



New Voluntary Parent Support Service

Brave Foundation submission

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Brave Foundation (Brave) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the development of a new voluntary service that supports parents who care for young children. We acknowledge that the new service will be for parents who receive a Parenting Payment to help them to plan for their future education and employment goals.

As a part of the consultation process to co-design the new service, Brave has participated in sector workshops hosted by ACOSS. In addition, Brave has supported the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations to engage young parents to share their lived experiences and recommendations through several targeted workshops. This submission will build on and consolidate previously provided information with a specific focus on supporting expecting and parenting young people.

Brave also wishes to draw attention to our previous engagement with Commonwealth Departments, specifically facilitation of young parents' lived experience to inform policy and program development with the Office for Women, Office for Youth and Department of Social Services.

About Brave Foundation

Brave equips expecting and parenting young people with resources, referral, and education opportunities to facilitate happy, healthy, and skilled families. Our vision is to see future generations thrive and we do this by unlocking the boundless potential of young parents.

Founded, designed, and led by women with diverse lived experience, Brave is Australia's first national not-for-profit dedicated to assisting expecting and parenting young people.

Established in 2009, Brave's innovative mentoring program, Supporting Expecting and Parenting Teens (SEPT), was initially funded in 2018 under the Try, Test and Learn (TTL) Fund and is currently funded until 30 June 2024, by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (Office for Women). We are also supported by the Tasmanian Government Department of Premier and Cabinet and philanthropic organisations.

About Supporting Expecting and Parenting Teens program

Brave's Supporting Expecting and Parenting Teens (SEPT) program is an innovative mentoring program that includes a Pathway Plan framework, co-designed with young parents and underpinned by evidence on the importance of the First 1000 Days of life to ongoing healthy development.

The program is available to participants for 12 months, however it can be reduced or extended depending on the parent's personal circumstances. The personalised program matches an expecting or parenting young person with a dedicated Mentor who works from a local hub site, community organisation or via in person or virtual outreach. Brave currently has 16 Mentors supporting young parents across most states and territories, with a physical presence in each jurisdiction except for ACT and South Australia. Three Virtual Mentors are also available for rural and remote participants and those experiencing isolation due to mental health or other complexities.

Our Mentors are a professional workforce, coming from disciplines such as education, early childhood, maternal and child health, youth work, community services and social work. Brave uses the term 'mentor', based on consultation with young parents about their preferred terminology. Brave requires all Mentors to complete training in family violence, child protection, sexual assault referrals, self-care, professional boundaries, culture, and working with those that have experienced or are experiencing trauma.

Mentors work intensively with young parents to build a trusting relationship and develop self-identified goals that are integrated into individualised pathway plans. Importantly, Mentors also link young parents to support and resources that will help them overcome barriers to goal achievement. Our Mentors are trusted guides who walk alongside their participants throughout the pathway program – from initial referral and first contact, to setting goals and working to achieve them, navigating access to support and resources, to celebration of their achievements and graduation from the program. SEPT participants also recognise their Mentors as positive role models and an important source of emotional and informational support.

Our Mentors work together with the expecting or parenting young person on what is important to them, including (but not limited to):

- educational and workforce participation
- health and wellbeing
- financial or housing assistance programs
- everyday infant care
- transport.

Each Mentor manages a participant list, the number of which is based on working hours and the complexity of the participants' presenting concerns. Brave also partners with and promotes existing pregnancy and parenting, mental health, family violence, financial management, and housing support services and educational and training opportunities. A core component of the program is to encourage our participants to engage with existing services that are local to them. This facilitates the building of connections with the community that they, and their child/ren, will continue to be part of after graduation from the SEPT program.

Brave's Impact

Since 2018, we have supported over 1200 pregnant and parenting teens and their children, including approximately 30% that identify as young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents.

Our program has achieved great success by supporting the holistic needs of our participants who are empowered to self-identify goals that are important to them. Participant goals typically focus on accessing basic needs; being an effective parent; building a safe, secure and positive family environment; life skills development, fostering personal and family wellbeing, and pursuing education, training or employment. Ninety-five per cent of participants completing the program achieve two or more specific goals. Qualitative evidence indicates that the mentoring support participants receive through the SEPT program has a profound impact on their and their children's lives.

