



Parents Advisory Group – Meeting 2

Communique

The Parents Advisory Group (the Group) held its second meeting on 9 May 2024. The meeting was held face-to-face in Melbourne, with some attendees attending virtually. The Group consists of parent representatives, community organisations and an academic expert. Attending the meeting were:

- Antipoverty Centre
- Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS)
- Brave Foundation
- Brotherhood of St Laurence
- Settlement Council of Australia
- Single Mother Families Australia.

The Department provided information on the proposed participant journey into the new service, indicating various connection and engagement points between providers and parents during their journey on the new services. Following member feedback, refugee and migrant services were identified as a potential source of referrals into the service.

Group members queried the role of Services Australia in the participant journey; how participant feedback will be proactively included for provider accountability; and in what languages information for parents will be offered.

Some members raised existing concerns about engaging with the new service due to previous negative experiences with ParentsNext, along with concerns about mixed messages about voluntary participation from existing ParentsNext providers. The child care activity test was also raised as a concern.

A number of members queried the thresholds of 15 hours a week of employment, and parents' youngest child turning six, to exit people from the program. There was also a discussion around the pros and cons of participant incentive payments.

Group members advice was sought about parents' expectations of the new service:

- What should engaging with an organisation that is providing a useful service for parents be like?
- How should an organisation treat parents who choose to participate in the new voluntary service?
- What services should parents expect from an organisation?
- What topics/issues should staff be knowledgeable about and competent to provide support on?

Members provided a range of input: this input will be used to help inform the Service Guarantee and guidelines around staff capabilities.

The creative agency engaged to develop the brand identity for the new service conducted a workshop to seek member feedback on preferred approaches to the branding for the new service.

Group members expressed a desire to meet more frequently so that more issues can be discussed in greater detail and the Secretariat will be working with Group members to determine a new meeting schedule. The next meeting will take place on 2 July 2024.