



# DIALOGUES @ SCHOOL 2024: DETAILED GUIDE

## “HOW TO RUN A SCHOOL DIALOGUE” (OR H2RASD)

### Introduction

Dialogues @ School is a significant civic and pedagogic initiative to stimulate **student voice** and student leadership in **collaborative discussions on complex topics** impacting students and their wider school communities. The program aims to encourage civic-mindedness and civil discourse amongst students and **provide students with ways to ‘disagree better’, increasing collaboration and reducing alienation.**

Dialogues @ School is an educational program that is aligned with five of the **general capabilities in the new Australian Curriculum** along with subject-specific capabilities in English and Humanities. The Dialogues @ School program can be run in a **small-group Club Format** within student leadership committees and subject offerings, or as a **standalone Annual Event** engaging the wider school as part of our Australia-wide annual series, or a combination of both. Importantly, all student voice from Dialogues along with acknowledgement of participating schools is collated and **shared with state parliaments through our Voice of Youth report.**

This document is a **complete guide** for the planning and running of an **Annual Series** Dialogue event at your school. For more information on running a Dialogue Club, see our [Dialogue Club Toolkit](#).

### Summary

**Don’t be daunted by the length of this document! (It’s only 8 pages plus appendices.) There are only a few essentials for running a successful dialogue event; the rest is bonus detail.**

The *essential* elements are, in approximate order of importance:

- a responsible organiser (who could also be MC on the day, for simplicity)
- a small number of reasonably intelligent, articulate speakers, well-briefed and prepared to participate in a dialogue, not a debate!
- as congenial a venue as possible, of appropriate size for the expected audience, with reasonable light and acoustics
- at least an hour for the event (preferably 1.¼ hours), allowing at least 45 mins for the actual discussion (preferably a full hour)
- communication with the intended audience to ensure good attendance and reception

and of course a suitable moderator, arranged by the school unless otherwise discussed.

In addition, *ideally*:

- good amateur or semi-professional technical services (sound, lighting, stage setting, recording)
- wider promotion will be undertaken before and after the event in the school community, having made all the effort to produce it, to maximise the social impact in the cause of civil discourse, the main purpose of the program

So please read this “Detailed Guide” as a guide, not as a prescription or handbook. It is based on the principles and practice we have developed for The Brisbane Dialogues’ own “Big Dialogue” major public event format, adapted for the school context, which we understand is quite different. Not only that, but circumstances vary widely between schools. You are creating your own unique event. Some things in this

guide will be completely irrelevant to some schools e.g. ticketing. And we might have missed some little things completely!

Just use common sense and don't hesitate to ask us for help or guidance whenever needed. Don't stress, keep calm and muddle on - it will be worth it!

## Table of Contents

[“HOW TO RUN A SCHOOL DIALOGUE” \(OR H2RASD\)](#)

[Introduction](#)

[Table of Contents](#)

[Background](#)

[What is a school dialogue?](#)

[Overview of what’s involved in a school dialogue](#)

[Timeline](#)

[Setting a time and date](#)

[Venue](#)

[Topic](#)

[Speaker selection and briefing](#)

[Student Panellists](#)

[Master of Ceremonies \(MC\)](#)

[Moderator](#)

[Audience participation](#)

[Event promotion](#)

[What TBD will be doing:](#)

[Things schools can do:](#)

[Audiovisual recording](#)

[Consent to use of audiovisual materials](#)

[Organisation leading up to the event](#)

[Coordinating with moderators](#)

[Overall coordination](#)

[Post-event](#)

[Financial considerations](#)

[Conclusion](#)

[Appendix - For Students: How to prepare for the dialogue](#)

[Topic](#)

[Research](#)

[Developing a position](#)

[How to listen to and accept new ideas without compromising on your opinion](#)

[A note on note taking](#)

[Speaker bio’s](#)

[The Brisbane Rule](#)

[Collaborative dialogue vs adversarial debate](#)

[Appendix - Sample Event Management Checklist](#)

[Appendix - Sample Run Sheet](#)

[Sample Run Sheet - Version 1.0](#)

[Appendix - Sample MC Speaking Notes](#)

[MC Talk/Notes](#)

[Appendix - Elements of Dialogue in Australian Indigenous Culture](#)

## Background

Thank-you for participating in Dialogues @ School, a significant civic and pedagogic initiative for secondary schools in Australia. The Brisbane Dialogues team is excited at the potential of this project to make a tangible contribution to the standard of public as well as private discussions of important ideas and issues in the long term.