Brave's Mentors are place-based and, as noted, a core part of their role is knowing and connecting with local community. In 2022, Brave made 900 referrals to community services. In doing so, Brave ensures that existing services are promoted and accessed – enhancing rather than duplicating support. For example, increased participant attendance and connection with maternal and child health services improves confidence in parenting, health and wellbeing outcomes.

In addition, approximately 500 children were also positively impacted in 2022 through their connection to Brave. Outcomes included early intervention with developmental concerns and referrals to appropriate support in addition to enrolment in early learning organisations.

Recommendations

Below is a summary of additional recommendations based on Brave's experience and feedback directly provided by young parents:

- Young parents under the age of 20 are prioritised due to complexities
- Specialised support service for young parents is made available as soon as practicable, prior to the cessation of ParentsNext in line with Workforce Australia recommendation to initially focus on a narrow group of parents
- The service is able to provide support from the pregnancy stage before any children are born
- The service offers flexibility associated with length of participation
- Clear pathways and wrap around support is available for when service participation ends
- The service has a holistic focus that addresses barriers to education and employment as well as the transition from parenting to engagement or re-engagement in education and employment
- A specialised service for (young) fathers is included in the new service design
- Inclusion of group-based sessions that provide peer support
- Multiple delivery modes inclusive of face to face, digital and a combination of both
- Establishment and maintenance of relationships with relevant organisations to facilitate service promotion, referrals and complimentary services
- Promote service information using relatable peers, stories where parents are already engaged
- Use of digital platforms to engage with young parents
- Additional funds are available to service participants to assist with accessing and fulfilling goals
- Funding for a service to support young parents should be prioritised and introduced by the end of 2023

In addition to specific recommendations included in this submission, Brave strongly recommends that the new voluntary parenting support service include specialised streams for different cohorts of parents, including a *separate* service specifically designed to meet the needs of young parents and their children.

Below are aligned explicit recommendations from key reports that have already been provided to government:

Specific House Select Committee on Workforce Australia Employment Services Interim Report Recommendation:

Policy Objectives: Government also has an enhanced responsibility towards teenage and young parents and their children, who are often in situations of heightened disadvantage and need additional support. Accordingly, the Committee considers that a program to support teenage parents should be implemented, either as an element of the 'Your Future Planning' service or as a stand-alone program.

Recommendation 5: The Committee recommends that the Australian Government design and implement a specific program focused on young and teenage parents. The program should have the objective of assisting young and teenage parents to complete their studies and improve their long-term prospects, as well as the long-term prospects of their children.

Recommendation 6: The Committee recommends that the program to replace ParentsNext, as well as the program to support teenage parents, be co-designed with key stakeholders.

Recommendation 7: The Committee recommends that where budget limitations restrict the ability to implement key recommendations, the Australian Government prioritise, at least initially, a higher quality service to a narrower group of parents rather than compromise on critical service design principles.

Women's Economic Equality Taskforce

Recommendation: Abolition of the ParentsNext program. This should be accompanied by a commitment to reinvest in a new evidence-based program co-designed with young parents, and based in principles of encouragement, support, flexibility and meeting their needs.

Young Parents Overview

Over the past decade, approximately 80,000 new Australian mothers were aged 19 years or younger¹. Whilst the overall trend for adolescent births has declined nationally and the average maternal age is increasing², there are parts of Australia, predominantly in outer urban, rural and regional areas where birth rates to teen mothers have increased³. The proportion of Indigenous teenage mothers (aged under 20) has also been falling over time, from 20% in 2010 to 11% in 2020. However, this cohort remains significantly larger than the national comparison of 1.8% of mothers who gave birth aged under 20⁴ and the proportion of young mothers who are Indigenous remains high at 33.4% in 2021⁵.

Deficit-focused public discourse that stigmatises young parents has been ongoing since the 1980s (Sheeran et al. 2016). As described further on, this stigma perpetuates disadvantage and social isolation that uniquely affects young parents. The current teen birth rate trends raise concern about the potential for increased stigmatisation of young parents who are seen as increasingly 'deviant' in contemporary Australian society^{2,4}, as well as concern for how this can contribute to growing inequalities between rural and remotely located and indigenous young people and non-indigenous young people living closer to urban centres.

The ongoing hardship young parents face (and associated negative outcomes for their children) is primarily driven by social and economic disadvantage that existed prior to pregnancy and is not inherently about age^{4,6,7,8}. Nevertheless, young parents have heightened risk of poor birth outcomes relative to older parents and, in contemporary Western societies, young parents have to contend with additional complexity associated with the intersection of two major life transition stages: the transition to adulthood and to parenthood⁹.

