



Brotherhood of St. Laurence
Working for an Australia free of poverty

**Let's make
change
that lasts**

10 November 2023

Heike Phillips
Assistant Secretary
Planning For My Future Taskforce
Employment Policy and Analysis Division
Department of Employment and Workplace Relations
ParentsConsultation@dewr.gov.au

Dear Ms Phillips

Feedback: What we've heard from parents

BSL welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations' (DEWR) summary of what has been heard from parents in relation to the design of a new voluntary parent support service.

The complex, varied and intersecting challenges parents spoke of resonate strongly with what we see in our practice and research. We consider the summary to be thorough and comprehensive, noting a couple of possible gaps.

Firstly, the summary includes domestic violence as one of the challenges parents face yet the summary contained no mention of the importance of safety when accessing the service. We query whether there was any discussion or input from parents in relation to this.

Further, while it is clearly acknowledged that the needs of parents differ, we felt there was missing emphasis on the need for the service to provide individualised support in response to these differing needs. It is important to avoid a tendency towards 'one-size-fits-all'. Connected to this, what works in some geographical areas will not necessarily work in others. We welcome the recognition of location-based challenges and emphasise that efforts to respond to regional differences through flexible servicing will be crucial.

The summary included welcome emphasis on engaging employers and the structural challenges parents face. We look forward to seeing how the service will work with employers and tackle barriers to increase opportunities for parents.

We commend DEWR's commitment to designing the new service with parents and for taking the important opportunity to check the accuracy of what has been heard. This demonstrates respect for parents and their time and shows their contributions are valued. Ensuring that the advice provided by parents is directly reflected in the final service model will be crucial to maintaining this respect.

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The Brotherhood of St. Laurence respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land and waterways on which our organisation operates. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders past, present and emerging.

In addition, to make sure the service remains relevant for parents over time, we recommend that DEWR establish a parent advisory group to keep listening to parents and to inform program adjustments to meet their needs. These opportunities recognise parents as experts in their own lives, enable them to be part of finding solutions as well as developing friendships and communities. They also build trust and confidence in systems and services, improve service transparency, accountability and provide an opportunity for parents to build (new) skills.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment.

Yours sincerely



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