The Brisbane Dialogues (TBD) was founded in Brisbane in late 2019 by a group of friends concerned about the deterioration of public (and private) discourse. We also saw a need and opportunity to establish a truly independent public forum for discussion of big ideas and issues.

We are a wholly independent, neutral, intergenerational, volunteer-led, not-for-profit organisation to stimulate better discussions about big ideas and issues. We are determinedly non-partisan and non-aligned and aspire to being non-parochial and inclusive.

Our mission is to demonstrate what *better discussions* look like, and help other organisations turn one-way talks and one-sided panels into genuine dialogues.

We conduct large public events (Big Dialogues), a series of private ones (First Tuesday Club) and various others, as sole producer or in collaboration with like-minded organisations. Our latest initiative is Australian Dialogues, a diverse national network of organisations which support the principle and practice of genuine dialogue between people who disagree.

Dialogues @ School is a highly strategic project for TBD, an exciting opportunity to further our mission among the next generation, with greater potential impact than all other activities.

## What is a school dialogue?

- a respectful, moderated, long-form discussion
- between a small (preferably odd) number of students with significantly different perspectives
- on a specific topic or question of significant student interest
- conducted under The Brisbane Rule (see below)
- on a stage or dais in a congenial venue
- good production values, preferably with a touch of theatre, and
- preferably, high quality AV recording

The format is a simplified version of that for our public dialogue series (“Big Dialogues”), which you see on [YouTube](#).

The goal of a dialogue is to demonstrate what *better discussions* look like. It is not a debate. (Did we say that already?! The point cannot be repeated too often.) It is exploratory and collaborative rather than adversarial. Speakers should state strong, clear positions and discuss differences, but listen carefully to each other, seek and acknowledge common ground and preferably canvass possible agreed solutions, or at least issues for further investigation.

As we say of The Brisbane Dialogues generally: “*It is what Q&A on the ABC should be!*”.

## Overview of what’s involved in a school dialogue

- setting a time and date
- booking a venue
- selecting and briefing speakers including MC (and moderator unless otherwise arranged by TBD)
- communications and promotion to ensure the venue is well-attended
- ticketing (if applicable)
- venue/tech liaison (where applicable) about setting up a stage, microphones, chairs, ushering, sound and lighting, AV recording and streaming coordinating with the moderator regarding the date, time and location
- collaboration between the MC and moderator over the run sheet and who is saying what
- project management of all of the above

## Timeline

From the date that a school decides to run a dialogue, event planning, execution and wrap up typically take just two months. While the window for our Second Edition Dialogue@Schools program is October 2023 - June 2024, many schools find it advantageous to run early in the first semester to avoid conflicting events. An indicative timeline is as follows:

**Anytime from October, and no later than May:** a date, time and venue for the event is confirmed with The Brisbane Dialogues and a school staff member nominated as the responsible organiser and contact point

**2-3 weeks after confirming:** student speakers and an MC selected. Flyers produced, ticketing set up (if applicable) and promotional emails begun

**4-6 weeks:** a moderator is finalised, with help from Brisbane Dialogues if necessary. Schools to create a detailed run sheet for the event to discuss between the MC, moderator and tech operators.

**5-8 weeks:** dialogue events held

**1-2 weeks post event:** schools have submitted recordings and/or discussion summaries or transcripts with notes on highlights).

**June:** TBD begins processing discussions for Voice of Youth Report and highlight reel

## Setting a time and date

This is entirely up to schools to fit in with their calendar and other circumstances. At this point your time and date has probably already been set and communicated to TBD, but if not please communicate it as soon as possible. If after November, this might delay the logistics of post-production, so it is not guaranteed that the school's dialogue will appear in the post-production material.

At least 45 minutes and preferably an hour should be allowed for the discussion itself, which means at least an hour and preferably an hour-and-a-quarter for the event overall, allowing for welcomes, housekeeping, introductions and closing comments after the discussion.