Adolescence and matrescence (the process of becoming a mother) are acknowledged to be periods characterised by excitement and new identity, knowledge and skill development; however, they are also associated with increased vulnerability to mental ill health due to the number of changes that occur and the additional responsibilities that come with these transitions¹⁰. Matrescence in Australia (and other comparative Western nations) is complicated by sociocultural shifts in women's access to educational opportunities and workforce participation, an associated social expectation for mothers to work while parenting, and intensifying parenting expectations^{2,10} alongside the devaluing of motherhood as an occupation⁵.

When matrescence (and we would argue patrescence) coincide with adolescence and emerging adulthood, challenges are compounded, stress mounts, and developing cognitive capacities are compromised. Further, peer connections and other opportunities commonly associated with positive development in adolescence and emerging adulthood are lost⁹. This is particularly the case for young parents who lack social support and economic resources. Unfortunately, many young parents within the Australian context are single parents with little or no family support and limited financial resources. In addition, they are more likely than older parents to have lived experience of intergenerational trauma, family violence, substance addiction, homelessness and the child protection system as a child themselves¹¹.

Stigma and age-based discrimination adds an extra layer of complexity that further differentiates the experiences of young parents. Numerous studies in Australia and overseas highlight the impact that negative stereotypes have on young parents^{2,8,9,11}. Young parents have reported negative experiences with health and social service professionals that prevent them from accessing future support. Fear of judgement and lack of belonging stop young parents from asking for help (from service professionals, as well as family and friends) and increase their isolation. Because of this, the disadvantage accumulates, and young parents are further alienated from active participation in their communities. This, in turn, can impact their children.

Commencing parenting at a young age is highly gendered, with the consequences of teenage parenthood differing for mothers and fathers. The challenges unique to matrescence at a young age mean that young mothers are one of the most disadvantaged groups in Australian society and the relative disadvantage has increased over time. They are more likely to be reliant on income support payments, have lower levels of education and, by the time they reach their 30s, are less likely to be partnered than women who were not young mothers¹². In the absence of necessary supports, the likelihood is that entrenched disadvantage will continue and lead to lifelong socioeconomic disadvantage and health disparities for young mothers and their child¹³. Young mothers clearly need to be provided with a range of supports and resources during their pregnancy and parenting journeys to support them and their children to thrive.

That stated, it should also be noted that very little is known about the consequences of teen parenting for fathers¹⁴. Demographic data related to young fathers is also unknown with reporting through means such as the Australian Bureau of Statistics also centred solely on mothers' age. Recommendations from a recent research review (Beauchamp, 2020) highlights the need for father-inclusive support, which aligns with Brave's experience of supporting young fathers. Fathers who have access to effective mentoring and system navigation support can improve outcomes for themselves, their partners and their children, similarly to young mothers.

Given the particular needs and challenges faced by young parents, support services need to be designed and delivered to meet their needs. They are likely to have different and more entrenched barriers to achieving their personal goals and supporting the positive development and wellbeing of their children¹⁵. Research shows that, despite being motivated, the perception that some young mothers have that services are not relevant for their age and that they will be judged as ill-equipped to care for their children has prevented them from accessing support¹⁶. In contrast, Brave participants have highlighted the value and impact of the relational, non-judgemental and flexible support provided by their mentors for overcoming barriers to pursuing their goals and accessing support for themselves and their children.

Discussion Questions

Parents needs

What support parents get now, and what challenges they have that we can help with

Australian Government policy and programs targeting young people are often centred solely on education and employment² which does not take into account the diverse needs for young parents or the basic foundations that are required before one is ideally placed to even consider these goals¹¹.

"Housing is a big thing... If I had a place to live that would be a big thing... I could do other things."

"Transport is a barrier because I don't have a license and there's no-one to teach me to drive. I can't afford a driving licence, the cost of the test, or getting my hours up."

Recent shifts in policy such as increased parental leave place an emphasis and value on prioritising parenting. This same importance is not afforded to young parents who based on their age are often required to demonstrate education and employment activities whilst simultaneously parenting during a crucial developmental stage in both their own and children's lives².

