

Consulting with Children Forum

22nd June 2011. Ballarat



Background

As part of the Primary Care Partnerships Family and Children's platform, consulting with children was seen as a fundamental objective of the group.

The City of Ballarat was planning to continue its work on developing a children's consultation strategy, so it decided to join forces and present a forum for the Central Highlands area. Workers from across the State were also welcome, after the initial registration period for Central Highlands passed.

The Forum

The forum was presented by Dr Jonathon Sargeant from the Australian Catholic University in Brisbane. Dr. Sargeant is a lecturer and researcher in Physical Education, Special Education and Classroom Management.

He has been involved in researching children's rights and citizenship & their perspectives on the world and has been talking with groups of children since 1997 throughout Australia, the United Kingdom, New Zealand and Sweden. His interest in the extent to which these children understand and view the modern world reveals perspectives often underappreciated by the adult community.

His current research focus is on giving children and youth (particularly tweens) a voice regarding their futures. He has a particular interest in developing better educational provision that incorporates young people's perspectives through ethical research practices that are informed by the United Nations Convention for the Rights of the Child.

The forum aimed to provide a broader understanding of

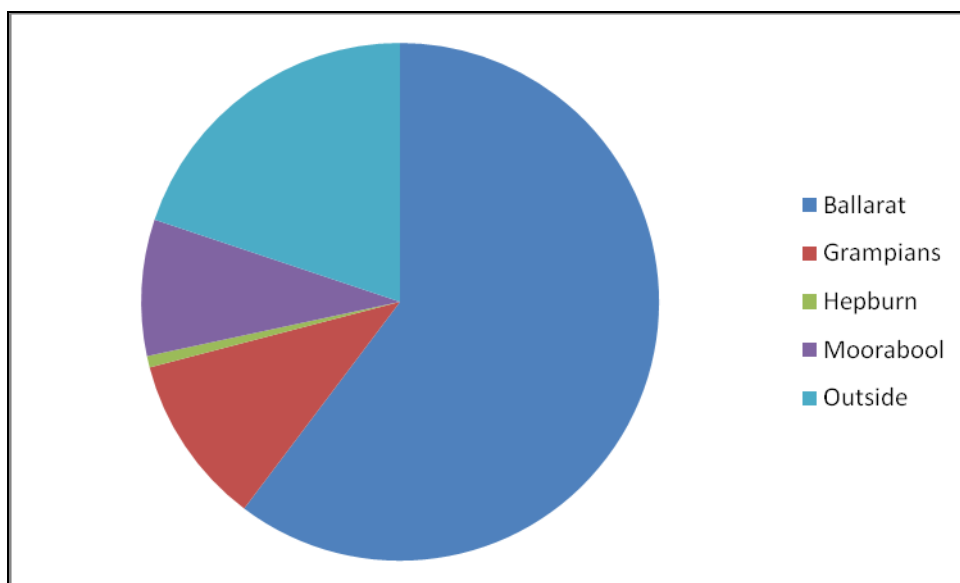
- the importance of consulting with children
- what children are saying about themselves, families, communities and the world
- the things that influence children
- children's perspectives on adults
- the ethics of consulting with children (why and when)
- different ways to consult with children (how).

It was believed that the forum would be of interest to early year's workers and managers, family support workers, family violence workers, recreation workers, community development workers, community health workers, school teachers / early years co-ordinators and Council staff across many sections.

