



Parents Advisory Group – Meeting 8

Communique

The Parents Advisory Group (the Group) held its eighth meeting virtually on 23 July 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
- Single Mother Families Australia

The Department provided an update on the Parent Pathways service, including the completion of the first mid-cycle provider performance review, the release of a new IT feature that enables providers to link goals to expenditure, and the recent launch of the Career Guidance mandatory training module launched for staff. The Department also provided an overview of the Parent Pathways service data as 31 May 2025 (<https://www.dewr.gov.au/employment-services-data/parent-pathways-data>).

The Department invited members to share their reflections and feedback on the Parent Pathways service following the first 6 months of delivery. Members raised ongoing concerns about parents being ineligible for the service due to partial or sporadic employment and regarding the eligibility criteria for Parent Pathways being set at the youngest child being under 6 years. Members noted their strong and continued advocacy for this feedback to be relayed to the Minister and government and for eligibility to be expanded beyond the current settings for the service.

The Department shared its insights into the implementation of the Parent Pathways service, noting that delivering a voluntary pre-employment service is new for the Department and it has provided considerable learnings for government which will inform future policies, programs and reforms. The Department reflected on the positive work undertaken so far to deliver Parent Pathways, including providing a smooth transition from ParentsNext to Parent Pathways, enhanced Parent Pathways materials to support parents, upskilling of providers to deliver high quality servicing, significant focus on ongoing servicing and continuous improvement, development of various client-centred tools to improve usability and overall client experience, and the delivery of Parent Pathways by the Australian Government. While the Department reflected positively on the initial delivery of Parent Pathways, it acknowledged that there are some areas of improvement that it is working towards, including:

- Ongoing system updates and changes to enhance servicing.
- Continued interactions with Services Australia to improve information sharing and customer service.
- Developing approaches and updating resources to better engage First Nations parents and carers.
- Providing education and additional resources for providers to ensure correct and appropriate service delivery.
- Consistent reviews of administrative data to ensure providers are delivering the service as set out and agreed under the Deed and Guidelines.

The Department delivered a presentation on the Parent Journey Tracker, which is a tool that will be used by participants and mentors to capture progress, recognise the parent's efforts, inform meaningful reflections and discussions, and to help parents feel empowered as they continue forward. Members provided feedback on the concept, key areas of focus, participant self-evaluation review process and the visual model of the tracker dashboard. Members suggested changes to the wording of the self-evaluation questions to ensure clear information and informal language is used and provided suggestions on ways to improve visual elements of the dashboard for users. Members raised concerns around how the Parent Journey Tracker will work on mobile phones and said that participants must be reassured about the purpose of the tracker which is to focus on reflection rather than evaluation or assessment.

The Department sought members' feedback on the Service Delivery Assessment tool, which is used by departmental staff to help assess the quality of a provider's servicing. Members generally felt that the Service Delivery Assessment tool focused on the right things to measure service quality, but suggested the Department look at expanding the types of goals that are included, and that it examine how complaints and the disbursement of funds could be included to enhance the robustness of the quality assessment.

Staff from the Department's Complaints Service Branch provided members with an overview of the employment and pre-employment services complaints report that is soon to be published. Staff gave an overview of the key sections of the report and members provided positive feedback on the proposed inclusions. Members reflected positively on the publication of complaints, suggesting it is an important and progressive step to demonstrating the government's commitment to taking complaints seriously. One member said that they had heard direct feedback about the significant improvement to the complaints mechanism following the changes made in December 2024.

The next meeting will be in-person and take place in October 2025.