



# Pre-Budget Submission

*Brave Foundation*

2024-25

# Executive Summary

In the past decade, there have been over 80,000 teen mothers in Australia. They are often single parents with little or no family support – many with lived experience of intergenerational trauma, family violence, poor mental health, substance misuse, homelessness and the child protection system as a child themselves. Without access to resources and support networks, these parents face an accumulation of disadvantages and the isolation these parents already face will continue to entrench itself.

Since our establishment in 2009, Brave Foundation (Brave) has played a frontline role in providing the resources, referrals and education opportunities needed to facilitate happy, healthy and skilled families. In the past five years, for example, we have supported over 1400 pregnant and parenting teens, including young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents. Through Brave's flagship mentor program Supporting Expecting and Parenting Teens (SEPT), we have helped young parents and their families transform their lives by strengthening parenting skills, promoting care and wellbeing, achieving educational goals and participating more fully in the workforce.

But Brave now faces a funding cliff that threatens our ongoing capacity to deliver services and participate in the future design and delivery of government programs aimed at helping teen parents. Existing funding, via the Office of Women within the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, expires on 30 June 2024. Without an extension, Brave will need to begin preparations for the closure of the SEPT program, loss of an experienced group of Mentors and other staff seeking roles elsewhere. An extension will provide sufficient time for dialogue between the Australian Government and Brave on the need to provide additional services over and above the commitment to a new, voluntary pre-employment service for parents that is replacing ParentsNext, given there are substantial limits to its scope. This could include a sustainable extension to the SEPT program (or an equivalent) as well as leveraging Brave's capacity to support the creation and delivery of initiatives that are focused on early intervention and have an innovative and holistic approach to supporting teen parents, putting them on a strong positive trajectory.

That is why we recommend that the Australian Government:

- Provide an allocation of approx. \$2.95 million in the 2024-25 Federal Budget to Brave to continue its existing program delivery for a further 12 months.
- Recognise there are limits to the scope of the new voluntary pre-employment service for parents of young children to commence on 1 November 2024 - which will require supplementary services to be established.
- Consider long-term sustainable funding arrangements that would support ongoing delivery and expansion of the SEPT program and ensure the government taskforces such as My Future (DEWR) and Early Years Strategy (DSS) have the opportunity to work with Brave to adapt and apply the principles and approach of its SEPT program (or an equivalent).
- Examine the ongoing potential for Brave to serve as a Centre for Excellence that harnesses the demonstrated expertise needed to create holistic, innovative programs for young parents that are designed as an early intervention to help prevent long term disadvantage from taking hold.

# Acknowledgement

Brave Foundation respectfully acknowledges the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of this nation. We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which our organisation is located and where we deliver our support programs across Australia. We pay our respects to their ancestors and Elders, past, present and emerging. Brave's work also brings us into daily contact with many people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. We are committed to respecting the culture and heritage of each person we encounter, both inside and outside our organisation.

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## About Brave

Brave is an organisation founded, designed and led by women with lived experience of young parenthood and is Australia's first national not-for-profit dedicated to assisting expecting and parenting young people. Brave provides resources, referrals and education opportunities to facilitate happy, healthy and skilled families.

Established in 2009, Brave created and implemented the Supporting Expecting and Parenting Teens (SEPT) program. 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). The program is also supported by the Tasmanian Government Department of Premier and Cabinet and philanthropic organisations.

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# Our Social & Financial Value

Since 2018, we have supported **over 1400** pregnant and parenting teens, including young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents.