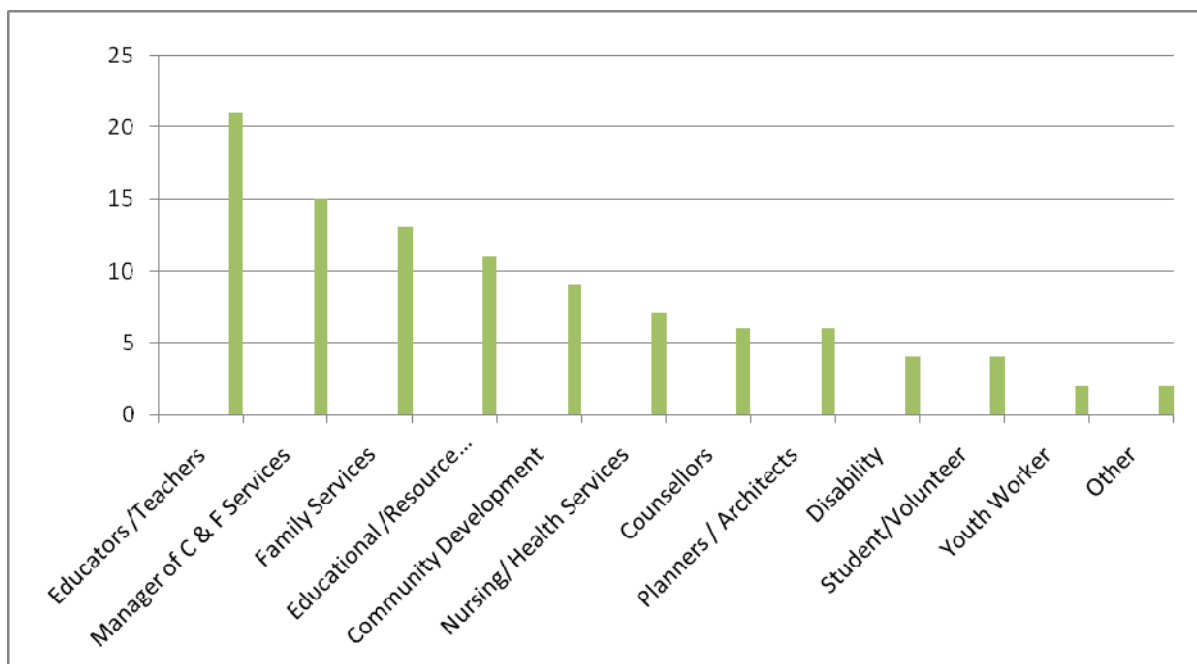
Outcomes

156 people formally registered for the Consulting with Children Forum, with 141 attending. People came from far and near and represented a broad range of professions and agencies. All participants were encouraged to fill out an evaluation form, to gain a better understanding of their feedback and assist with future planning and implementation. 84 forms were completed (approximately 60%)

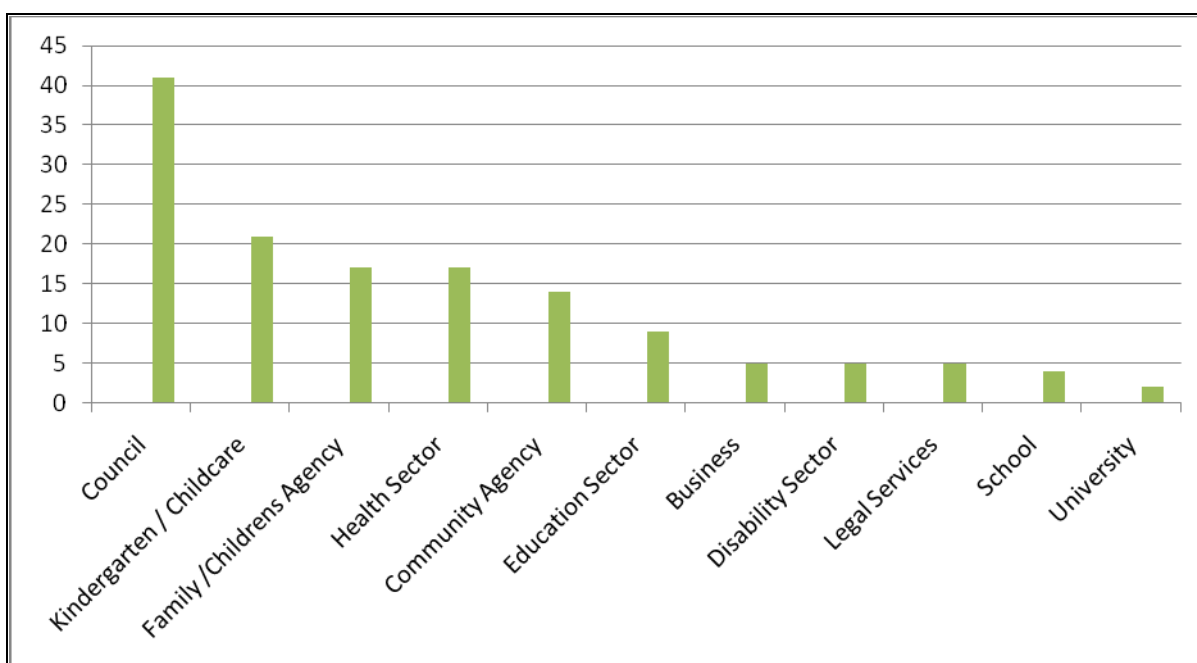
Where participants came from?



