



# Parents Advisory Group – Meeting 6

## Communique

The Parents Advisory Group (the Group) held its sixth meeting virtually on 27 February 2025. The Group consists of parent representatives, community organisations and an academic expert. The community organisations attending the meeting included:

- Antipoverty Centre
- Australian Council of Social Service
- Brave Foundation
- Brotherhood of St Laurence
- Council of Single Mothers and their Children
- Settlement Council of Australia
- Single Mother Families Australia

The Department advised of changes to the membership of the Group from the Settlement Council of Australia. The Department noted that membership for the Group was due to be reviewed in November and members will have the option to extend their membership for 12 months or withdraw from the Group.

The Department provided an overview of the data from the implementation and first 2 months of the Parent Pathways service. Members raised several questions about the data, with particular interest around gender breakdown, the funds available to participants and projected caseload numbers. The Department noted that as implementation of the Parent Pathways service continues, additional data will be provided at future meetings. The Department advised that it is implementing changes to make the Parent Pathways service more accessible to parents and carers, including by providing translated communication materials on the Department's website and to providers for them to give to parents and carers. Additionally, from July 2025, the Department is expanding current settings to enable participants to choose to remain connected to Parent Pathways for up to 26 weeks if they need to temporarily move to a region where the Community Development Program operates, for example for cultural business or to care for family members.

The Department sought feedback from members about their experiences or issues regarding the Parent Pathways service. Members raised concerns over some of the language used to describe the service, which they believed contradicted the goals and intentions of Parent Pathways. The Department acknowledged these concerns and noted it would be mindful of the language used in association with the service.

Members raised concerns about the process to transfer participants from Parent Pathways to employment services, as one member spoke about the negative experience of their transition to Workforce Australia which impacted their payments. The Department committed to investigate this situation. Members also raised their ongoing concerns about the eligibility restrictions for Parent Pathways being based on the age of the youngest child. The Department confirmed that the concerns had been provided as feedback to the Minister and changes to eligibility is a decision for government.

The Department thanked members for their input at out-of-session workshops on the Trauma Informed Servicing training and the Evaluation Theory of Change. The Department advised that the feedback provided at these workshops has been considered in the development of these pieces of work. The draft Evaluation Strategy will be circulated to the Group for review and feedback before the final version is published.

The Department delivered a presentation on its new employment programs complaints service. Members were provided an overview of the new tiered process, highlighting the complaints service commitment to handling complaints impartially, confidentially and with empathy, and supporting people with an effective voice to give feedback on Parent Pathways and employment services. The new complaints service is designed to be accessible and considerate of the needs of the complainant, and complainants are supported by the Department throughout the process. One member said they had heard from some participants using employment services that there has been a noticeable improvement in the process for participants. Members provided feedback on key aspects of the new complaints service, such as what is important to parents in a complaints process, where the Department could be doing better, and what information is important to include in public reports on complaints data.

Services Australia representatives provided members with an overview of its Parent Pathways connection process. Members raised concerns around some of the language and messaging used in the connection process. Members stressed the importance of ensuring that messages about the Parent Pathways service across all stages of engagement and the user journey need to clearly emphasise, reflect and repeat that:

- the service can provide support for goals broader than training, education or work
- the service is voluntary; participants can exit or pause at any time
- parents choose to provide their consent to be connected.

Members also said that all messaging needs to state the eligibility criteria of the service, so it is clear to parents and carers. Members said that changes to the language and messaging could make impactful changes to how the service is communicated to eligible parents and help to ensure that parents do not fall off at the initial touch points. Services Australia representatives thanked members for their feedback and noted that the key messages raised by members are included at multiple points in the parent journey, including a letter sent to eligible parents, the agency's website and in the online service customers use to refer their details to a provider. Services Australia representatives mentioned that there are content limitations with some touchpoints (e.g. character limits) and while they are limited to some language they must use, they will use the feedback from this meeting in consideration of how to improve and soften the messaging of the service.

The Department thanked members for their input and feedback into the draft 2025 Forward Work Plan. Members provided further suggestions for the plan, which the Department is considering for inclusion. The Department advised that the plan is a living document that can be updated as required. During the meeting members endorsed the revised Parents Advisory Group Terms of Reference.

The next meeting will take place in late May 2025.