**92%** of participants agreed our program had a **positive impact on their lives**

**97%** reported that the program **motivated them in their life and parenting**



Greater levels of **parenting confidence**



Strategies to **manage stress**



Feeling like part of a **community**

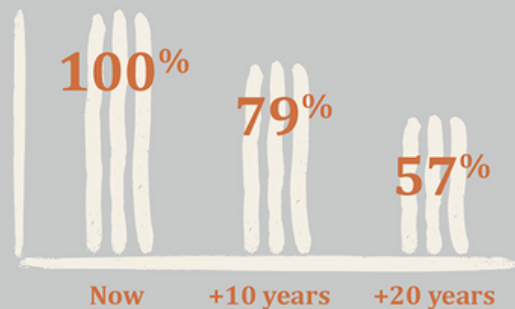


Feeling **good** about their future

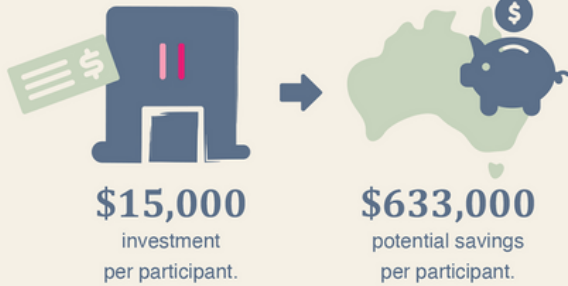


Each of these teenagers, as parenting payment recipients, could have had an **average lifetime cost of \$648,000,**

with the expectation that **79%** would still be receiving income support in 10 years' time and **57%** in 20 years' time.



# Our Social & Financial Value



An investment into the SEPT program is costed at **\$15,000 per participant.**

By providing mentorship, expert support and referrals, the \$15,000 investment per participant has the potential to **save the Australian taxpayer \$633,000 per participant.**

For every  
**\$1 invested** in the SEPT program,  
**\$4.51 of value**  
is created.

Analysis led by social impact specialists Think Impact.



“

I remember saying & feeling like 'I'm never going to work, I'm just a single parent now & my life is over' but my mentor changed my perspective on this.

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# About Supporting & Expecting Teens Program

Brave's SEPT program is an innovative Mentor program, co-designed with young parents and underpinned by the lived experience of young parents and informed by the scientific evidence of effective relational interventions, positive youth and parenting development (including evidence on what supports healthy child development during their first 1000 days). The SEPT program is transformative for young parents and their children; each participant strengthens their parenting skills, learns how to care for their wellbeing, strives to complete their education goals, and is assisted to participate meaningfully in the workforce.

Our program is catered to parents aged 25 and under who began parenting before they were 20. Within this group, we have four priority cohorts. Through our extensive experience, we have identified that these four cohorts experience significant disadvantage and a higher likelihood of becoming pregnant and a young parent than the general Australian population.

- Nearly a third of program participants identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the program has been adapted to support First Nations parents aged under 25 who began parenting before they were 21.
- We support parents who are Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD), also aged under 25 and began parenting before age 21.
- We support parents living with disability under the age of 25.
- We support parents living in rural, regional or remote locations under the age of 25.
- As well as these priority cohorts, Brave's Central Intake Panel also gives consideration to other complex life circumstances such as family violence and experience of Child Protection and Out of Home Care.

SEPT Mentors work intensively with young parents to build and develop goals and pathway plans and, importantly, to link the parent with support services and resources that will help them overcome barriers and achieve their goals. Our Mentors walk consistently alongside their participants throughout the program – from referrals and first contact, to setting goals and working to achieve them, to celebration of their achievements and graduation from the program. Our Mentors work together with the expecting or parenting young person on what is important to them. This includes (but is not limited to):

- educational and workforce participation,
- physical and emotional, health, wellbeing and safety,
- financial or housing assistance programs,
- everyday infant care and knowledge of developmental milestones, and
- social connection.

Brave also partners with and promotes specialist pregnancy and parenting support services and educational opportunities.

# Context

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 mothers. Young mothers within the Australian context are often single parents with little or no family support – many with lived experience of intergenerational trauma, family violence, poor mental health, substance misuse, homelessness and the child protection system as a child themselves. Young parents face a greater likelihood of single parenting, lower rates of school completion, workforce participation and higher rates of poverty. As a result, young parents are often at greater risk of long-term welfare dependency. In 2022, there were 5,021 births to a parent aged 19 or younger in Australia. Although this has been a declining statistic in recent years, the numbers have plateaued nationally in 2022 with increases reported in a number of locations across Australia.

Ultimately, all young parents, including mothers and fathers, are stigmatised because of their age. Studies indicate that the stigma and systemic discrimination young parents face is a major barrier to accessing the support and opportunities they need to fulfil their goals. These disadvantages accumulate and young parents end up further alienated from active participation in their communities.

