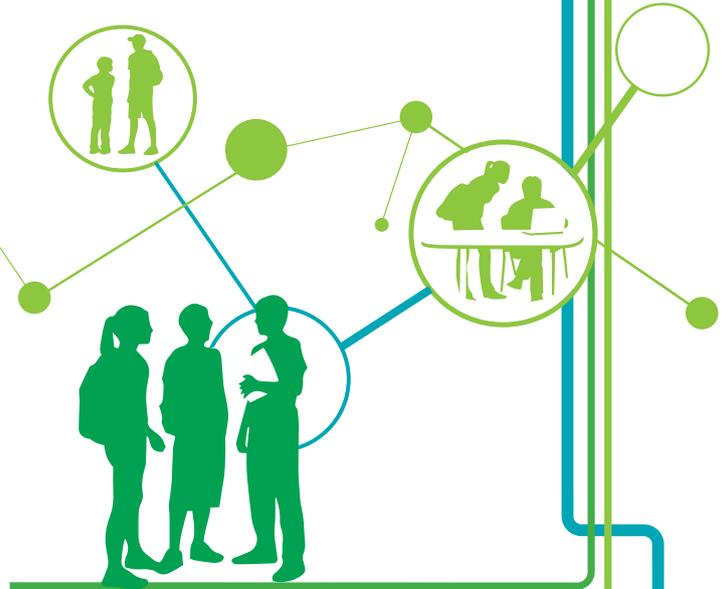


IMPROVING WELLBEING THROUGH STUDENT PARTICIPATION AT SCHOOL

SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS:

PHASE 3 DEVELOPING A VALID AND RELIABLE SCALE



This Summary presents the findings from **Phase 3** of a major research project funded through the Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage scheme.



Australian Government
Australian Research Council



Education
Public Schools



DIOCESE OF
LISMORE
CATHOLIC SCHOOLS OFFICE

Office of the
Advocate for Children
and Young People

acyp.



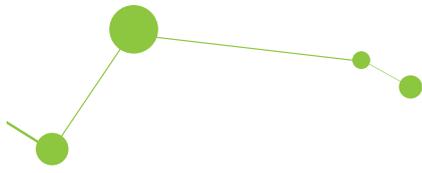
University of Central Lancashire



Australian
National
University



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY



The research was led by the Centre for Children and Young People at Southern Cross University in partnership with the NSW Department of Education, the Catholic Schools Office (Diocese of Lismore), the Office of the NSW Advocate for Children and Young People, the Australian National University, University of Sydney and University of Central Lancashire.

The research team comprised:

Professor Anne Graham (Lead Investigator - Southern Cross University)

Dr Sharon Bessell (Australian National University)

Professor Judy Cashmore (University of Sydney)

Professor Nigel Thomas (University of Central Lancashire)

Dr Lyn Gardon (NSW Department of Education)

Mr Andrew Johnson (Office of the NSW Advocate for Children and Young People)

Mr Paul Milgate (Catholic Schools Office Lismore)

Dr Catharine Simmons (Southern Cross University)

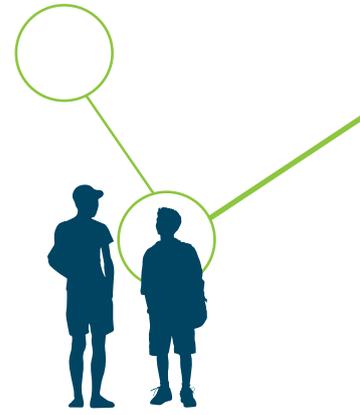
Dr Donnah Anderson (Charles Sturt University)

Dr Melissa Goldman (Office of the NSW Advocate for Children and Young People)

Ms Julia Truscott (Southern Cross University)



PHASE 3 SUMMARY



BACKGROUND

This research, funded by the Australian Research Council (LP140100540)¹, explored how student participation is understood and practised at school.

The project specifically aimed to find out if there is a connection between student participation and social and emotional wellbeing at school and, if so, which elements of participation are most closely associated with wellbeing.

The findings will help improve the ways in which student participation and wellbeing are understood, supported and measured in schools.

WHAT DID THE RESEARCH INVOLVE?