## Venue

Ideally, the venue for the dialogue should tick most, if not all of the following boxes:

- as congenial an atmosphere as possible for discussion including audience participation
- size and layout appropriate for expected audience size
- flexible seating arrangements so that it can take as many as possible, but not look empty if attendance is lower
- provided pro bono by owners or sponsors (or owned by the school)
- good quality sound, light and AV setup

It is expected that most schools will be hosting their dialogues on campus, often in auditoriums. What is most important is that the size of the venue is appropriate for the audience size, so if hosting in a large venue, schools should promote to as many students, parents, teachers and members of the community as possible.

Schools are welcome to explore smaller, more agile events and spaces too. This could be as simple as a lunch time discussion event, or even a double period combined classroom discussion.

## Topic

The topic for the 2023/2024 Dialogues@School program is: **COULD AI IMPROVE EDUCATION FOR ALL?** which is designed to engage young speakers, while providing wide scope for discussion and be of interest to others in the school community.

Students may address questions such as:

- How might AI improve education?
- In what ways might AI change access to education?
- What will AI mean for fairness in the delivery of learning and assessment?
- What could we do about these concerns? What are the impacts of these interventions?

This topic connects to broader social issues, including but not limited to:

- The purpose of education
- Equality of opportunity versus equality of outcome
- The role of technology in learning and work

## Speaker selection and briefing

### ***Student Panellists***

The ideal number of panellists is probably five (5). Two (2) or four (4) might tend to be adversarial rather than collaborative. Three (3) might not be enough to sustain a longer discussion. Four could work if students are well-prepared and briefed not to split down the middle.

(For what it is worth, in a Big Dialogue with expert adult panellists, three is the ideal, as they have plenty to say; three different positions is enough and avoids simple adversarialism. More than three risks speakers competing for airtime and the discussion being disjointed, with the moderator inviting speakers in repeated turns on a sequence of issues, rather than the speakers themselves pursuing points in depth in a more spontaneous way between themselves.)

Discussions where speakers agree on everything are just as unengaging as discussions where everyone shouts over each other, so schools should be mindful of the risks of both extremes. Schools should aim for a panel that has strong opinions on both sides as opposed to a panel entirely of “moderate” positions, as panels of entirely moderate speakers can fail to engage with the meat of the issue. The purpose of dialogue is to find common ground between people who won't necessarily agree on everything, so having people actually disagree is the first essential component of a productive discussion.

It's up to individual schools to choose the best likely student speakers as they see fit. A suggestion is to request that students nominate themselves by submitting a brief e.g. 100-word summary of their thoughts on the topic to the teacher(s) organising the dialogue. The teacher(s) should then use their judgement to choose students who would be, *in an ideal world*:

- good public speakers (preferably with a sense of humour and/or theatre)
- good listeners
- curious to understand different views
- willing to check their ego at the door
- seek commonality as opposed to division on these topics, even if they cannot agree on everything
- embody the spirit of dialogue by engaging with their peers respectfully and honestly
- represent a diverse range of opinions and perspectives

This is a tall order! You obviously have to work with what you've got. On the plus side, students might be more amenable than adults to the spirit of a dialogue and responsive to the brief than a lot of adults.

**Briefing and preparing students will make the biggest difference to the quality of the discussion. See the Appendix - “For Students: How to prepare to participate in a school dialogue” for detailed material.**

### ***Master of Ceremonies (MC)***

The MC will say a few words of background and introduction to the dialogue then welcomes the panellists and moderator to the stage. After the discussion, they thank participants, make any brief closing comments they want to and conclude the event.

The simplest choice for MC is the organiser, but it could be a student, the school principal, or another staff member or school community member e.g. parent, local MP or media personality etc.

*Ideally* (another tall order, just as a guide), the MC should embody the following qualities:

- civil discourse advocate or enthusiast
- articulate, upbeat, preferably with some humour
- some available time to collaborate as needed on their speech, to convey desired messages but with a personal stamp and value-add
- also enough time to absorb and preferably contribute to the run sheet
- on board with the TBD approach to the indigenous acknowledgement (a specific, substantive reference to an aspect of the tradition of dialogue by the MC alone, rather than normal ritualistic form of words, often by several speakers)
- preferably some affinity and anecdotal connection to the topic, but not intervening in the discussion or taking strong personal position

See the **Appendix - MC Speaking Notes** for sample notes.