The disadvantage facing young parents is particularly pronounced if the parent identifies as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, is living with disability and / or is Culturally and Linguistically Diverse and / or lives in a rural, remote or regional location. For example, young First Nations people have disproportionately higher fertility rates and number of births when compared to non-Indigenous adolescents at both the national and state level. First Nations teen birth rates were 34% higher than non-indigenous teens across Australia. The number of First Nations birth numbers increased in SA, VIC, NT and NSW between 2021 and 2022. QLD, NSW and WA recorded the highest birth numbers for First Nations adolescents in 2022. With this said, it is culturally appropriate in some Indigenous communities to have children earlier in life. Regardless, all young parents-to-be and parents must have the right support in place.

Fertility rates for girls aged between 15 to 19 in rural and regional areas are also higher compared to metropolitan areas. Compared to the national adolescent fertility rate of 7.3 in 2022, 'remote' and 'very remote' areas recorded a fertility rate of 34.3 and 'inner' and 'outer regional' areas recorded a fertility rate of 12.1. Though the broader trends reflect decreasing teen fertility rates, there are several Local Government Area (LGA) pockets within specific states that demonstrate increasing trends that would benefit from targeted support.

# The critical, comprehensive role of Brave

SUPPORTING YOUNG PARENTS WHO FACE STIGMA, ISOLATION & ENTRENCHED BARRIERS TO WORK & STUDY

Teenage pregnancy is a global health issue that adversely affects birth outcomes and can lead to intergenerational cycles of poverty and ill-health. In Australia, there have been over 80,000 teen mothers in the past decade. Collectively, this data underscores a critical need to provide effective support for young people who are expecting and young parents, many of whom continue to face stigma and isolation. More resources are desperately needed to improve the outlook of these young people's, and their children's, lives and decrease the likelihood of becoming dependent on welfare later in life.

Brave established the SEPT program to achieve positive outcomes with young parents and their children to boost their parenting confidence, safety, stability and ensure the healthy development of their child, the overall health of all family members, to foster their connection to their community, family and personal resilience. Brave's SEPT program draws on the evidence from the First 1000 Days - Strong Foundations report which highlights critical insights into how to best support children from conception to age two. This report found that early intervention is key to improving child outcomes and provides the economic case for investment in targeted, strength-based early intervention strategies. The report highlighted that children from all contexts would have better outcomes in all areas, from the time of their conception to their second birthday, if they are provided with carers or parents who understand their needs and can provide warm and loving relationships, a sense of safety and security, time to play and opportunities to be outside, a healthy and safe environment and healthy and nutritious food.

ParentsNext, the Australian Government's pre-employment program for parents and carers, attempted to support young people with children to some extent. The compulsory program was designed to encourage young people into the workforce in order to receive a Parenting Payment, when their child was nine months or older. However, the program was limited in its success with participation being difficult for young parents who were more likely to be single parents, have lower rates of school completion and workforce participation, higher rates of poverty and have limited access to proof of identity documents. Where Parenting Payments were reduced or cancelled, some young parents were unable to meet their basic needs.

While SEPT and ParentsNext share some common elements, the SEPT program is holistic and takes a broader focus than ParentsNext. A key distinction between the programs is that participation in SEPT has always been voluntary with participants able to self-refer or be referred to the program by family, friends or professionals. The voluntary nature of the program enables the development of trust and for the young person to have a greater agency and accountability in their choices.



Given the program is informed by the research from the First 1000 Days - Strong Foundations report, it looks to support young people and their children from early in pregnancy. The SEPT program fills the gap between the time when a young person discovers they are expecting and the time they are required to develop a participation plan and possibly enter the ParentsNext program when their child turns nine months old. The next iteration of ParentsNext, launching in November 2024, will not be available to people during pregnancy unless they already have a child or children under the age of six and meet the eligibility criteria such as receiving a parenting payment. This was confirmed by a representative from the DEWR Taskforce on 11 December 2023.

