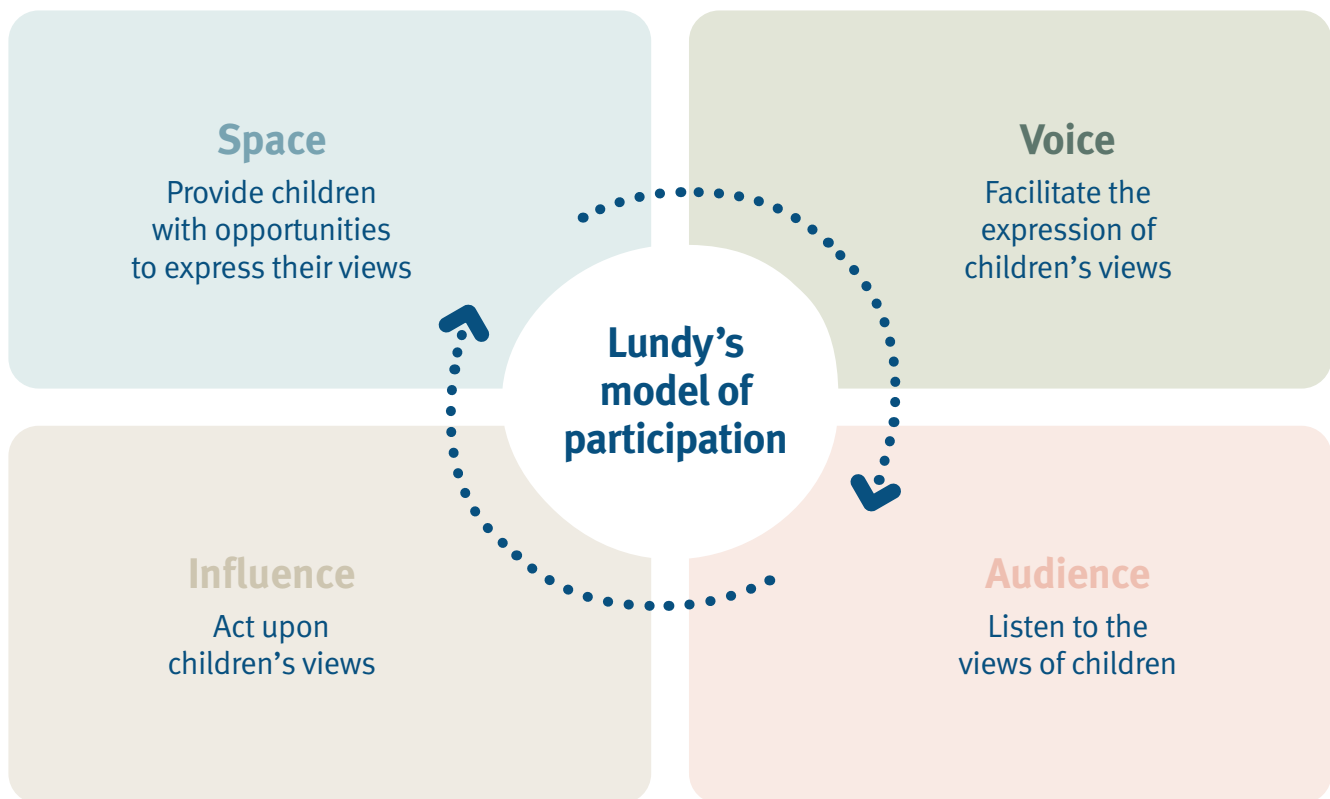
Lundy's model of participation

Laura Lundy's model of participation provides a way of conceptualising a child's right to participate, as described in the UNCRC. Lundy considers the application of 4 elements implied within Article 12 (right to participate):

- **Space:** Provide children with opportunities to express their views
- **Voice:** Facilitate the expression of children's views
- **Audience:** Listen to the views of children
- **Influence:** Act upon children's views.³

Lundy encourages people to consider the child's right to participate in the light of other relevant UNCRC provisions, in particular: Article 2 (non-discrimination), Article 3 (best interests), Article 5 (right to guidance), Article 13 (right to seek, receive and impart information), and Article 19 (protection from abuse).⁴

If we think about children's participation in this way, it improves our ability to successfully act on children's right to participation.





Barriers to participation

When working towards genuine youth participation opportunities, organisations often encounter a number of barriers that inhibit children's and young people's active involvement and limit their capacity or motivation to engage, including:

- unfavourable leadership, organisational attitudes, structures, or procedures
- insufficient allocation of time or resources from within the organisation
- costs associated with engaging with children, including the cost of transport and additional resources
- lack of expertise in working with children and young people.⁵

These need to be considered from the start of development of youth participation approaches.

