DOCUMNET 10 (A)  
LETTER TO PARENTS/GUARDIANS

Dear

I am a senior lecturer at the Australian National University and I work on social policy for children. In conjunction with the Youth Coalition of the ACT, I am currently undertaking a research project on children’s participation in decision making. This research is exploring the ways in which children are involved in decision-making and consultative processes, such as school and youth councils and advisory groups. We are interested in finding out what attitudes people (both adults and children) hold towards children’s participation, what is considered ‘successful’ participation, and whether participation leads to better policies and services for children.

As your child has indicated interest in participating in the research, we would like to ask your permission for him/her to be involved.

Attached is an information sheet about the research. We would appreciate it if you could take a moment to read the information sheet and, if you are happy for your child to participate in the research, sign the attached consent form.

If you have any questions about the research, please do not hesitate to contact me. My complete details are on the information sheet.

Thank you for your time.

Yours sincerely

Dr Sharon Bessell
Children’s Participation in Policy and Decision-making  
Sharon Bessell  
Asia Pacific School of Economics and Government  
Sharon.bessell@anu.edu.au

DOCUMENT 10 (B)  
INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS

Who will be doing the research?
Sharon Bessell is a senior lecturer in the Asia Pacific School of Economics and Government (ANU). She teaches courses on children and social policy and gender and policy. She has been conducting working on social policy for children for twelve years, as an academic and with a number of organisations including UNICEF, Save the Children (Sweden), Defence for Children International (Australia) and AusAID. She has a particular interest in child protection and children’s participation.

The Youth Coalition is the peak youth affairs body in the Australian Capital Territory and responsible for representing the interests of people aged between 12 and 25 years of age, and those who work with them. The Youth Coalition is represented on many ACT Government Advisory structures and provides advice to the ACT Government on youth issues as well as providing information to youth services about policy and program matters. The Youth Coalition actively promotes the well being and aspirations of young people in the ACT with particular respect to their social, political, cultural, spiritual, economic and educational development.

What is the research aiming to do?
Over the past decade, governments, non-government organisations and schools have given increasing attention to children’s participation. This might be through children’s/youth advisory groups, inviting children to join boards or other decision-making bodies, inviting children to be involved in conferences, student bodies and so on. Research on children’s participation indicates that it is often difficult for children to participate effectively, especially in organisations or situations that are run by adults. Yet there has be virtually no research into the attitudes towards children’s participation of adults who are not involved in working directly with children. Moreover, the evidence about the effects of children’s participation – on policy and service delivery, as well as on the individuals involved – is extremely limited.

The project is exploring the attitudes and experiences of both adults and children in relation to children’s participation. It is also investigating the outcomes of children’s participation.

This project aims to:
1. Increase knowledge and understanding of attitudes towards children’s participation
2. Increase knowledge and understanding of the policy outcomes of children’s participation

We want to hear the views of both adults and children.

Who will be involved in the research?
Government officials, staff of non-government organisations and children will be invited to participate in this research.

How will my child be involved?
Children's participation in this research is entirely voluntary. If you and your child both agree for him/her to be involved, s/he will be asked to do one or more of the following things:

1. Be involved in a group discussion with other children of a similar age to talk about their views of children's participation
2. Complete an attitude survey that asks them to either agree or disagree with statements about children's participation
3. Complete a series of short sentences about children's participation
4. Draw a picture(s) or tell a story about a time when they were able to make a decision or were not able to make a decision.

We aim to keep the information provided by children confidential to the greatest extent possible. We will not publish children's full names or identifying information and children may chose to use a pseudonym.

**What will the outcomes be?**

We hope that this research will help us to understand when children's participation is considered by those involved (adults and children) to be successful and why. This will lead to better processes for children's participation. We also hope that the research will provide evidence as to the impact of children's participation on policy and service delivery, and what contributes to different impacts. This will contribute to better policy and service outcomes for children.

**Where can I get more information?**

If you would like more information about this research, contact:

Dr Sharon Bessell
Asia Pacific School of Economics and Government
The Australian National University
Canberra
Email: Sharon.bessell@anu.edu.au
Tel: 6125 6562

**What if I am not happy with the way the research is conducted?**

If you have any concerns about this research that you do not wish to discuss with Dr Bessell, you can contact:

The Human Ethics Officer
Research Services Office
Chancery 10B
The Australian National University
Tel: 6125 7945
Fax: 6125 4897
Email: Human.Ethics.Officer@anu.edu.au