

# Children's Ministry Network

# Start Up Kit

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## Are you interested in starting a Children's Ministry Network (CMN) in your area?

Networks such as this can offer support, encouragement, wisdom and camaraderie. We trust that this document will empower you in setting up your local network so that you may gain ideas, encouragement and support thereby increasing your effectiveness in your ministry with children and their families.

Children's Ministry Networks exist within most states and territories in Australia. The state-level networks are made up of representatives from many Christian denominations and para-church organisations. The CMNs in each state are working hard to raise the profile of Children's & Family Ministry across the country. Those involved have discovered the richness of meeting together to network, encourage and challenge each other. We hope that you will initiate a local Children's Ministry Network in some shape or form, and that you will also find these benefits to be true.

Who could you connect and network with in your region? We'd love to help you - and to learn from you. Find the contact for your state/territory to get in touch.

## The Purpose and Benefits of a Local Network

Could include:

- Building supportive and strategic relationships between churches, denominations and other ministry organisations
- Sharing, and encouraging the sharing of, resources (working smarter, not harder)
- Coordinating and collaborating together on Children's & Family ministry training, events and initiatives
- Providing support for each other, being sustained and encouraged in our ministry roles
- Demonstrating visible unity of the church
- Raising the profile of ministry with children and their families in local churches and in the wider community
- Advocating for children
- Providing a forum on issues related to children and families and, where appropriate, offer a united voice

# Who is in a Local Network?

The people within a local CMN can come from Christian churches and organisations and be involved with various activities related to ministering with children and their families:

- Church contexts: Sunday School, Kids' Clubs, after school clubs, playgroup, MOPS etc.
- School contexts: CRE, chaplaincy, lunchtime clubs, SUPA Clubs, Kids Hope etc.
- Community contexts: community outreach, camping, summer mission programs etc.

# What Does a Local Network Look Like?

There are no rules! Whatever will work for you and those that will participate in this network.

Some factors that seem to characterise groups that have lasted are:

- The establishment of a **small steering group** who seek to initiate gathering dates, purpose, communications, direction, events, etc
- **Meeting for a specific purpose** rather than just for the sake of it – always making sure there is something to talk about and a reason to come
- The group needs to show respect for each other's **backgrounds, theologies, traditions and perspectives**. There needs to be a common understanding that this is not the forum to impose individual beliefs, but one where people listen, share and enjoy the unity and diversity of the group
- **Good communication** between members about why they are meeting and being prepared to name the differences between the members' organisations as well as the commonalities
- **Flexibility** ... thinking "outside the box" about meeting times and formats
- **A less formal** (but still well organised) **meeting style**
- **Shared leadership**

# How to Start a Local Network

- **Pray!**
- **Connect** with other local or state networks, let them know what you're doing
- **Gather** a small group of interested Children's & Family workers (whether paid or volunteer)
- **Brainstorm** about what a local group could look like
  - *See Setting Direction on the next page for some questions you might like to discuss*
- **Survey** local churches for potential Children's & Family workers in leadership positions
- **Determine** the felt needs of the local Children's & Family ministry leaders
- **Decide** the logistics... best timing, place, format and goals for your group
- **Evaluate**... learn and listen from the past and present

# Special Funding Offer in 2024

The state-level CMNs around the country are wanting to support, foster and catalyse local and regional networking. To this end, when you make contact with a few others in ministry in your area and find a time to get together, we are happy to cover the cost of your coffees for the first three gatherings. (Coffee alternatives are also approved!)

Simply visit the [CMN](#) website to find the key contact for the CMN in your state or territory, let them know about your new group, and make sure you keep your receipts for reimbursement.

## Setting Direction

It will be important to take some intentional time in your first few meetings as a group to explore “what you can do together better than you can do alone”. Consensus and shared vision are important foundations for a long future together as a network. Your most important task is to facilitate a time of clear, relaxed, open communication.

The easy questions to work through are:

- **When** will we meet? Breakfast, coffee, lunch, weekends...
- **How often** will we meet? Fortnightly, monthly, each term...
- **Where** will we meet? At a cafe, rotate through each other's churches, or on Zoom if necessary...
- **Who** will host? Arranging the room, providing refreshments...

The most important questions are **What** and **Why**:

- A. What **challenges** do we face as we engage in children's ministry?  
Identify these as individuals, in pairs, or in a small group. Then compile the results as a whole group to determine which challenges are common to everyone present. Help the group gauge the importance, priority level and urgency of addressing these challenges.
- B. What is your **vision** for children's ministry? What do you want to do differently?  
Again, facilitate an opportunity for individuals to identify these in pairs or small groups, and then gather this information to identify the common interest base of the entire group. Ascertain what the most important, pressing, exciting and urgent issues are.
- C. Identify the **resources** the group has available: What do we bring to this group? What do we not have that we wish we did?
- D. Now you can begin to succinctly phrase your common goals and your **Why** for meeting, and encourage others to join in.  
Given what the group has in common with respect to visions, needs and challenges, brainstorm as to “What can we do together better than we can do alone?” Ask questions such as: What can we do together? What is achievable, feasible, necessary in light of our discussion? Who will do what? By when? What are our goals?

Don't rush this process. Laying this foundation will benefit the group with a clear understanding of expectations and goals for a great networking relationship.

# List of Suggested Topics for Gatherings

Choose topics based on the needs (the Why and What) of the group and either use the skills & expertise of those in the group, or invite a guest in to provide specialist input along with the usual space for sharing, networking, collaborating and contextualising to your community.

- How to listen to children
- Mentoring children
- Children and missions
- Children and divorce
- Children and grief
- Children and worship
- Children and prayer
- Child abuse
- Children and art
- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
- Learning styles
- Parent enrichment
- Helping parents in the spiritual nurture of this children
- Connecting home and church
- Pastoring children and their families
- Single parent families
- Church's role in sex education
- Programming – Sunday programs, midweek programs, holiday programs, seasonal events...
- Programming for the transition between children and youth
- Family ministries
- Leadership development
- Special events – Christmas, Easter
- Classroom atmosphere
- Creating theme days
- Puppetry
- Clowning
- Storytelling
- Group management/discipline
- Administration
- Working as a team
- Communication
- Volunteer recruitment
- Safety policies and legal issues
- Screening of volunteers
- Children's spirituality
- Teacher training ideas
- Promotion and advertising
- Resources (eg curriculum, new resources)
- Pre-recorded content from the [Amplify](#) library

*Psalm 133:1*

*"How wonderful, how beautiful, when brothers and sisters get along!"*

*(The Message)*