"The first three years of a child's life is essential for precious milestones and bonding time. I feel ParentsNext made me miss precious time with my kids... and I couldn't focus on what they (ParentsNext) wanted. I felt pushed into work. If I had the choice, I would have waited until my kids were in school."

Adolescent pregnancy is a global health issue, not unique to Australia, that adversely affects birth outcomes and can lead to intergenerational cycles of poverty and ill-health¹⁷. Young mothers are a specific vulnerable cohort who need to be supported, ideally in line with first 2000 days frameworks from conception of their first child. Young mothers are less likely to engage in antenatal and postnatal care and, if they do, must overcome the associated access and financial barriers^{10,18}.

Young parents face the challenge of meeting not only their own developmental needs at a time of significant growth, but also the needs of their children. The challenge for practitioners and policy makers is to create a range of supports that respond to the needs of both young parents and their children. If this is achieved, then parenthood at a young age need not be a negative experience; rather, it can become a catalyst for growth and positive life outcomes¹⁹

Brave is a national organisation that seeks to achieve outcomes with young parents and their children which include increased parenting confidence, safety, stability and healthy child development, improved overall health of all family members, connectedness to community, improved family relationships and resilience. Our program is place-based and provides both individual support to identify goals relevant to young parents' life contexts as well as support with system navigation to identify services that can support achievement of goals for both parents and their children.

Consistent feedback from our participants highlights their need to prioritise their children's wellbeing before being able to focus on their own personal goals.

"I don't know where to start with study... my main focus is getting support for my kids before I can focus on me and a job or studies."

In order for young parents to feel supported, the following needs must be addressed:

- a range of supports early on in their pregnancy and parenting journeys to assist them in addressing challenges including poor mental or physical health, disabilities, past and current family violence, financial struggles, housing insecurity, stigma and age-based discrimination which are barriers to the progression of their education and employment goals.
- time to focus on caring for their children in the early years of their development until young parents feel ready and safe to be placing their children into the care of others

This is in line with contemporary research evidence that calls for support prior to and during parenting that extends beyond a focus on employment and education to include parenting, wellbeing and relationship support and interventions that address systemic barriers to achieving goal aspirations and thriving, including access to stable housing, transport, childcare, and flexible educational opportunities^{2,8,11}.

Eligibility

Who can access the voluntary service, which groups to prioritise?

Criteria including receipt of parenting payments, age, residential address, employment and education status previously triggered the compulsion to participate in ParentsNext program. The decision to abolish this mandatory involvement and shift to a new voluntary support service is welcomed.

Brave's experience of working with young parents affirms that people who choose to opt into programs such as SEPT voluntarily often have more sustainable outcomes associated with participation due to personal drive rather than compulsion.

The new service should be open to *all* parents for those needing additional help or guidance regardless of life circumstances. We do however recognise that some parents will need more specialised assistance and others and that support should be prioritised for our most vulnerable parents and their families - such as young parents.

With Australia's average age for first time mothers increasing, what constitutes as 'young' needs to be defined. For the purposes of the new service, Brave recommends that parents under the age of 20 have priority access. In line with Brave's eligibility, we also recommend flexibility with age associated criteria to also include:

- Parents aged under 25 who began parenting at 19 years or under
- First Nations and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse parents aged under 25 who began parenting at 21 years or under
- Parents aged under 25 living with disability
- Parents aged under 25 living in rural, regional or remote locations
- Parents under 25 experiencing mental health challenges and family violence

Recommendation: Young parents under the age of 20 are prioritised due to complexities

Recommendation: Specialised support service for young parents is made available as soon as practicable, prior to the cessation of ParentsNext in line with Workforce Australia recommendation to initially focus on narrow group of parents

Timing

When can parents access the service and for how long?

The ability to express interest seeking parenting support should be made available at any time a parent is 'ready' with flexibility offered for how long support is provided.

With a growing emphasis on the importance of its first 2000 days of life and recognition of lifelong impacts, parents should be able to seek support from their earliest stages of parenting – meaning pregnancy and beyond. For our most vulnerable, support during this stage is critical to assist with preparation for a child's arrival and ensuring foundations are laid for families to thrive once the parenting journey begins.

"In pregnancy what stressed me the most was needing to be organised... no one offers you anything until you've had your kid. I just needed someone to talk to about my questions"

Any specified length of time associated with the new service needs to incorporate flexibility and, if an upper limit is introduced, Brave recommends that a clear pathway to ensure ongoing place-based wrap around support is available after participation in the service ceases.