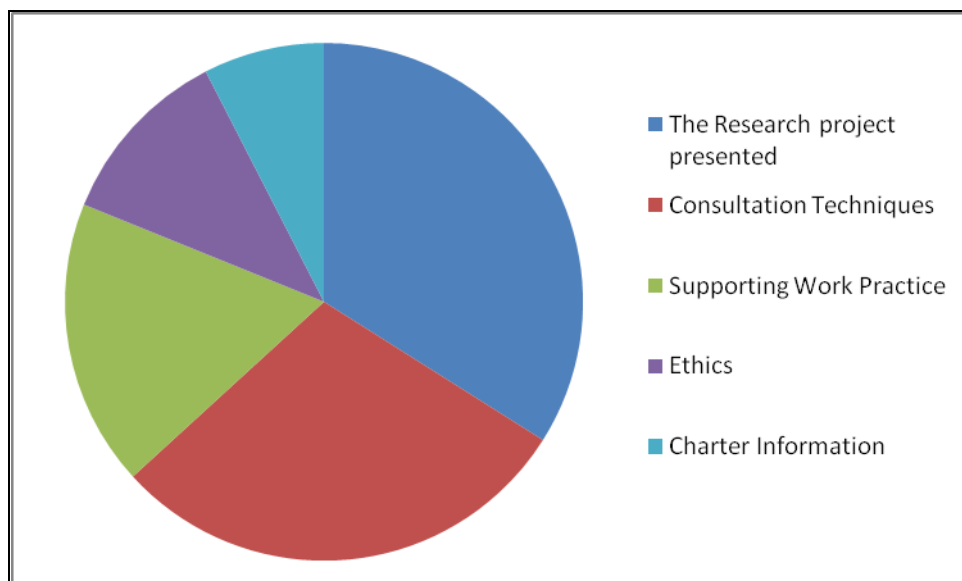
What professions were represented? (%)



What sorts of organisations were represented? (Numbers)



What did you find most helpful about today's forum?



Comments:

'The notion of being more interactive with children and asking them questions and REALLY listening to their Responses'

'Importance of "child friendly" language - asking children to explain what you said without being condescending'

'The forum provided me with some good information in promoting "the voice of children" and honouring their thoughts and beliefs are important and should be heard in the most appropriate child friendly way.'

'I found the forum really interesting and though provoking in regards to the capability of children to engage in consultation.'

'The information on Children's Human Rights and including children in all stages of developing a plan.'

'The information affirming Children's ability to understand and give informed feedback on a wide variety of issues.'

'Children are communicating with us (adults) - it is about our capacity and willingness to understand them.'

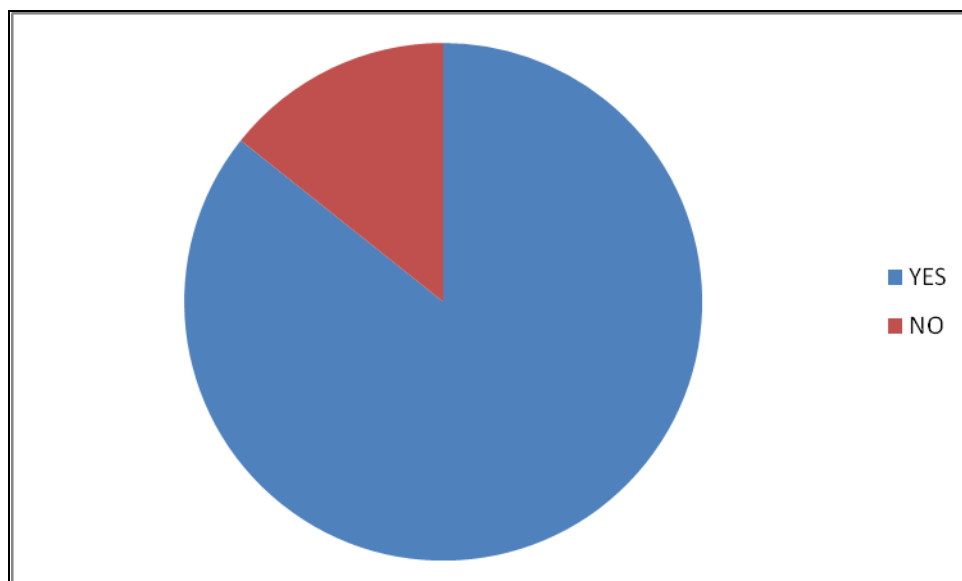
'The linkage between the rights of the child and the importance of children participating was most enlightening.'

'Highlighting the complexities of consulting with children i.e. The ethics involved and the consent needed etc.'

'That children have the capacity/opinions and are aware of local/global level of what is happening around.'

'The elements we need to think about before devising any strategies or implementing any work with children.'

Did you find the content relevant to your work?



Of the 86% who responded “Yes”

- 62% stated it had relevance to their current work
- 14% stated it had relevance in a broader context
- 7% stated it had relevance for the future and
- 17% gave no further comment

Comments

‘Difficult to research children in a clinical setting - although this is something to ponder on.’

