

## **Invitation to a public guest lecture**

as part of the research colloquium of the Department of Education

### **Prof. Dr. Gabrielle Drake**

Professor of Social Work in the School of Social Sciences|  
Western Sydney University, Australia



**Did you hear me? Children's experience of  
participation in community services in Australia**

**Tuesday, November 25, 2025| 5:15–6:45 p.m.**

**Location: Regina Mundi, Adresse: Rue P.-A. Faucigny 2, 1700 Fribourg, Raum RM S-1.133**

In Australia, and many parts of the world, organisations who work with children and young people are required to include practices and culture where children and young people participate in decisions that affect them and are taken seriously. However, what participation entails, who is responsible for it, and how much influence children and young people's voices should have remains contested (Strømmland et al., 2022; Slaatto et al., 2024). Discourse on child-centeredness emphasises the need to attend to the child or young person and can neglect the conditions necessary for adults to centre the child (Michail et al., 2023). As Lundy (2007) argues, participation is more than providing opportunity for voice, it is about the structures, processes and relationships adults need to operationalise participation, for example providing children and young people with 'audience' (adults to listen) and 'influence' (acting on what children and young people have communicated) (Canosa et al., 2022). In partnership with three community organisations across regional and metro settings in two states of Australia (NSW and Queensland), researchers from Western Sydney University explored how participation is experienced by children and young people in community services; and how participation is operationalised by community service practitioners? Professor Drake will present the findings from this study and key practice and policy recommendations.

**Professor Gabrielle Drake** is Associate Dean and Professor of Social Work in the School of Social Sciences at Western Sydney University, Australia. She is a recognised expert in social policy, mental health, disability, and housing and homelessness pathways. Her research focuses on inclusive and emancipatory methodologies, children's well-being, social work practice in mental health and disability, and the lived experiences of marginalised populations.

With over 25 years practice experience, Professor Drake has held diverse roles across community and public sector management, strategic policy reform, research, and direct practice. She has contributed extensively to graduate and postgraduate social work education and is committed to amplifying consumer and carer voices in curriculum and policy development.