



PROJECT ETHICS STATEMENT: Transforming Early Learning

The considerations and principles outlined in this document are intended to provide guidelines on how this project supports the ethical and responsible participation of children and young people in the Transforming Early Learning project.

Please take the time to read this information carefully. You may ask questions about anything you don't understand or want to know more about.

What is this project about?

The Transforming Early Learning project is about the creation of future visions for early learning in Australia that will enable us to develop strategies and pathways, build shared aspirations, and work together with a shared sense of purpose and connection, so we can collectively transform the early learning system into one where every child, family and community can thrive.

To support this, the Front Project and the Apiary Fellowship are bringing together diverse perspectives from children and families, as well as from professionals from all corners of the early learning system in a series of conversations nationally to hear their lived experience and how that may impact the future of early learning.

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Our Values

Amongst its set of values, the Front Project and the Apiary hold children at the centre and recognises the need to genuinely listen to and include the voices of children and their families in decisions that emerge from the changing context in which they live. We believe that:

All children and young people have the capacity to participate.

All children and young people have the right to participate.

All children and young people have critical and unique perspectives in their lives.

(Engaging children and young people in your organisation, ACYP, 2019).

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Listening to children is central to recognising their voice, opinions and views on decisions that directly impact them. In 1991, Australia ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which specifies the right of children and young people to have their opinions taken into account on matters that effect their lives (Article 12, Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989).

The Front Project & The Apiary

The Front Project

The Front Project is an independent, not-for-profit organisation that works with families, the early learning sector, government, and business leaders to develop evidence-based, meaningful, and pragmatic policy solutions, to ensure the early learning system supports all Australian families, and gives all children the best possible start to life.

The Front Project works closely with government to advance the ability of Australian families to access quality early learning and ensure the early learning system offers the right support to working parents who need to work and raise their family. We do this through a range of approaches, including producing independent, evidence-based research. The Front Project also directly supports early childhood educators who are undertaking a bachelor's degree in early childhood teaching, through enabling peer-to-peer support and mentoring.

The Apiary

The Apiary brings together people who are committed to creating thriving futures for children in Australia. Through the support of the Front Project and the Paul Ramsay Foundation, it builds system leadership, collaboration, and the capability to work differently to bring about lasting change in early learning. Over a series of convenings and workshops facilitated by the Front Project and through the incubation of key ideas to leverage systemic change, the Apiary collaborated on the identification of an opportunity to unify our diverse systems under a shared purpose for the future and help visualise how early learning stakeholders can meet the timeless needs of children into the future, as the world around us changes.

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Participation is also a key principle in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). Under Article 18, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people expressly have the right to participate in decision making in matters that affect their rights. The rights of Indigenous children are also given special attention at Article 22. Participation and consultation must be consistent with the principles of free, prior and informed consent. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people must be respected and treated as key stakeholders in developing, designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating all policies and legislation that influences their wellbeing.

Future Visioning Conversations

We want to know what children and families value about the early learning environments they interact with, for example their relationships with people who lead or are involved in their learning, their friendships, facilities and natural environments they access, and the cultures and communities they connect with. We also want to understand the future aspirations children, families and professionals have for early learning in Australia. In doing so, we can highlight the implications for early childhood or social sector reforms across Australia.

We are recruiting early learning settings who want to host conversations about the future of early learning with the children and families they interact with, and their staff.

These Future Visioning Conversations will be held through to the end of March 2023. Participants will have an invaluable opportunity to contribute their early childhood expertise and help raise the voices of children and families by hosting future visioning conversations within their organisation or early learning setting. As part of ensuring there is diversity in the voices represented in the visioning process, we are actively engaging and seeking people and communities who work or interact with children and families and other professionals in metro and rural settings, such as ECEC services, playgroups, libraries, First Nations and cultural settings, health, mental health, disability, early intervention, libraries, arts, environment, sports and more.

What will I be asked to do now?

Future Visioning Leader

A Future Visioning Leader for this project is a person that will register, organise the implementation of future visioning conversations in their organisation, coordinate the submission of data to the Front Project and ensure that their activities and conduct are in compliance with the project's ethical guidelines.