### **Moderator**

Moderators will be arranged by the school, although TBD will assist on a best-efforts basis if really necessary. Good sources of moderators include teachers, academics, media/journalism, business, law and other professions. There are likely to be suitable parents and others in the school community in most cases.

Examples of moderators arranged by schools themselves in the inaugural round last year were: the Chancellor of James Cook University, the Mayor of Randwick and a parent who is an economics professor. Tapping into the personal networks of principals and other senior staff will help. Asking senior students for suggestions of parents could also be useful.

All moderators will be briefed by TBD to prepare them to manage the student dialogue to greatest effect, in particular on TBD's non-adversarial dialogue principles and methodology and to some extent the subject matter of the particular topic. There will be a separate detailed guide for moderators as well as an online video call briefing, but essentially they will be responsible for:

- ensuring conversation flows smoothly and that speakers all have adequate opportunity to be heard
- preventing dialogue from breaking down or becoming too adversarial
- moving conversation between different components of the topic

Moderators may be willing also to deliver an acknowledgment of the traditional custodians in the TBD manner, which is to make a meaningful reference to one or more principles or elements of dialogue in aboriginal culture rather than a typical rote form of words (more below). This is a matter for individual negotiation between the school and the moderator before the event. Alternatively it could be done by the MC - but once is enough!

### **Audience participation**

Questions, statements or comments from the audience can add a lot of value to the discussion if they are relevant and succinct. It will be up to the organiser and the moderator to agree beforehand whether there will be participation from the floor and for the moderator on the night to manage.

### **Event promotion**

Whether it is a private school event or more of a school community or public one, we encourage as much promotion as possible. After all the effort made by teachers and other staff to stage a dialogue, creating awareness about it - and what it is all about - can increase the impact well beyond those immediately involved, before and after the event. In addition, it makes a big difference to the overall event if the venue is full or nearly full.

TBD is keen to work with a separate marketing person at each school if available, in addition to the main organiser contact.

#### **What TBD will be doing:**

- producing a flyer, poster and sample promo copy for schools to use
- mini-campaigns on social media on five (5) platforms by both TBD and Queensland Talks (see below) (which will also be available for schools to adapt and use)
- dedicated email newsletters to both TBD and Queensland Talks lists (ditto)

- press releases setting up dedicated section on our website [www.brisbanedialogues.org](http://www.brisbanedialogues.org)

### **Things schools can do:**

- post flyers on notice boards
- dedicated emails (whole school and sub-groups, school community)
- mentions in newsletters
- social media posts (several in the lead-up, as well as one or two afterwards with link to full video and highlights, then later to the all-schools written report and highlights video and any press)
- suggest participating students to record short selfie videos about why they are involved or what interests them about the dialogue, for posting on socials and including in video submitted for the highlights reel
- arrange students or staff to take photos as well as audio/video of the event
- encourage student speakers and their social circles to get the message out
- consider requesting promotion of the event by compatible local organisations, e.g. brother or sister schools, community associations, charities etc. Local politicians might be particularly interested and willing to mention to their email lists. Local press are likely to be interested.

*It is an exceptional opportunity to showcase the school, its talent and a leading, progressive, civic attitude. Internally, the more staff and students who attend, the greater the positive flow-on effects will be - in terms of more students engaged in better discussions of important issues and the foundational improvement in scholastic and life learning and development that goes with that.*

## **Audiovisual recording**

*“If a tree falls in a forest and no one is around to hear it, does it make a sound?”*

Producing a high quality record of the dialogue event is strongly encouraged, so that TBD can summarise the key points of discussion into a report on the voice of youth on the topic for presentation to parliaments and general publicization and produce video highlights to spread awareness of the program.

If a video recording is not feasible, schools may submit an audio-only one or must, as a minimum, submit a written summary of the discussion, with key points and any notable quotes or exchanges.

Although there is not a particular standard of quality which schools must adhere to, it is important that video is:

- stable (i.e. not handheld or shaky)
- shot in **landscape** mode (so the videos can be consistent in their presentation)
- shot at an angle which encompasses all speakers involved (and is free from visual distractions, such as people entering and leaving the room)
- reasonably high quality (phone cameras are fairly good these days, though a professional setup is always best)

It is similarly important that audio is:

- an appropriate and consistent volume (you should be able to hear speakers without difficulty)
- free from audio distortion (i.e. no echo or reverb which makes it difficult to listen to)
- recorded with a separate microphone (not a phone mic) and through a mixer (if possible)

In addition to the video and audio recording quality, it is similarly important that the space for the dialogue is well lit and does not hide the speakers' faces.

