



Parents Advisory Group – Meeting 1

Communique

The Parents Advisory Group (the Group) established to advise the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (the Department) on the development and implementation of the new Parents Pre-employment Service held its first meeting on 26 March 2024. Membership of the Group is comprised of parent representatives, community organisations and an academic expert.

The first meeting was held virtually and heard from representatives from:

- Antipoverty Centre
- Brave Foundation
- Settlement Council of Australia
- Single Mother Families Australia

The Department provided an overview of the public consultation process that had led to the announcement of the new service in December 2023, and Group members shared their previous experiences of ParentsNext. Members noted the stigma, shame and trauma associated with the compulsory nature of the ParentsNext program, which had previously been detailed during the consultation process. Members agreed that the new service needs to help parents, with greater empathy and understanding for parents and their children.

The Group discussed its terms of reference and scope, and their views were sought on the development of a new brand for the new service. In previous consultations, parents had advised they wanted a brand a name for the new service that reflects that it is: voluntary, tailored, accessible, flexible, trustworthy and non-judgemental. Group members said that the brand and name of the new service needs to reflect the purpose of the new service and what it is trying to do.

The Department provided information on the policy development process for the new service. Members raised issues around access to childcare subsidies for participants, and discussed ways to support parents with lived experience to be employed to deliver the service.

In discussing terminology for elements of the new service, the Group noted that, while wording will always be contentious, Group members expressed a preference for simple and descriptive terminology. Members stated that no matter what terms are selected, the Department needs to support the terms with clear statements to inform parents of what the new voluntary pre-employment service for parents is and what it is for.

The Group will meet regularly with the next meeting to be held in person on 9 May 2024.