‘Consulting children is often expected now but not supported – [the speaker] inspires motivation and defines the challenges and some of the considerations.’

‘Forced me to question all aspects of my job description, role and interactions with all stakeholders of an early childhood service.’

‘Gave other ideas of how and when to consult with children and how to encourage others to consider.’

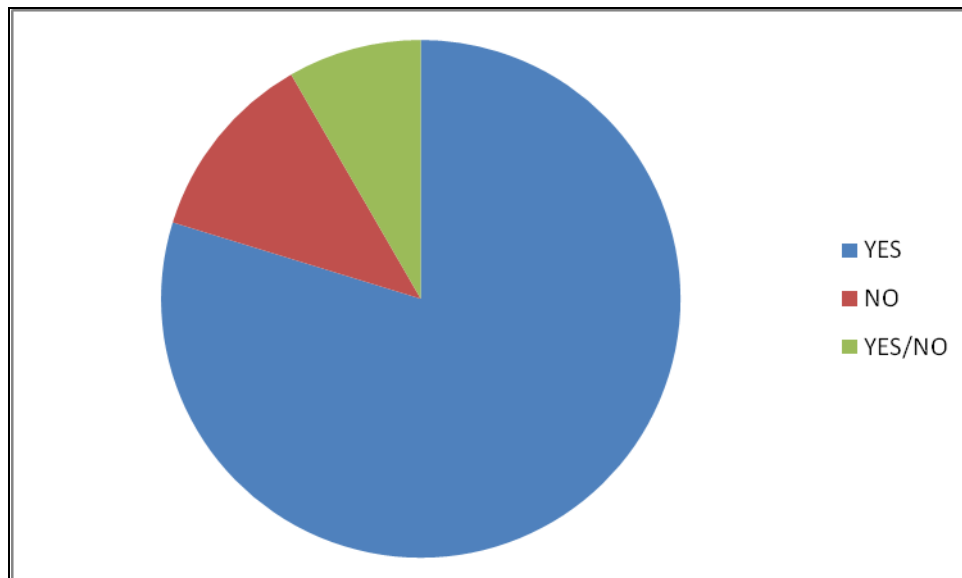
‘I work with children and their families as well as early childhood services and primary schools and find that children do not get many opportunities to contribute.’

‘Important to remember that children are active citizens in our community and their options and ideas count.’

‘In the context of reminding me of things to consider when consulting children about their views and experience. Also the discussion of rights of child.’

‘This will help shape the work we are doing consulting with children about where they live and what's important to them.’

Will you be able to incorporate this into your work practice?



Of the 86% who responded "Yes"

- 54% stated that it had practical applications now
- 33% stated that it had increased their awareness
- 4% stated it would be relevant in the future
- 9% gave no further comment

Comments

'Just being aware that you need to listen to children's voices would help in planning, implementing and evaluating some programs.'

'Reassess the assessment tools used to enlighten our clients/students studying early childhood qualifications.'

'We need to spread the word and encourage all departments to consider children as important members of the community. Help them to remember how our actions/plans impact on children therefore they should be included in the consultations.'

'Using different thoughts and processes in consulting with children to hopefully given them a greater sense of wellbeing.'

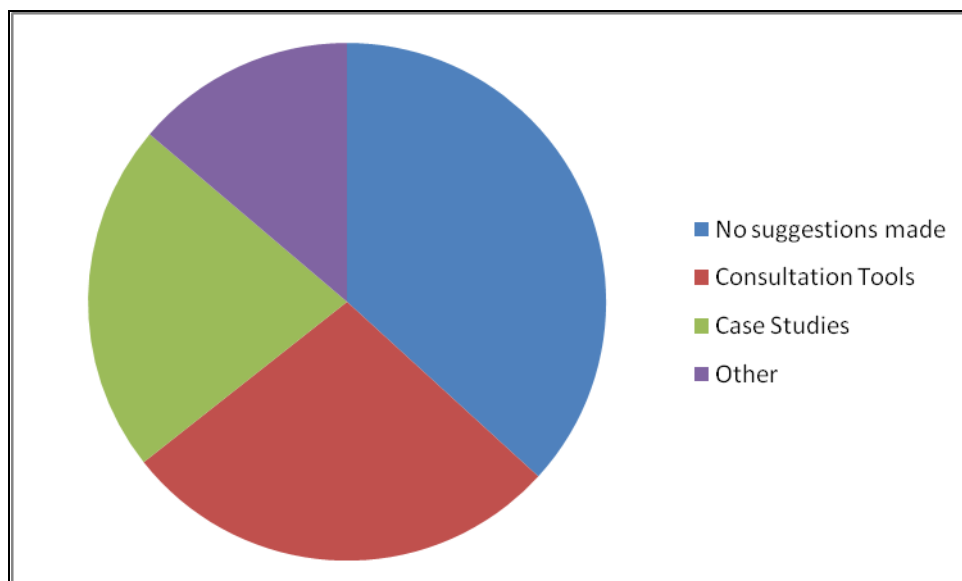
'Through the tips on question development, taking notice of children's behaviour whilst participating in the research.'