If your organisation agrees to take part, you will be asked to:

- Nominate a Future Visioning Leader in your setting who will coordinate the implementation of two activities with children and be the contact for the Front Project. Future Visioning Leaders will receive practice guides and have access to support for the implementation of the experience.
- Engage with children and families in the community setting in which you participate or interact in, gaining children's and families' consent to participate, run the activities as part of your usual schedule (or holding a special event), and capture and submit the outcomes to the Front Project.

Participating organisations will be asked to sign a Collaboration Agreement to ensure that the future visioning conversations are implemented locally in a way that upholds our ethical principles when working with children.

Parents / Guardians will be asked to complete a consent form to enable their and their child's participation and use of data.

Children will be asked for their assent to participate and data to be used prior to participating in the future visioning conversations.

What are the possible benefits?

It is anticipated that this project will provide the information needed to develop strategies and pathways towards transforming early learning for the benefit of current and future generations of children and families in Australia.

The future of the early years system is on the national agenda: the Australian Government has embarked on an ambitious and important early childhood education and care (ECEC) policy agenda and is creating a whole of government approach to the 'early years' by developing an Early Years Strategy that will identify ways to deliver better outcomes for children and families across Australia. Additionally, a number of state and territory governments are pursuing their own reforms to increase access and affordability to ECEC for children in their jurisdictions. We hope that the findings from this project will be used to inform policy and practice decisions for early learning nationally through the Front Project's advocacy activities.

What are the possible risks?

This project involves engaging and interacting with children and talking directly with them about their feelings and thoughts about early learning. It is our privilege to raise the voices of children in this work and it is our obligation to make sure this is an enjoyable, inclusive, and safe experience for all. To ensure children's comfort, safety and wellbeing in participating in these conversations, we are asking that Future Visioning Leaders:

- Host these conversations as part of their regular learning schedule, or prepare children and families well for a special event,
- Implement the activities with adults they are familiar with, can speak with if anything confuses or upsets them, and whose credentials you have verified as part of your Child Safe workplace policies and procedures.

It is a requirement of the host collaboration agreement that organisations have in place a process or procedure for notifying a parent/career if a child becomes distressed.

There is a risk that involvement in this project may result in additional burden in terms of Leaders' own time. To minimise this, we have planned the conversations to be implemented over a period of months so Future Visioning Leaders can coordinate the activities at a time convenient to their setting, and in spaces where children and families are comfortable and feel supported. We are also providing practice guides that will support the Future Visioning Leader to prepare for and implement the conversation activities in their organisation to ensure they are successful.

There is a risk that these conversations may raise comments that have implications for how families feel about your service. We recommend the nominated Future Visioning Leader include in their information for parents and carers, instructions for how they might be able to contact them for further discussions on anything specific they would like to raise.

We are collecting data from the conversation activities that may include images and recordings of children and adults. We have outlined in detail below how we are keeping data secure and how it will be used ethically by the project.

Future Visioning Leaders can contact the project team during business hours to discuss the visioning conversation activities and how to implement them.

Do I have to take part?

No. Participation by your organisation, children, families and staff is completely voluntary. You are able to withdraw consent to discontinue your participation in the project at any time, until the data has been processed. If you choose to withdraw, you may also choose to withdraw part or all of any unprocessed data that we have collected from you, which will be destroyed in line with the Front Project's Engaging the voices of children and families: Ethical Considerations and Principles statement. If participants choose to withdraw, this will not have any detrimental impact on relationships with the project team, the Apiary Fellowship or the Front Project.

Will I hear about the outcomes of this project?

At regular intervals throughout the project, information about our findings from the project will be compiled in a cumulative summary that will be published on our website <https://www.thefrontproject.org.au/initiatives/transforming-early-learning-future-visioning-conversations-for-change>. A copy of the final project report will be emailed in April 2023 to adults and host organisations who have consented to be contacted. We may present our overall findings in academic or general publications and at briefings or conferences. We will also develop a range of resources based on the findings from the future visioning conversations for all audiences, including children. In addition to these reports, findings will be shared in a range of ways, including in media (traditional media e.g., interviews, opinion pieces etc) and also social media (such as in Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn posts). We will not identify participants in any information or publications.

What will happen to the information?