To ensure the quality of these recordings is maintained, it is important that video and audio quality are tested on the day of the event. Once the events have ended, schools are free to (but not obliged to) edit their footage and send it to the Brisbane Dialogues. Additionally, a transcript of the event and notes on key highlights of the event would be valuable for the post-production process.



## Consent to use of audiovisual materials

It is up to schools to obtain any consents required for students' participation in the Dialogues @ School program. As consistently advised, a public report on the voice of youth on the topic and a highlights reel from all or any of the school recordings will be produced and publicised, but individual students will not be named in the production, only schools.

Schools may edit videos before sending if particular students need to be excluded and only send photos of those who are happy to be included. The Brisbane Dialogues will not name any individual students in any publicity without specific permission.

## Organisation leading up to the event

### *Coordinating with moderators*

Ideally, moderators will be secured at least a fortnight, and preferably a month before the event, allowing time for them to be briefed and mentally prepare.

It is useful to have an in-person meeting or at least a videocall with moderators before the day to go over a runsheet (see Appendix for a sample) or at least the main points.

### *Overall coordination*

To assist with the overall coordination of these events, see the sample checklist in the Appendix. Check lists should be adapted and maintained by the school leader organising the event to help ensure that preparations are progressing comfortably and it all goes off well on the day.

The Brisbane Dialogues will also schedule check-ins to see how the event is coming along and to offer schools an opportunity to ask any questions.

**These check-ins are designed to help you remain on track with organising your event - not to assess you!**

## Post-event

As advised, TBD will produce a written report and a highlights reel for presentation to parliaments, for use and reference by schools and for general publicity.

If you have made a recording, please send it in a common file format as promptly as possible after your event, by upload to this [dedicated folder](#):

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/19pC-FBO9OZx94IWzCzvX8rM3Oeq6wB0g?usp=drive\\_link](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/19pC-FBO9OZx94IWzCzvX8rM3Oeq6wB0g?usp=drive_link)  
[or by whatever means is easiest for you \(Sharepoint, SendAnywhere, YouTube, etc\).](#)  
[or by whatever means is easiest for you.](#)

Transcripts would be appreciated - these could be done by students after the video file has been sent, either manually or via YouTube (free) or a service like [rev.com](#) (paid).

If you have not made a recording, please email your summary or notes of the discussion to [schools@brisbanedialogues.org](mailto:schools@brisbanedialogues.org)

Schools will also receive individual feedback on how the dialogue was conducted to improve the program in future as well as a brief survey for feedback on the program and TBD.

TBD will send out certificates of participation for students and schools.

## Financial considerations

Schools need to bear any costs of staging their respective events but **no** financial contribution is required from schools to participate, thanks to the generous support of the Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation and commercial sponsors.

[Further sponsors are welcome](#) - additional funds will help us support regional and remote schools to participate, e.g. by sending moderators and allowing students to attend presentations to parliaments.

## Conclusion

We hope this has provided a practical, reasonably comprehensive guide on how to run a school dialogue event. Again, it is not meant to be prescriptive. Each school will have to decide how they want events to be run, keeping in mind the overall goal of facilitating a different and better discussion among students, a dialogue rather than a debate.

And again, a sincere thank-you for making the effort so that your school can participate in this significant civic and pedagogic initiative. We hope many students and others in your school community will derive considerable benefit from it, which will reflect in society at large.

If you have further questions or wish to discuss anything please don't hesitate to contact us.

Murray Hancock  
Convenor  
0415 429 723  
[info@brisbanedialogues.org](mailto:info@brisbanedialogues.org)

## Appendix - For Students: How to prepare for the dialogue

*"He who knows only his own side of the case, knows little of that."*  
John Stuart Mill, English economist, philosopher and politician

### Topic

The topic for the 2023/2024 Dialogues@School program is: **COULD AI IMPROVE EDUCATION FOR ALL?** It provides wide scope for discussion. You could start by addressing implied questions such as:

- How might AI improve education?
- In what ways might AI change access to education?
- What will AI mean for fairness in the delivery of learning and assessment?
- What could we do about these concerns? What are the impacts of these interventions?