The study involved four phases:

Phase 1:

An extensive policy analysis to identify what current NSW and Commonwealth education policy and other related guidelines say about student participation.

Phase 2:

Focus groups with students (Years 7-10) and interviews with teachers, Principals and education policymakers.

Phase 3:

The development of a reliable and valid on-line survey to measure the elements of student participation and wellbeing at school using two samples of Year 7-10 students from NSW high schools.

Phase 4:

Administering the on-line survey, developed in Phase 3, to Year 7-10 students from high schools across NSW to test the links between the elements of student participation, student wellbeing and student recognition.

This document provides a summary of the findings from Phase 3.

¹ The Australian Research Council Linkage Program is a competitive research funding scheme offered by the Commonwealth Government for projects that also have support from industry partners. The partners for this ARC Linkage project were: Catholic Schools Office Lismore, NSW Department of Education, and Office of the NSW Advocate for Children and Young People.

WHO WAS INVOLVED IN PHASE 3 OF THE RESEARCH?

Seven high schools from across regional and metropolitan NSW were involved in Phase 3. Some were government schools and others were Catholic schools:

ROUND 1

In Round 1 there were **253** student participants from across Years 7–10.

ROUND 2

In Round 2, there were **283** student participants from across Years 7–10.



WHAT DID WE FIND OUT?

Responses to select demographic questions regarding SRCs in participating schools.

ON AVERAGE **64%** OF STUDENTS SAID THEIR SCHOOLS HAD A SRC



15 STUDENTS WERE MEMBERS ON THEIR SCHOOL SRC IN ROUND 1



14 STUDENTS WERE MEMBERS ON THEIR SCHOOL SRC IN ROUND 2

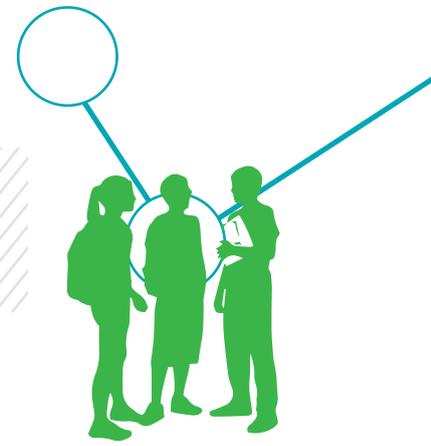


STUDENT PARTICIPATION QUESTIONS

Based on the survey, we found that student participation is made up of six elements, where students:

- 1. WORK TOGETHER** with other students and with teachers to make changes at school.
- 2. HAVE VOICE ABOUT SCHOOLING** - like classroom rules, homework, how they are taught, what they learn, how their work is assessed, how they are supported at school and how they are disciplined.
- 3. HAVE A SAY WITH INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE WHO MAKE DECISIONS AT SCHOOL** like the Principal, the Deputy, the Student Representative Council (SRC), and teachers.
- 4. HAVE INFLUENCE AT SCHOOL** - where teachers listen to students' views and act on them.
- 5. HAVE VOICE ABOUT ACTIVITIES AT SCHOOL** - like sports teams, excursions, camps, clubs, fund raising, and socials.
- 6. HAVE CHOICE AT SCHOOL** - about the type of school activities they do, how they present their school work, who they sit near, how much they get involved in school activities (such as sports, camps, socials, plays), and how they look.

WHERE TO NEXT?



- Phase 3 used the above findings to develop further the online survey that measured student participation. Phase 3 started to test for reliability and validity of the scale, which was proving to be effective in the early stages. Phase 4 tested these further and used this survey and other wellbeing and recognition questions, to test the links between the six elements of student participation, student wellbeing and recognition. In total 1435 students across the four regions of NSW participated in the Phase 4 survey (see Phase 4 summary for more information).

A range of practical resources have been developed from the project to assist schools with embedding and monitoring effective approaches to student participation. These include:

- A *Good Practice Guide* to support student participation;
- A survey tool and information pack for schools to measure and monitor student participation and wellbeing;
- Video vignettes on participation at school;
- Professional learning resources for school staff.



The above resources and documents will be available at: bit.ly/ParticipationStudy

For further information about this project please contact Professor Anne Graham
Email: anne.graham@scu.edu.au