Overcoming barriers

'When acknowledging and planning for barriers to youth participation, organisations can embed a more holistic children's rights framework across their organisation.'⁶



To overcome common barriers to youth participation, the QFCC uses 6 guiding principles that guide project development across the organisation.

Figure 4: QFCC Guiding principles for genuine youth participation





How we implement the framework – *the practice matrix*

We designed a practice matrix to provide a clear outline of the policies, programs and actions we are taking to support young Queenslanders in being included, heard and respected both within and outside of the QFCC. A blank version of this is included in the appendix for use by other organisations.

Engagement		
Key element	Executive pledge	How we do this
 <p>We facilitate genuine connections by:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritising meaningful participation from the children and young people who are most impacted by the work we do, including vulnerable communities across Queensland. • Holding ourselves accountable for ensuring the views of children and young people influence our work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create opportunities for young people to have their say on matters important to them. • Conduct targeted engagement opportunities to hear specifically from vulnerable groups of young people. • Provide opportunities for young Queenslanders to get involved in and have their say. • Provide ongoing information to young Queenslanders that promotes their rights and opportunities to influence. • Co-design resources with young people to build the capacity of other young people to feel empowered.
 <p>We provide effective support by:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building the capacity of young people to participate and become agents of positive change in their lives and communities. • Making sure the children and young people who generously share their time, experience and expertise feel safe and protected while doing so. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure practices are in place to support the safety of young people. • Embed children's rights across all projects. • Use risk assessments to promote safe practices. • Reinforce governance for clear accountability regarding child and youth participation. • Include the views of young people as evidence in all projects and programs of work. • Provide opportunities for young people to directly influence all work.



Advocacy

Key element	Executive pledge	How we do this
 <p>We continuously amplify the voices of young people by:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recognising and promoting children and young people as experts on their own life experiences, and actively respecting the significant amount they have to offer in relation to issues and future policies that affect them and their communities.• Identifying opportunities for children and young people to have their views heard by other organisations, and facilitating their participation where possible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Undertake activities to amplify the voices and stories of young people, without changing them to suit adults.• Work with young people to identify target topics of interest to young Queenslanders.• Build an advocacy plan directly with young people based on the issues on which they want to see change.• Create connections between key Queensland decision makers and young people to support direct and solution-focused conversations.• Continue to foster stakeholder relationships with government, non-government, charities and youth service providers to promote best practice in both youth perspectives and youth participation.
 <p>We act on what we hear from young people to influence change by:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Advocating for policy and practice that ensures the meaningful participation of children and young people in decision making across Queensland.• Strengthening our organisational culture, embedding approaches and perspectives that help all staff undertake meaningful child and youth participation. In this, we seek to be an example of best practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Embed children's rights across all projects.• Connect young people with stakeholders to discuss areas of interest and solutions for change.• Support other organisations in implementing youth participation practices where young people hold positions of influence.• Continue to connect young Queenslanders with each other.• Maintain and grow a system of connection between those committed to supporting children's rights and youth participation, including youth advisory groups.

Why do we seek youth participation – *the evidence base*

The QFCC collects views directly from children and young people, and from primary sources (for example child safety and youth justice datasets). We constantly engage with a diverse range of young people across Queensland, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, those from refugee and culturally diverse backgrounds, and young people living with disability, as well as those who identify as being LGBTIQ+ and those who come from rural and remote communities.

We analyse and report on this direct feedback in reports, submissions and publications. We look to identify trends

and patterns in youth concerns and convey these to decision makers across the state.

Among our stakeholders, we promote system change, monitor changes in youth views and experiences over time, and contribute to wider risk reduction and improved policies and practices for children and young people. We also promote the adoption of meaningful youth participation practices for all young Queenslanders, including those involved with child protection and youth justice, and those who rely on mental health and online safety services to stay safe and well.



Young Queenslanders are the reason we exist

Young people have insightful views on topical issues (such as mental health, education and the environment) and they want to be heard. Through the QFCC's ongoing *Growing Up in Queensland* (GUiQ) suite of projects (including *Living through COVID*) we have heard young people's desire to be listened to by adults, decision makers and community leaders.

“I think the most important issue for young people today is having our voices heard and our ideas taken seriously.”

Female, 18 years, GUiQ 2020

“It is important for young people to have their say and for their perspectives to be heard and acted upon.”

Annika, Kulkalgal Nation Central
Torres Strait Islander female, 25 years,
Youth Advocate

“I think the most important issue for young people today is being heard and noticed by the world leaders and adults, as young people have a unique perspective.”

Male, 16 years, GUiQ 2020

Young people don't just want to be heard;
they also want their opinions to be
considered when decisions are made.



