

Children have the right to be heard –but how do we listen?

Early Childhood Australia National Conference
Darwin. 2016



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In this session

- United Nations Convention on Rights of Child
- Participation Rights – Article 12
- Children’s Rights Report
- Statement of Intent
- How do we listen?



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1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

- 40 distinct rights
 - - 16 from previous declarations (1924 and 1959)
 - - 18 new still provision and protection
 - - 6 new rights (participation rights)



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The new image of the child

“social actor from the beginning of life, with particular interests, capacities and vulnerabilities, and of requirements for protection, guidance and support in the exercise of their rights”



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The newest category of rights

- “participation rights that support an autonomous child with rights to participate in society in their own right” (Krappmann, 2010:502).



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Six Participation Rights

- the right: to be heard (article 12),
- to freedom of expression (article 13),
- to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion (article 14),
- to freedom of association and assembly (article 15),
- to privacy (article 16),
- access to appropriate information and mass media (article 17)” (Wall, 2008:535).



Article 12 UNCRC

“State parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child”



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In relation to article 12

- Article 12 has caused the most controversy on one hand and has also been described as the heart of the UNCRC
- “one of the most widely violated and disregarded in almost every sphere of children's lives” (Shier, 2001 p. 108).



Complication

- CRC is the only convention that “includes provisions that recognise the legitimate influence, indeed right, of 3rd parties on the exercise of another individual’s rights” (Tobin 2011 p 72)



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Supportive Relationships

- “The sense of identity which grows through continuing relationships is the basis for children to be seen, and to see themselves, as people to be consulted.” (Alderson, 2000)
- “In a relationship, integration entails each person’s being respected for his or her autonomy and differentiated self while at the same time being linked to others in empathic communication” (Seigel, 2011)



Reality

- “All modern societies survive by requiring and produce “regimes of truth” about how we should think, act and feel towards ourselves and others” (Foucault 1977)
- “Those in authority determine who is the child” (Freeman 1992)
- “Culture shapes the brain” (Siegel , 2011)



ECA Statement of Intent



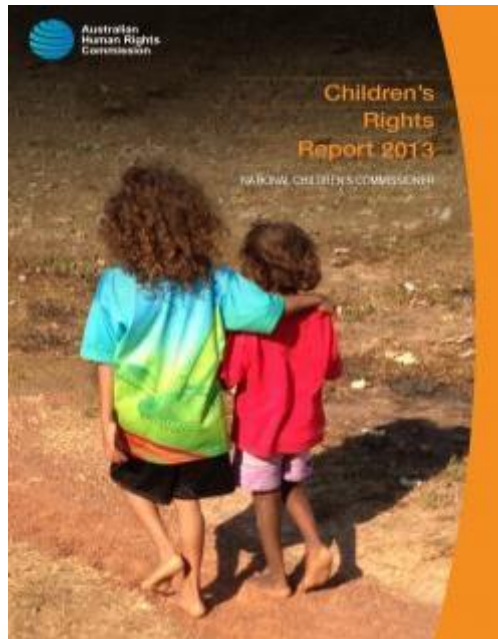
- Education and Care Services National Law (2010)
- Early Years Framework (2009)
- Children's Rights Report (2013)



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Children's Rights Report



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The Big Banter

The National Children's Commissioner heard the views of children from a variety of backgrounds and ages.

- Face-to-face with over 1000 children.
- The online survey attracted views of approximately 726 children aged up to 17 years.
- 602 postcards through early learning centres