Any information we collect from Future Visioning Leaders, their organisation, children and families is confidential – it will never be used in any way that identifies participants. Strict procedures are followed to ensure that only authorised people have access to your information. Any personal information we collect that might identify participants (e.g., name) will be kept in a separate database from the information provided for the project. Names of participants will not be used in any publications, presentations or reports. We will not attribute quotes or comments to any individuals. Reports from the future visioning conversations will be shared as part of the Front Project and the Apiary advocacy work on Federal, State Government and non-Government reform initiatives, as part of the objectives of this work. De-identified data will not be shared beyond the Front Project and the Apiary Fellowship. All data protection rules will be complied with as per the Front Project's [Privacy and Data Policy](#). This means any information you provide will be de-identified and will remain strictly confidential. The data collected from the activities will be used for the specific purpose of this project and may be used in future ethically approved studies or projects at the Front Project. All future projects using this data will not have access to identifiable information.

De-identified information

Any information collected about and from children will be de-identified, where data collected are unable to be connected to children's identity or location.

Non-identifiable information

Non-identifiable images are photos where a child may be present or partly present in the photo and their face is obscured, blurred or facing away from the viewer, and has no identifying logos or information about the early learning setting where the activity took place.

The Front Project will use non-identifiable information

The Front Project will use non-identifiable photographic, audio, video and audio-visual images and recordings of child/ren to contribute to the findings of and disseminate information about the Transforming Early Learning project (Images and Recordings). Parents/carers are not obligated to provide permission for their child/ren's images or recordings to be taken.

The data collected, whether written, recorded or images, from the 2 activities will be collected by the Front Project electronically via the Future Visioning Leader for each host organisation. The visioning conversation data collected by the Leader will be submitted to the Front Project through a secure data transfer using Drop Box, unique to their organisation. The data transfer is one-way only and no data relating to other host sites will be visible or able to be accessed.

Any Images and/or Recordings captured as part of the project data collection will be collated into a project image library for later use in analysis and generation of project reports and communications products. Recordings are for project use only to capture children's responses in their own words and will not be used in public communications. Non-identifiable Images may be used for project communication and advocacy purposes by the Front Project, or in media (including print, television, radio and the Internet), events, showcasing the involvement of local centres, organisational publications, the Front Project website and communications, such as newsletters relating to this project. Non-identifiable Images may also be used on the Front Project's social media pages including but not limited to Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and Twitter to disseminate information about the project.

After the project has ended, only de-identified, anonymised data will be stored on the secure Front Project server, in a restricted access folder. As the data collected for this project involves children, all data will be destroyed 15 years after the youngest child's 18th birthday in accordance with ethical records retention and disposal guidelines.

Confidentiality

Children and young people will not be identified in the project outcomes including but not limited to reports and presentations.

The information provided by the children and young people will be kept confidential so that they are not able to be identified.

When a group of children and young people participate together, ground rules will be established at the outset that include their responsibilities to each other regarding confidentiality.

In certain circumstances confidentiality may need to be breached. Such circumstances include when:

As a direct result of their experience (e.g., a child or young person may share personal information that causes them distress or anxiety).

- A child or young person reveals they are in a situation where they could be seriously harmed.
- A child or young person discloses physical, sexual or emotional abuse or neglect.
- It is necessary to report to another person to assess a particular situation (e.g., medical condition).

Limits on confidentiality

Limits on confidentiality, such as when a child discloses being unsafe, will be made clear to children and young people at the outset of the project.

Who is funding this project?

The project is funded by the Front Project with the support of the Paul Ramsay Foundation.

Where can I get further information?

If you would like more information about the project, please contact the project team at theapiary@thefrontproject.org.au or contact the lead contact: Rachael Wilken at 04022 31029.

Who can I contact if I have any concerns about the project?

This project has ethics approval from the Front Project CEO and the Apiary Steering Committee. The Apiary Steering Group members have completed their certificate in Human Research Ethics from Macquarie University, or equivalent if employed by a university. If you have any concerns or complaints about the conduct of this project, which you do not wish to discuss with the team, you should contact the Holly Wighton, the Front Project's Operations Manager, Monday to Thursday during business hours. Tel: 0413 826 006 or Email: hwighton@thefrontproject.org.au. All complaints will be treated confidentially. In any correspondence, please provide the name of the project and the contact's name you are most familiar with.

The Apiary
the
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Contact us with any questions on:

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