*“ I think the most important issue
for young people today is being involved
in decisions that shape the future,
as we are the ones that will live with the
consequences of other people's actions.*

Female, 15 years, GUIQ 2020

*“ Leaders should take more
action on bringing young people
into the fold. Many of the decisions
made by our leaders affect the
younger generation; however,
most of the time the younger
generations' opinions aren't heard.*

Male, 17 years, GUIQ 2020

*“ I think the most important issue
for young people today is being
excluded from government decisions
that directly and indirectly affect us.*

Male, 16 years, GUIQ 2020

*“ Get us more involved so we
feel like we are all in it together and
we are doing something to help.*

Male, 16 years, Living through COVID

*“ Young people should be involved in decision making
because these decisions also impact us. We are the next
generation so we should be involved in this crucial process
of decision making to benefit our current society
and our future too. Additionally, young people can learn
so much from being involved such as how to work
with others, what the decision making process is
and thinking of the advantages and disadvantages.*

Jessy, Kabi Kabi female, 20 years,
Youth Advocate



It is also important that leaders act on what young people tell them, by amplifying their voices, advocating for their needs and working together on solutions to issues that affect them.

“ Leaders should take more action on advocating for the younger people, we need a voice, we need people to hear our needs, and to voice our concerns for us when we are not heard by big corporations.

Female, 17 years, GUIQ 2020

“ Leaders should take more action on engaging with the younger community and consulting with youth leaders on how they can properly address and help youth issues.

Female, 18 years, GUIQ 2020

“ Leaders should connect with and listen to First Nations young people because they have the power to make changes. These changes need to be based on what is happening right now, and what needs to be changed right now. They can turn our voices into action.

Worimi and Kariyarra female, 21 years,
Youth Advocate



As mentioned earlier, the QFCC employs a group of young Queenslanders as Youth Advocates to help embed the perspectives of young people across all levels of our agency.

Benefits for children and young people

By participating in processes and decisions, children and young people gain an understanding of democratic participation. They can build confidence and competence to participate.⁷ They can grow and develop authentic responsibility as citizens.

Specific benefits include:

- being personally empowered to make a difference
- developing an awareness of, and value for, their own knowledge, understanding and insights
- acting and being recognised as citizens
- becoming familiar with group and democratic processes
- acquiring and expanding their problem-solving, negotiation and communication skills
- developing improved relationships with adults and peers.⁸



Benefits for organisations

Inclusive and meaningful youth participation is fundamental to the development and implementation of durable, workable policy and service-based solutions based on the needs of children, young people and future generations.

For example, benefits include:

- developing more effective policies and services based on needs
- gaining new perspectives on an issue
- developing policies and services that are more informed
- increasing their relevance to young people
- enhancing relationships with staff.⁹

Youth Advocates are offered numerous opportunities across different areas to directly influence change in systems, processes and decisions. They bring their own areas of interest and employ a range of engagement and advocacy methods to connect with other young people, decision makers and community leaders.

Additionally, the QFCC Youth Advisory Council (YAC) was specifically established to provide

youth perspectives and leadership to the QFCC, and has been doing so since the QFCC began. It meets regularly to directly provide advice to the commissioners on what is important to children and young people in Queensland and explore responses to concerns.

All children and young people in Queensland will have their voices heard, and their views taken seriously, by the QFCC.

Why we work with others

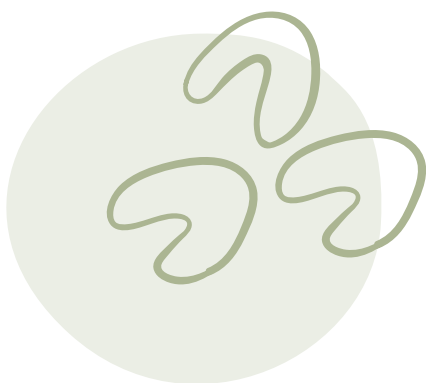
– *strategic links*

The framework has been developed to align with numerous international, national and local level policies and practices as a way of demonstrating our commitment to the priorities of other child rights-based agencies.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child

The *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UNCRC) sets minimum standards for governments to protect children's rights, founded on respect for the dignity and worth of each child, regardless of their personal circumstances. These rights apply to every child, everywhere.

The framework is underpinned by Article 12 of the UNCRC, which says children and young people have the right to have a say on all matters that affect them and for their views to be taken seriously.¹⁰



The National Principles for Child Safe Organisations

The National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (the National Principles) have been designed by the National Children's Commissioner to provide a child-rights approach based on the strengths of young people, as a way to actively embed a child safe culture across all sectors involving children in Australia.

All of the national principles are underpinned by the rights of children, with Principle 2 specifically addressing the need for children and young people to be informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them, and be taken seriously.

Our Way: A generational strategy

The Our Way strategy 2017–2037 works to empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents, families and communities to have a greater say on laws, policies and programs that affect them and their lives. The framework seeks to give practical effect to the principles outlined in the Our Way strategy by assisting young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders to engage and participate in the decisions impacting them, their families and communities.

