



## Youth Participation Charter Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand

### Opening Statement:

We, the Good Shepherd Network value all young people and recognize that they are vital in the development of the Good Shepherd Life & Vision into the future. The Good Shepherd Network aims to empower young people through meaningful participation, recognizing and nurturing their strengths, interests and abilities.

The Good Shepherd Network invites all young people to embrace the social justice principles that guide us;

- ❖ When any person is oppressed, we are all diminished.
- ❖ When any part of creation is abused or destroyed, we are impoverished.
- ❖ We are prepared to challenge people, institutions or structures that diminish fullness of life and human dignity.

For the purpose of this Charter, Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand views youth participation as not based simply on age, but on the attributes brought by young individuals to their role. Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand hopes to achieve increased youth participation through involving a variety of connections, such as, service users, Good Shepherd staff, community members, students etc.

This Youth Participation Charter is based on the following values:

### Inclusiveness

Ensuring that all young people have the opportunity to participate; appreciating individuals' qualities, skills and interests.

### Purposeful Engagement

Young people are recognized as equal partners to ensure that participation is mutually beneficial for the young people and the organisation.

### Empowerment

Effective participation ensures that young people are contributors to their communities and shapers of their future.

Good Shepherd and individuals within it embrace the following guiding principles as the foundation for youth involvement.

Good Shepherd Life and Vision

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## Guiding Principles:

### • Creative participation

It is important for all members of the Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand Network to take the time to evaluate how they currently involve young people and how they can move toward a more conscious way of doing this. It is crucial to explore ways in which young people can be involved. Participation must be creative, varied and suit the needs and goals of the individual. For participation to be effective it must include clearly defined roles and responsibilities. Good Shepherd invites individuals, programs, Boards etc to embrace youthful wisdom and integrate it into the fabric of their work, community and The Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand Network.

### Recommendations

- A permanent position to exist on Boards/ Committees of Management for a young professional/ person.
- Brainstorming within programs, sites, etc around youth participation opportunities.
- Develop a plan for the future that outlines increased youth participation and begin it now.
- Develop Position Descriptions
- When evaluating programs – ensure young people, not necessarily clients are involved in every evaluation process.
- Talk to them! – Ask young people their opinion at any opportunity.
- Ask younger people to assist in functions, events in whatever capacity they can.
- University or Secondary school students on placement – define their role specific to their needs and the needs of the organization: don't just make them fit in.
- Quality Vs Quantity. Ensure that all placements offered are of a high standard and fit within the means of the program. Concentrating on fewer placements may be the key to creating successful outcomes and more experienced professionals in the field.
- Have a younger person on the assessment/ interview panels for volunteers/ foster carers/ mentors etc.

### • Orientation

Good Shepherd recognizes that everyone should receive a thorough Orientation to the following –

The Good Shepherd history including Life & Vision

The Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand Network

The Good Shepherd place where they will do most of their work

The specific program/ area they will work within

This will enable a clear connection to their involvement with Good Shepherd and allow for future development within the wider Good Shepherd Network. Orientation is a priority and must be entwined with the role they will perform.

### Recommendations

- Utilise the resources produced by the Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand Life & Vision Team to assist with Orientation. Processes around this are constantly being developed and reviewed to ensure it meets the needs. E.g.: PowerPoint presentation for larger groups, Orientation booklet, reading resources etc.

- Site Visits – Visiting other Good Shepherd work sites/ agencies is a valuable way for people to contextualize where they fit and expose them to the bigger picture.

- Local Orientation processes – usually individual sites will have an orientation process that people can adapt and make suitable for young people if required.

#### • **Mentoring and Support**

Involving new people into the Good Shepherd Network means they will need support. Past experiences have identified that support and mentoring ensures positive participation experiences. Therefore, it is important that each new person is allocated a support/ mentor who will assist them to 'find their feet' and support them through their work/ involvement in Good Shepherd.

Whilst people have expertise and strengths they will bring to their position/ role, they will not know or have limited experience of Good Shepherd culture and Life and Vision. Those more experienced in Good Shepherd, have an obligation and responsibility to support/ mentor younger workers, students, volunteers and young people in general.

This support/mentoring relationship must be mutually beneficial and reviewed regularly through clear processes that are developed according to program or individual needs. For workers, students, volunteers etc, it is also important to recognize that support/mentoring may be separate to formal Supervision they may receive.

### Recommendations

-Keep it simple. Mentoring does not need to be time consuming but rather a safety net for people to tap into on an informal but regular basis.

#### • **Skills development and training**

To ensure that all youth participation is not token, it is crucial that all involvement enables the young person to develop skills both formally and informally to help them to grow as individuals and professionals. This is also a part of the support/ mentoring relationship.

The first step in skills development is evaluating what skills the young person brings with them to Good Shepherd. From this dialogue, their Supervisor and/or support person/ mentor can work with them to make sure they are receiving the

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appropriate experiences. It is expected that all young people be given similar access to relevant training, professional development and mentoring/support that a more experienced worker, volunteer or student would have.

### Recommendations

- Tap into the training that staff is already accessing.
- Perhaps other staff throughout the organization can offer training or skills development rather than outsourcing?

#### • **Creative reimbursement**

Good Shepherd respects that individuals have the right to be recognised and reimbursed for the work that they do. Often this is a difficult area as financial support is often unavailable or unreliable. No volunteer or young person should be out of pocket, so reasonable expenses should be covered. E.g. vehicle mileage etc. Good Shepherd invites you to be creative and to 'think outside the square' as a means of ensuring that young people are adequately reimbursed for the role they perform.

### Recommendations

- Sitting fees for participation in meetings, evaluations etc.
- Reimbursement in the form of vouchers, cash equivalent gifts/ incentives.
- Explore and utilise fundraising opportunities to support this.
- It important that reimbursements are negotiated and agreed upon, keeping in mind that financial constraints of the organization may impact on this.

#### • **Pathways**

Given that Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand has a commitment to Youth Development, it important for those supporting/mentoring young people that they explore other potential opportunities that would allow that young person to grow. Opportunities for professional and personal development are encouraged and should be supported by all. Pathways may include avenues within or without Good Shepherd. Good Shepherd is committed to exploring possible pathways that may be identified by young people or others in the Network. Again this calls for creative thinking!

### Recommendations

- Is considered in addition to the 'Skills development and training' above.
- Create leadership opportunities wherever you can.

#### • **Review and evaluation**

To ensure Good Shepherd is engaging the wisdom of young people effectively and in a mutually beneficial way, it is fundamental that each participation experience is reviewed and evaluated. Given the nature of people's work, it is important to make the evaluation and review user friendly. Reviews and

evaluations can be creative, involving many forms i.e.: regular journaling as a means of reflection, informal and formal meetings, written etc. Reviews and evaluations must be decided with the young person and their support/ mentor person to make certain they are clear about the process and understand they have an equal part to play.

### Recommendations

- The *quality* of the experience is far more important than the *quantity* of young people.
- The young person may use a journal for reflection purposes.
- A regular written report could be a part of their role and review.
- All process must be explored with and be negotiated with the person as to best utilise their time and resources. Flexibility is the key.

