



Parents Advisory Group – Meeting 3

Communique

The Parents Advisory Group (the Group) held its third meeting on 2 July 2024. The meeting was held 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
- Council of Single Mothers and their Children
- Settlement Council of Australia
- Single Mother Families Australia

The meeting started with a welcome and introduction for the new members from the Council of Single Mothers and their Children.

Group members were asked what the Department should consider when **measuring service quality**.

Member feedback included:

- trust levels that parents have of their service providers,
- parents feeling good about themselves after meetings with providers,
- are participation funds being utilised fully,
- cultural safety, particularly for First Nations, migrant and LGBTQ+ parents.

Group members advised that **parents feedback and views could be sought** by:

- giving parents the ability to complete a short survey or rating immediately after engagement with a provider,
- performance managers inviting parents to meet face-to-face discuss the service,
- allowing parents to give feedback anonymously,
- advising parents how their feedback is used,
- giving parents a variety of channels to provide feedback,
- approaching parents who would normally opt-out of the feedback process.

The Group also discussed the topic of **lived experience**. Below is a summary of members' feedback on this issue, which will be used to inform and shape the Department's work on performance guidelines around quality of service and staffing skill mix.

The Department sought members' feedback on **what lived experience perspectives would be most valuable for staff providing the new service**. Members gave a wide variety of answers including parents who have navigated complex government systems; parents who have experience with the Family Court; parents who have overcome challenges with alcohol and other drugs; and parents of children with a disability or who are LGBTQ+.

Members were then asked what **resources would assist providers to employ staff with lived experience**. Members had a wide range of ideas and suggestions including establishing a community of practice; appropriate performance measures for providers; templates for position descriptions and job ads for roles requiring lived experience; direct departmental engagement with staff who have lived experience; and job customisation to the needs of parents with lived experience.

There was also a conversation about what experience counts as lived experience. Members expressed a strong view that **“lived experience” should refer to experiences which reflect the backgrounds and circumstances of the parents they will be supporting**. For example, people who have experiences of **navigating the welfare system and/or raising children in a low-income household** should be well regarded.

Under the terms of the Request for Tender, providers are required to employ staff with a variety of experience and qualification, including lived experience. Input provided by members on this topic will inform resource creation and monitoring to ensure that providers are employing staff with appropriate skills and experience. Members feedback was considered when creating the Job Information Packs for roles in the APS Pilot, including:

- using strengths-based language
- avoiding the use of words such as ‘barriers’
- describing the roles and responsibilities for the Mentor and Senior Mentor.

The Job Information Packs also took into consideration requirements detailed in the Request for Tender – Voluntary Pre-employment Service for parents with young children 2024-2027 and other stakeholder feedback.

The next meeting will take place on 5 September 2024.