The framework adopts the principle of protecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's right to live connected to culture and country and the principle of evidence-based responses (basing efforts on evidence of what works). It also demonstrates a commitment to changing systemic racism and inequities through the creation of direct engagement and advocacy activities with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, families and communities.

Legislative basis for the framework

Queensland Human Rights Act 2019

The *Human Rights Act 2019* entrenches the right of every person in Queensland to take part in public life, without discrimination. This framework will help make sure children and young people can take part in aspects of public life, including decisions about local issues and consultations with government.

Queensland Youth Strategy

The framework also aligns with an increased commitment to child and youth participation across Queensland, generated through the Queensland Government's broader strategy of youth engagement – led by the Queensland Government Department of Environment and Science's Office for Youth.¹¹

The current strategy includes 3 actions for the QFCC:

1. Connect with children and young people to listen to their views, thoughts and opinions about issues impacting their safety and wellbeing.
2. Actively involve children and young people in identifying, planning, implementing and reviewing key areas of the QFCC's work.
3. Actively celebrate and promote the views, thoughts and opinions of children and young people to leaders and decision makers.

We will continue to act on these under the strategy through our framework.

Queensland Family and Child Commission Act 2014

Under section 23(1)(a) of the *Queensland Family and Child Commission Act 2014* (the Act), the QFCC is required to engage with, and take account of, the views of children, young people and their families.

The QFCC fulfills this obligation by identifying and facilitating many participation opportunities for young Queenslanders – opportunities that are respectful, safe, and focused on celebrating their successes in an ongoing way.

Section 23(1)(a)(b)(c)(d)(f) of the Act states that:

In performing a commissioner's functions, the commissioner must do the following—



- engage with, and take account of, the views of children, young people and their families;
- ensure the interests of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders are adequately and appropriately represented;
- respect and promote the role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service providers in supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities to protect and care for their children and young people;
- be sensitive to the ethnic or cultural identity and values of children, young people and their families;
- work cooperatively with relevant agencies and help build their capacity to meet the needs of children, young people and their families.

In Part 4, section 30, the Act states:



The Principal Commissioner may establish 1 or more advisory councils, as the commissioner considers appropriate, to advise on matters relating to the commission's functions. The formation and establishment of a Youth Advisory Council adheres to and fulfils QFCC's responsibilities and legislative obligations in accordance with the *Family and Child Commission Act 2014*.

Appendix 1

Child and Youth Participation Practice Matrix Template

Engagement		
Key element	Executive pledge	How we do this
 We facilitate genuine connections by:		
 We provide effective support by:		



Advocacy		
Key element	Executive pledge	How we do this
 <p>We continuously amplify the voices of young people by:</p>		
 <p>We act on what we hear from young people to influence change by:</p>		

References



1. The State of Queensland (Queensland Family and Child Commission) (2021), *Strategic Plan 2021–2025 ‘Bringing Children’s Rights to Life’*, accessed 10 November 2021. <https://www.qfcc.qld.gov.au>
2. Hart R 1992, *Children’s Participation, from Tokenism to Citizenship*, UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, Florence, Italy. <https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/100-childrens-participation-from-tokenism-to-citizenship.html>
3. Lundy L 2007, “‘Voice’ is not enough: conceptualising Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child” p. 933, *British Educational Research Journal*, 33:6, 927–942
4. Lundy L 2007, “‘Voice’ is not enough: conceptualising Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child” p. 933, *British Educational Research Journal*, 33:6, 927–942
5. NSW Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People 2012, *Citizen Me! Engaging children and young people in your organisation*, accessed 10 November 2021. <https://www.acyp.nsw.gov.au/participation-resources/citizen-me>
6. Children’s Rights Alliance for England 2017, *Barriers and solutions to using children’s rights approaches in policy*, accessed 10 November 2021. <https://crae.org.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/Barriers-and-solutions-to-using-childrens-rights-in-policy-E.pdf>
7. Hart R 1992, *Children’s Participation, from Tokenism to Citizenship*, UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, Florence, Italy p. 5, accessed 10 November 2021. <https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/100-childrens-participation-from-tokenism-to-citizenship.html>
8. NSW Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People 2012, *Citizen Me! Engaging children and young people in your organisation*, accessed 10 November 2021. <https://www.acyp.nsw.gov.au/participation-resources/citizen-me>
9. NSW Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People 2012, *Citizen Me! Engaging children and young people in your organisation*, accessed 10 November 2021. <https://www.acyp.nsw.gov.au/participation-resources/citizen-me>
10. *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* Art. 12, accessed 10 November 2021 <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>
11. The State of Queensland (Department of Environment and Science) n.d., *Queensland Youth Framework*, accessed 10 November 2021. <https://www.des.qld.gov.au/youth/how-qld-govt-is-helping-youth/queensland-youth-strategy>



Queensland
Family & Child
Commission