This topic connects to broader social issues, including but not limited to:

- The purpose of education
- Equality of opportunity versus equality of outcome
- The role of technology in learning and work

### Research

Students participating in the Dialogues @ School program are expected to complete some background research on the topic. This research should ensure students are prepared to bring the following to the dialogue:

- Statistics on AI and how it is being used
- Understanding of how AI works
- Familiarity with a variety of opinions (not just ones they agree with)
- Their own opinions based on their own research and experience

Overall the research component of this program should only take a few hours and can be done at home.

In preparing for the dialogue, it is important that students understand that they are not seeking to prove that their opinion is superior to others as is the case in a debate format. Instead students should aim to form their own opinions and then engage in dialogue with others to find points of agreement and potentially solutions.

### Developing a position

When developing a position on any topic, it is important that students consider:

- *context*: what is the broader historical, social and political context that we exist in? What is being spoken about in the news that is related to the topic? What is unique about the current era compared to previous eras? How does the topic of discussion fit within a broader historical narrative?
- *framing*: how can I present my opinion as an extension of something which people already agree on? (i.e. AI regulation as emerging from a desire to protect human workers) how are others framing their perspectives? Is the way in which other speakers frame their arguments biased or inaccurate in some way? Am I framing my perspective in a way that is reductive or simplistic?
- *potential counterarguments*: what might people of the opposite opinion to me say? How can I acknowledge the concerns of others, whilst demonstrating that my position addresses those concerns? Can I draw reasonable comparisons between what another speaker is saying and other arguments that are largely discredited? (i.e. comparing AI regulation to opposition of other technologies) what could I say in response to criticisms of my own ideas?
- *alternative solutions*: what should be done about the issue being discussed? What does my proposed solution achieve and can I achieve it through other means? What solutions have already been suggested by experts? What might be the reason that people would oppose my solution or prefer another?

- *logical fallacies*: a comprehensive list of logical fallacies can be found online. Some of the more common are ad hominem, appeal to authority, bandwagon fallacy or straw man fallacy.
- don't make things or take things personally: people may criticise what you're saying, but *don't take it personally*. You aren't your opinions, and inversely other people aren't their opinions - they're people who happen to hold a differing opinion, so don't make it or take it personally.

### ***How to listen to and accept new ideas without compromising on your opinion***

Perhaps one of the more difficult yet important skills to master when engaging in a dialogue is the ability to listen to new ideas without compromising on your opinion. Though it can be tempting to shut out opinions which differ from your own, or change your position completely to agree with another speaker, neither of these approaches are conducive to good dialogue. To prevent either of these outcomes, students should:

- be certain of the core of your argument and try to state it in as simple terms as possible.
- discern what you like about the other speaker's position and what you don't like about it.
- Seek to clarify points which don't make sense to you or that seem contradictory.
- accept that you can't agree on everything and can't be right about everything, and be willing to move on from points which you and the other speakers clearly don't agree - agreeing to disagree is still agreement.
- think critically about the underlying assumptions of the statements of other speakers before accepting them.
- trust your gut.

### ***A note on note taking***

Generally, note taking is not conducive to dialogue. Although taking notes is an important part of adversarial debates, dialogues are a space where people should be able to converse with their fellow speakers freely and naturally. Bringing pre-prepared notes is fine and can enhance the quality of dialogue when used sparingly, however taking notes on what people say takes you out of the conversation which hurts the quality of dialogue - so don't do it.

### ***Speaker bio's***

Before the dialogue, it is helpful for students to write a brief 100 word summary of themselves, their interests and their connection to the topic. These bio's may be used to introduce them to the audience by the MC on the day of the event.

### ***The Brisbane Rule***

Speakers should embrace the spirit of collaborative dialogue at all times, including "The Brisbane Rule", which states:

***"All participants agree to listen carefully, speak respectfully and concentrate on the content of discussions, not on characters - before, during and afterwards, online as well as offline."***

### ***Collaborative dialogue vs adversarial debate***

In addition to the Brisbane Rule, speakers should understand the differences between collaborative dialogue and an adversarial debate.