"It's a scary feeling knowing the service ends, but if you could be flexible and you could come back if something changed."

Brave offers a 12-month program for young parents with ability to complete or extend the program as required. Dependent on their needs, participants join the program at various stages of parenting – some from early on in their pregnancy and, for others, support is available years into parenting and with multiple children.

Recommendation: The service is able to provide support from the pregnancy stage before any children are born

Recommendation: The service offers flexibility associated with length of participation

Recommendation: Clear pathways and wrap around support is available for when service participation ends

Features

What features, information and support options to prioritise to best meet parents' needs?

We recognise the primary purpose of the new service is to support parents to plan for their future education and employment goals; however, basic needs such as housing, financial stability and healthy relationships should firstly be addressed in order to be able to focus on such goals¹¹. Ideally the service includes a holistic approach to supporting parents whilst also supporting any identified education and employment goals.

This is not a new concept with programs such as the Queensland education departments Link and Launch program²⁰ already in existence. An evaluation of the program also found that the Link and Launch officers that were place-based connected with schools and experienced in working with young people provided a critical anchor that young people valued as they navigated their way changing circumstances²¹. This positive relationship with one single point of contact that understood the needs of young people has also been affirmed by Brave participants.

During recent consultations with young parents, they shared that, in order to increase their positive experience with a support service a trusting relationship with a single, non-judgmental worker with strong relational skills was essential. Specific traits they valued included:

- persistently checking in with them
- being available when they needed them
- expressing care and compassion for the demands they were grappling with
- responding flexibly to their needs
- providing goal-oriented, educative, practical, and advocacy support, and facilitating their access to opportunities and resources that assisted them in both their parenting and other life goals.

“In the 36 weeks I was pregnant, I had four workers. You go in one week then someone different and I had to repeat my story... have one key person.”

Social support is consistently acknowledged to be a protective factor for young parents' positive development and wellbeing. Evidence also indicates that effective services are those that are underpinned by a strengths-based approach and ethic of care, and where support workers are non-judgemental and are effective in building trusting and genuine relationships^{2,11}.

Parents do not fit into one homogenous group. No two parents are the same, each approaching their new roles based on their own life circumstances and for some, intergenerational cycles. There is therefore a need to ensure that all parents receive specialised support that is designed to meet their unique needs.

The unique needs of young parents is one area that needs, and will benefit from, specialised support from a service designed for and with them. The original iterations of ParentsNext recognised this need with initial programs focused solely on supporting young parents. It is also widely recognised that workers who are experienced in working with young people are also essential and will enhance program experience²²

Brave professional Mentors come from a variety of social support related backgrounds with a common element of being experienced working with young people. A consistent model of mentoring that is evidence based and consistently underpinned with continuous improvement and professional development is also used to guide practice.

Whilst the vast majority of parents who have engaged with ParentsNext and SEPT are mothers, there is a growing recognition and demand for specialised services to also support the different needs of fathers.

“There needs to be more access for dads... needs to be both parents. This is not spoken enough about. There are not many places for dads to get support.”

Recommendation: The service has a holistic focus that addresses barriers to education and employment as well as the transition from parenting to engagement or re-engagement in education and employment

Recommendation: A specialised service for (young) fathers is included in the new service design

Delivery

How the voluntary service should run, and its service deliverer should operate

Critical to the success of any feature included in the new service will be its ability to address access barriers. Young parents involved with consultations to assist with design of the new service noted that their ability to participate would be limited unless this was addressed and they underscored the need for multiple, convenient locations, transport support, supervised child-friendly spaces on-site, and incentives that would address some of their material needs.

They also desired flexibility in terms of the mode of delivery so they could access support in person at a conveniently located site or at home, over the phone or online, depending on preferences and need. The delivery of 'hub-like supports was seen as preferred where young parents could access a range of their support needs in one place.

“A mix of structure - online, in person or at-home. It's hard to go to an office but I was also anxious to have someone come to my home at first. Now I prefer home visits. Video chat can also be good.”

As childcare access is a challenge for many parents, the new service needs to be child-friendly, have a suitable space for children to come along with their parents or where they could be appropriately supervised and cared for by trusted others during their appointments or when parents were engaged in education or training courses.

