



Parents Advisory Group – Meeting 5

Communique

The Parents Advisory Group (the Group) held its fifth meeting on 13 November 2024. The meeting was held virtually. 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 (ACOSS)
- Brave Foundation
- Brotherhood of St Laurence
- Council of Single Mothers and their Children
- Settlement Council of Australia
- Single Mother Families Australia

The Department provided an update on the launch of Parent Pathways, which is delivered by a network of providers and the Australian Government (APS Pilot) in 51 Employment Regions and commenced on 1 November 2024. Members were given a presentation on the scope and purpose, delivery sites, community and parent engagement plans and staff for the APS Pilot. Members raised several questions and provided suggestions for the APS Pilot which the Department will consider as part of its continuous improvement in service delivery, measuring performance and evaluation of the Parent Pathways service.

Members raised early concerns with the Parent Pathways service as one parent member reported they were not given an opportunity to advise their preferences for a mentor prior to their initial contact. Members noted that it is important for parents and carers to have agency in their engagement with the service. Members suggested that parents and carers should be able to indicate their preferences for a mentor and their expectations of the service before receiving any contact from their provider. The Department acknowledged the concerns raised and noted the suggestions for potential changes to the delivery of Parent Pathways. The department subsequently amended Guidelines in response to these concerns.

The Department updated members on the mandatory training modules for Parent Pathways staff. Members were invited to attend an out-of-session meeting to provide input into the Trauma Informed Servicing Training Module for Parent Pathways. The Department also provided an overview of the Parent Pathways Performance Framework, noting how feedback received from the Group at a previous session in July regarding provider quality has been used to inform the development of the Performance Framework.

The Department gave a presentation on the approach to the Parent Pathways Evaluation Strategy. The presentation outlined the purpose and process of conducting an evaluation, legislative frameworks that inform the evaluation of government services and the various research methodologies used by the Department. Members raised several questions and concerns regarding the approach to evaluations of

employment programs and advised that the issues raised by stakeholders and participants should be addressed in the Parent Pathways evaluation.

The Department sought members' input into the key things that should be considered in the Parent Pathways Evaluation Strategy. Members also provided suggestions as to what methods and questions the Department should use when engaging with parents and carers in the evaluation process, or when seeking their input and experiences of the service for the evaluation. The input and suggestions provided during this meeting will be considered for inclusion in the Parent Pathways Evaluation Strategy. The Department will continue to engage with the Parents Advisory Group during the development of the Evaluation Strategy and during the evaluation process.

Members were asked for their suggestions for agenda items and the proposed schedule for future Parents Advisory Group meetings in 2025. The Department will use this input to develop a schedule and a Forward Work Plan for 2025 for the Group to review.

The next meeting will take place in early 2025.