Dialogue	Debate
Speakers aim to explore complex issues to find points of agreement and acknowledge points of disagreement	Speakers aim to defeat the arguments of their opposition
Speakers talk about their own opinion on the matter	Speakers argue for or against a position based on what they are assigned by a moderator
Speakers talk to each other in a conversational format	Speakers speak in a rigid, one-way format which focuses on argumentation over discussion
Speakers can occupy “grey areas” where it isn’t clear if they are in favour of something or against it	Speakers are divided into two teams and must clearly be for or against something
Speakers are allowed to acknowledge things they like about the positions of other speakers and seek to incorporate their ideas into their own perspective	Speakers cannot change their mind and must attack the arguments of others to “win”.

***“The aim of argument, or of discussion, should not be victory, but progress.”***

**Joseph Joubert, French Enlightenment/Romantic writer**

## Appendix - Sample Event Management Checklist

	Item	Notes (detail, delegation etc)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Time and date set and notified the Brisbane Dialogues	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Venue booked	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Marketing briefed	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Students have submitted their 100 word applications to participate	
<input type="checkbox"/>	MC selected and briefed (if not the organiser yourself)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Production services organised, including microphones/sound, lighting, stage furniture, AV recording	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Students selected and briefed	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Advertising materials have been produced and published across multiple channels	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Runsheets done	
<input type="checkbox"/>	You've spoken with the assigned moderator and MC to go over the run sheet, including the acknowledgement and audience participation.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Students have prepared for the event, including conducting their own research and having printed speaking notes	
<input type="checkbox"/>	MC speech or speaking notes done	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Day before: final confirmation of all speakers and production services and arrange back-ups if necessary	
<input type="checkbox"/>	On the day: arrive early, check all arrangements, greet moderator (and MC if applicable), give instruction to commence event	
<input type="checkbox"/>	After the event: AV recordings, transcripts and feedback sent to the Brisbane Dialogues	

# DIALOGUE @ SCHOOL

## Sample Run Sheet - Version 1.0

[school logo]

**Date & Times:** Thurs, 28 Apr 2022  
Doors open 3.30pm  
Stage discussion 4-5.30pm  
Social discussion 5.30 onwards  
Doors close 6pm

**Location:** The School Auditorium  
[Address]

---

### Earlier Setting up

- Chairs, lectern, microphones, lighting, water, any stage dressing etc.
- Audio and video recording equipment

### 3-3.30pm Event Manager tasks

- Any tasks that need to happen before the event (i.e. confirming stage layout, sourcing water for speakers, testing AV)

### 3.30pm Doors open

- Any ushering/ticketing arrangements

### 3.45pm Pre-event run through with speakers

- MC/Moderator go through the runsheet to make sure everyone is on the same page

### 4.00pm MC Opening Comments

- MC gives general welcome, explains the event context, acknowledges traditional custodians and introduces speakers

### 4.07pm Moderator opening comments

..... Dialogue .....

### 5.00pm Moderator calls for questions from audience

### 5.20pm Wrap up by Moderator

### 5.25pm Closing remarks: MC comes on stage

- Thanks to moderator, speakers and audience
- Brief personal reflections and event signoff
- Plug for the Dialogues @ School program and The Brisbane Dialogues

### 5.30pm Stage proceedings conclude

# MC Talk/Notes

## A Dialogue @ School: Could AI Improve Education For All?

4-5.30 pm Thurs 28 Apr 2022 in the School Auditorium

### [Welcome] [c. 30 secs]

- Welcome to everyone, referring to the topic for the dialogue

### [Self-intro] [1 min max]

- Name of the MC ["and I will be your MC for tonight"], brief description of themselves and why interested in participating in this event, (possibly) brief personal reflections on the topic

### [Housekeeping] [c. 20 secs]

- Any necessary housekeeping (i.e. fire exits, toilets, phones on silent)

### [Brisbane Dialogues Context] [c. 1 min]

- Mention the broader Dialogues @ School project and the mission of The Brisbane Dialogues, e.g.  
*"Dialogues @ School is the schools-based program of The Brisbane Dialogues, a leading independent public forum and Australia's first dedicated civil discourse organisation. In this inaugural series, approximately 15 schools in Queensland and NSW will conduct dialogue events on the same topic, to be distilled into a highlights reel and a report on the voice of youth for presentation to parliaments. The program will be scaled into a major national one in the future."*
- Tie this back to why the school is involved and how the school's values or objectives align with civil discourse

### [Acknowledgment of traditional custodians] [c. 1.5-2 mins - long but important!]

- Schools may acknowledge the traditional custodians of their land however they see fit, although the following approach is preferred
  - The Brisbane Dialogues always takes a unique, meaningful approach to the acknowledgment, referring to one or more elements of dialogue in aboriginal culture (see [Appendix](#) below)
  - Draw links between one or more principles of indigenous dialogue and the nature of the Dialogues @ School program or the school's choice to participate, e.g.