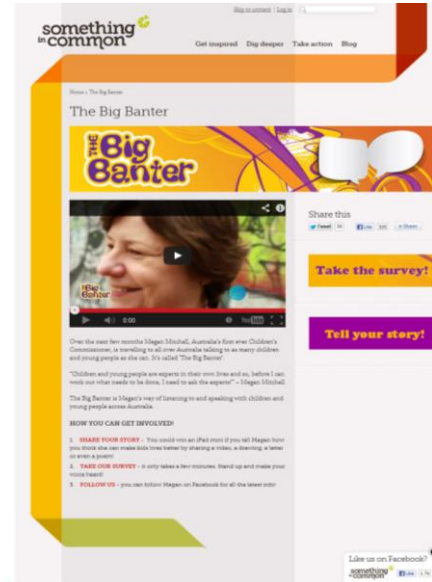


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The Big Banter themes

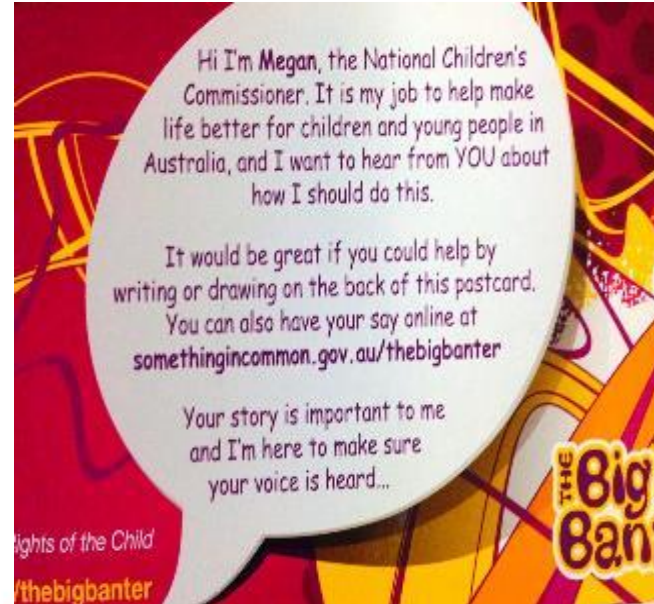
1. A right to be heard
2. Freedom from violence, abuse and neglect
3. The opportunity to thrive
4. Engaged citizenship
5. Action and accountability



The right to be heard

For adults to listen well to children it requires:

- specific engagement skills,
- meaningful support



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Statement of Intent on Supporting Young Children's Rights

- The right to be heard-
- Freedom from violence, abuse and neglect
- Engaged citizenship
- Action and accountability



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What does this mean for Early Childhood Educators?

“It is important that the eyes with which we look at children should themselves be full of potential” (Teruhisa 2006)



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What else?

- “Promoting Children’s voices and participation in decision-making processes, and enabling greater opportunities to hear from children about their concerns.” (statement of intent 2014-2018 p3)



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In relation to children's right to be heard I will:

Provide children with opportunities for their views to be heard and acted upon.

Listen to and value children's views and opinions and show that they have been acted upon



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Listening:

- “young children can tell adults much about daily lives and what makes them feel that their needs and opinions are valued” (MacNaughton, 2007)
- “Compassionate deep listening”. We can learn so much about our own perceptions and their perceptions. (Thich Nhat Hanh, 2001)



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Deep Listening

In mindful listening ...we listen
with the sole purpose of helping the other person feel
heard and accepted.

(Thich Naht Hahn –Planting Seeds –mindfulness for children 2011)

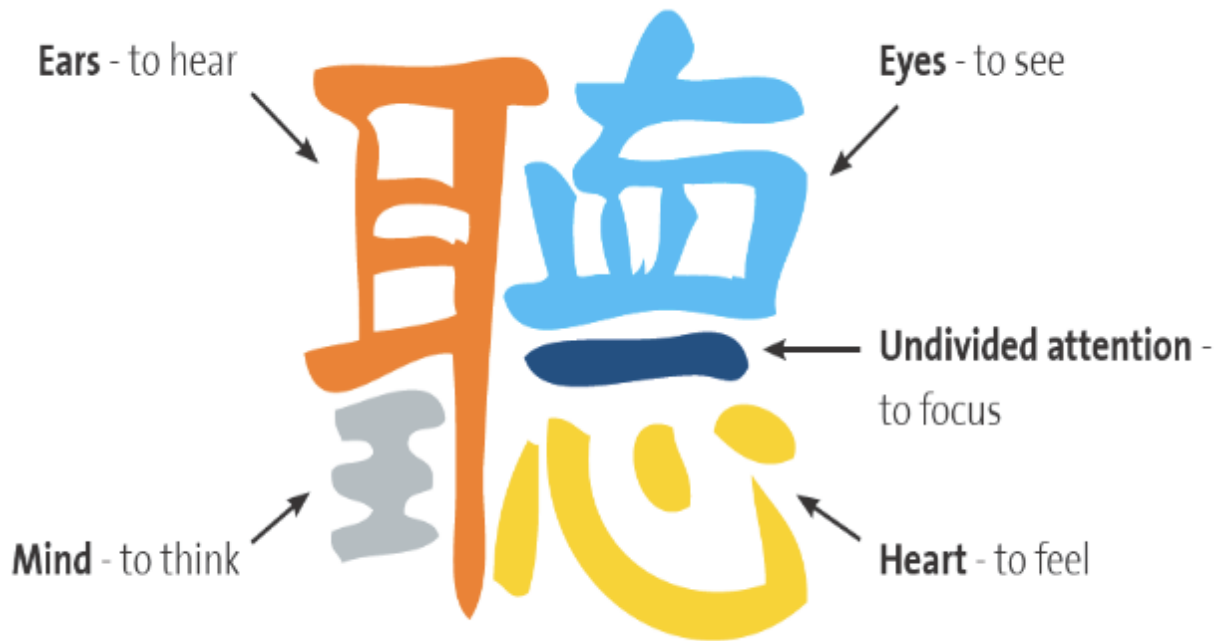


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Bringing Up Great
Kids

Chinese Symbol for listening:



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Bringing Up Great
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And then.....

- Advocate for children's views and opinions to be heard and valued within child's community
- Recognise children's agency and their individual capacities for involvement.
- Facilitate learning environments that foster opportunities for all children to express themselves



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Finally

- Children can only access the right to be heard if we provide the environment and support for them to do so.
- It is up to us



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