“The space must be child-friendly. When I went to my ParentsNext appointments, it was a tiny room, and there was nothing for my kids.” Were taking courses. This was critical to being able to focus on other tasks.

Brave currently offers both face-to-face and digital delivery modes of SEPT. The digital delivery addresses access issues for young parents living in remote or rural area or in complex situations that make face to face contact challenging.

In addition to the SEPT program, group-based sessions that facilitate young parents' connection with peers, alongside the one-to-one support is also valued by participants. This approach also encourages place-based community support to ease the transition when service participation ends.

“Talking with other young women... people who are like me. Some of us are locked in with our kids and don't get out... we could support each other. We feel alone in everything we do.”

Recommendation: Inclusion of group-based sessions that provide peer support

Recommendation: Multiple delivery modes inclusive of face to face, digital and a combination of both

Engagement Strategies

What engagement strategies and incentives would encourage participation?

Historically, participation in the ParentsNext program and its previous iterations has been compulsory with some arguing that the mandatory nature has been a driving force of engagement. In contrast, demand for Brave's voluntary program for supporting young parents demonstrates that high engagement levels can still be achieved when programs are accessible and appropriate for their audiences.

Brave participants come from a variety of referral pathways including but not limited to schools, health and social services, families and also self-referral. Place-based partnerships with related organisations is a significant factor in ensuring communication about the service's availability and benefits, in addition to ensuring connection with other services that parents may use or wish to engage with in the future.

When promoting the new service to young parents varied media and pathways, should be used and information about the new service should be advertised where young parents spend time (e.g., hospitals, midwifery clinics, schools and community noticeboards). Other approaches such as providing

pamphlets in hospital packs and when children were enrolled at school, placing posters in frequently used locations, advertisements on TV and community billboards are also suggested. Direct approaches from social workers, midwives and mentors, and presentations at playgroups and schools would help get the word out.

Digital marketing through social media is also an important avenue to reach young parents in addition to clearly communicating what a new service was about, could provide, and how it would benefit them.

"TV ads, TikTok, emails with information, SMS, text messages from MyGov."

Brave also has a partnership with the My Baby WA app²³ that assists women and families to navigate the pregnancy, birth and early parenting periods through the provision of information that is specific for women and families in Western Australia. Thanks to the partnership, relevant information for young parents and a direct link to Brave services is now available. This partnership and inclusion of information can be replicated with similar apps available in different states & territories.

The new service also needs to have a new identity and new approach to encourage young parents to participate. Young parents recommended not looking and feeling like a government service and instead having bright, welcoming spaces that weren't office-like, and bold colours for promotional materials and a slogan that told parents what it was about.

"It should be fun and about us...don't make it seem so 'government-y'."

Underlying this is the need to make the service relatable by using peers and their stories in promotional material and to facilitate engagement.

Recommendation: Establish and maintain relationships with relevant organisations to facilitate service promotion, referrals and complimentary services

Recommendation: Promote service information using relatable peers, including stories from parents who are already engaged

Recommendation: Use digital platforms to reach and engage with young parents

Funding

How to structure and prioritise the funding for the service

Funding associated with the new service needs to look beyond the cost to delivery services and instead consider associated funding as an investment per parent and address barriers that may prevent participation in the service.

Provision of financial incentives that address material needs, including making cheaper options for essential items and assistance with transport needs (particularly for young parents yet to obtain a driver's license) available.

"Have a cheap pantry available...we have it at the (school) and it helps with costs."

Further to this, brokerage and scholarship funding should also be included to assist parents with progressing their identified employment and education goals.

Finally, with the implementation of the new service not expected to commence before July 2024, funding should be prioritised to introduce or expand existing services for the most vulnerable parents (i.e., young parents) as soon as possible to ease with the transition period. This is in line with Recommendation 7 already provided by the House Select Committee on Workforce Australia Employment Services in their Interim Report released in March 2023.

Recommendation 7: The Committee recommends that where budget limitations restrict the ability to implement key recommendations, the Australian Government prioritise, at least initially, a higher quality service to a narrower group of parents rather than compromise on critical service design principles.

Recommendation: Additional funds are available to service participants to assist with fulfilling goals

Recommendation: Funding for a service to support young parents should be prioritised and introduced by the end of 2023

Thank you for considering the evidence and recommendations included in this submission. We welcome the opportunity to further contribute, design and deliver a support service to support young parents.

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