'Good ideas for possible future research that could be based on feedback from children as to how to improve the experience of children as an inpatient in hospital/having a procedure.'

'I will adopt and will read UN Charter more thoroughly.'

'To further my organisations ability to build consultations with children into projects'

What would you like to hear more of?



Comments

'Child Friendly Cities International examples of consultation with children.'

'Examples of where and how best practice consultations have occurred.'

'How groups/organisations have incorporated children's voices to enact 'real' change in a given context'.

'How this research has influenced policy in relation to families and children and young people.'

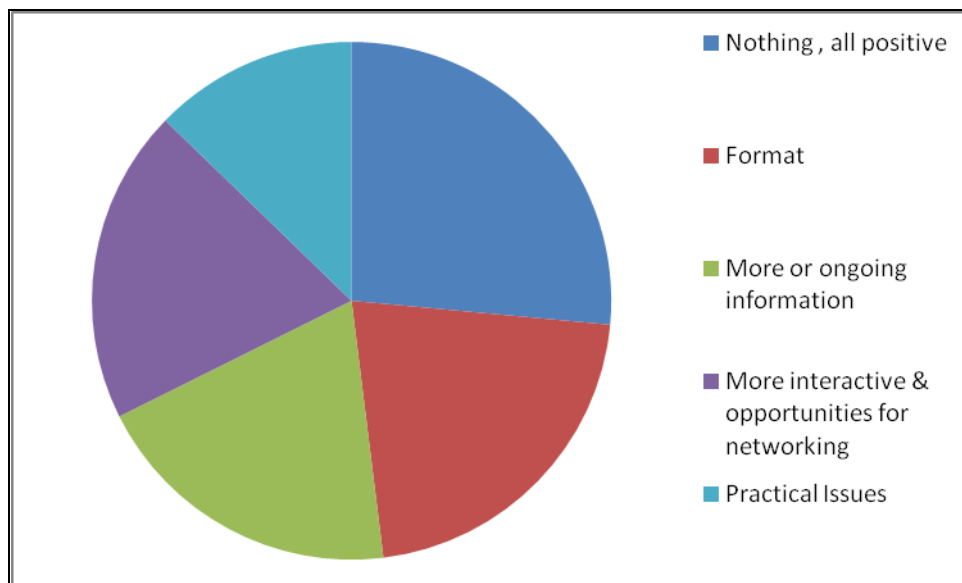
'Effects of not consulting well with children.'

'Practical examples of how consultation can change practice.'

'Disability specific examples.'

'Specific project methodologies for consulting different client groups/age groups.'

How could the forum be improved / other comments?



'Less about formal consultation for research purposes and more about everyday consultations that empower children to have a say in their learning.'

'More small group discussion / audience involvement.'

'More discussions and examples of practice and how to achieve the outcomes.'

'Discussions on being ethical and gaining consent from children.'

'Have handouts at end of session.'

'At times difficult to hear presenter.'

'Grounding, consulting and engage children within human rights.'

'Forum was fantastic and extremely interesting. All information will assist me in both my professional and personal life.'

Budget

Details	Income	Expenditure
Venue hire and food provision (\$40 per head)		\$6000
Speaker costs (airfares, accommodation, forum)		\$3000
Registrations outside Catchment area (27 registrations @ \$50)	\$1350	
Best Start sponsorship	\$2000	
Ballarat City Council sponsorship	\$650	
Primary Care Partnership sponsorship	\$2000	
Grampians Integrated Family Violence Committee	\$1000	
Highlands LLEN sponsorship	\$500	
DEECD sponsorship	\$1500	
Planning Meetings (20 hours)	In kind	
Registration and administration (80 hours)	In kind	
Venue visits and set up (10 hours)	In kind	
	\$9000	\$9000

This forum was a partnership initiative of the Central Highlands Primary Care Partnership - Child & Family Platform and Ballarat Best Start. Other partners included:

- Central Highlands Local Learning & Employment Network
- City of Ballarat - Child and Family Friendly City
- Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
- Grampians Regional Integrated Family Violence Committee



Compiled by Ballarat Best Start August 2012