*"I would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we gather by reference to one of the elements of dialogue in Australian indigenous culture, according to The Brisbane Dialogues' research. This is:*

*'Reaching resolution on important subjects takes as long as it takes. The process is more important than the destination, or any particular issue.'*

*This resonates with what we are doing here today, that is conducting a dialogue rather*



*than a debate, attempting to deepen our understanding of a complex topic and make some progress on how to make things better, rather than notch up a victory and move on. It is interesting to reflect on how this single intangible element or principle might have contributed to the durability of indigenous culture - and how it yet might contribute to ours.*

*We might not reach any conclusions today, but hopefully everyone will learn something, everyone will have more understanding and respect for others' views and the world might be a little bit closer to adapting to a recent phenomenon which is undoubtedly affecting modern lives, for better or worse."*

- MCs could pick any one or two of the elements listed if they see connections they think would resonate with students.

### **[The Brisbane Rule] [c. 30 secs]**

- And so to today's discussion, to be conducted under "The Brisbane Rule". This was created at the launch of The Brisbane Dialogues as a starting point for not just civil, but enjoyable and enlightening discussions:

*All participants agree to listen carefully, speak respectfully and concentrate on the content of discussions, not on characters - before, during and afterwards, online as well as offline.*

### **[Introduction of Speakers to the stage] [c. 1 min]**

- Give a one-sentence introduction of each of the speakers and the moderator.
- Hand over to moderator by name

-----Dialogue-----

### **[Hand back to MC from moderator]**

### **[Vote of thanks to speakers][c. 1:00]**

- Thank the panellists for their participation, the moderator for volunteering time and effort and ask for audience applause

### **[Event wrap-up] [c. 2:00]**

- Thank the audience
- Any brief personal reflections, key points or takeaways from the discussion
- Plug for The Brisbane Dialogues other main activities:
  - Big Dialogues series - major public discussion events in Brisbane later this year. See **brisbanedialogues.org**
  - [QLD schools only] Queensland Talks
    - a calendar for talks and discussion events
    - an ecosystem of curious citizens, speakers and event organisers
    - a community service to help people find out about the many interesting events going on
    - **queenslandtalks.com**
- Stay, enjoy and carry on the discussion (if appropriate)

## Appendix - Elements of Dialogue in Australian Indigenous Culture

1. Sit under a tree, or around the campfire: gather in a congenial place for discussion.
2. Listen carefully. "Deep listening" ("dadirri") was inculcated in upbringing, presumably reflected in adult councils.
3. "Walk together", literally: move between physical environments if the discussion becomes heated or difficult - break negative energy, work through stubborn differences and seek common ground to go forward from. More directly: "walk and talk".
4. Reaching resolution on important subjects takes as long as it takes. The process is more important than the destination, or any particular issue.
5. There is no chief, or ultimate authority; however some have more knowledge and authority and are better at dialogue. Inner councils of elders form organically. These can vary depending on the subject.
6. Agreement is not always possible. Decisions are not necessarily a broad consensus, more like the group of elders making judgments about how to maintain cohesion, or making everybody as happy as possible.
7. Dialogue and resulting decisions reflect the serious obligations of members to the community, together with rights.
8. Decisions are respected and implemented. Matters under discussion and decision were sometimes serious and personal, so the decision process had to be respected if escalation was to be avoided and resolution reached.

It seems a fair assumption that "Women's business" is fundamentally the same in these respects, which would be interesting to explore.

### *Sources:*

- a) Discussions with Lloyd Hancock and Wesley Aird, Feb-Jul 2020
- b) Daly River elder Miriam Rose Ungunmer on dadirri: "We could not live good and useful lives unless we listened. This was the normal way for us to learn - not by asking questions. We learnt by watching and listening, waiting and then acting."