The SEPT program is delivered by a professional workforce, coming from disciplines such as education, early childhood, maternal and child health, youth work, community services and social work. SEPT deliberately uses the term 'Mentor', a term chosen based on consultation with young parents. Each Mentor is required to complete training in family violence, child safety, sexual assault referrals, self-care, professional boundaries, cultural sensitivity, and working with those that have experienced or are experiencing trauma. Mentors are place-based, are specifically matched to each participant and provide face-to-face personalised support. The Mentors connect with participants from local hub sites, community organisations or via outreach across most States and Territories. Given the higher prevalence of young parents in regional and remote locations, Brave adapted the program so Mentors could also provide virtual support. This format of the program has assisted SEPT participants experiencing isolation due to mental health or other complexities.

Although SEPT does support young people into the workforce, like ParentsNext, it also encapsulates everyday infant care, educational opportunities for the parent, financial and housing assistance, health and wellbeing and transport. The program is available to participants for 12 months, however it can be reduced or extended depending on the parent's personal circumstances. As such, SEPT is broader and more thorough in its focus and its tailored approach has significant success with each participant, whether they are working or not.

In 2022, Brave also established a Community of Practice to ensure the ongoing high quality of our program. This internal group, involving staff from across Brave, supports one another through opportunities for connection, support, structured problem solving, reflective practice and knowledge exchange. The group's work is guided by the Continuous Improvement Framework and an annual workplan. This ensures that every SEPT participant is working with a Mentor who has the most up-to-date knowledge.

# Case Study

## Ms D

Ms D was a 20-year-old young woman residing with her partner in a caravan park when she discovered she was pregnant. She was referred to the Brave program by a worker who was assisting her in her transition from foster care to independent living. Ms D spoke of this being a challenging time and feeling unsure about her pregnancy journey and hoping to get advice and support given she had limited family support available to her.

Ms D was able to access mentoring support through Brave's digital delivery of SEPT because there were no available mentors to work face-to-face with her in her geographical area. Working closely with her virtual mentor to create her Pathway Plan via regular phone conversations and text messaging, Ms D identified several goals that were important to her and felt she had someone with a genuine interest in her.

Ms D was studying hairdressing full-time and trying to manage pre-existing mental health and medical issues which were exacerbated by the young couple's financial circumstances. Despite the challenges, Ms D described this as an exciting, albeit scary, time for her and she was keen to make the most of the support being offered by her mentor.

One of her first goals was to access affordable antenatal care and connect with other young mums. Her mentor was able to find a bulk billing ultrasound service and connected Ms D with the Brave private SEPT participant Facebook group. The information shared through the group was very helpful for Ms J in learning about her growing baby and preparing for birth and parenting.

## THE POSITIVE IMPACTS, BENEFITS & VALUE OF BRAVE'S SEPT PROGRAM

Brave's program has achieved great success by supporting the holistic needs of participants who are empowered by their Mentors to self-identify goals that are important to them. Between 1 July 2022 and 31 October 2023, 100% of participants said they would recommend the program to others. 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 approach has been so successful that, in 2023, the Minister for Social Services, the Hon Amanda Rishworth MP, and the Minister for Early Childhood Education and Youth, the Hon Dr Anne Aly MP, invited Brave to participate in the Australian Government's National Early Years Summit to assist in developing the Australian Early Years Strategy. The Australian Government also invited Brave to lead the consultation process with young parents for the redesign of ParentsNext after acknowledging Brave's capability in engaging young parents.

An independent evaluation, conducted by the University of Tasmania's Peter Underwood Centre of a national SEPT trial, found that the early support given to participants is likely to place them in a better position to achieve their education and employment goals, during their involvement in SEPT or after they move onto ParentsNext. It also found that the program provides a much needed and well-timed mentoring service for young people who face complex and intersecting challenges at the beginning of their parenting journey. Additionally, the voluntary nature of SEPT and intensive support from Mentors set participants up to engage with the historic compliance requirements of ParentsNext.

The Peter Underwood Centre's report also concluded that the broader remit of SEPT encouraged referrals from ParentsNext. While ParentsNext continues to be the current program design for supporting young parents, other young parents outside of Brave's reach and resourcing limits are potentially missing out on valuable support that would bring both immediate and long-term benefits but also contribute to breaking cycles of disadvantage for future generations.

SEPT delivers exponential benefits for young parents in a way that is thorough and considered but it will also have benefits for the Australian taxpayer. Based on current costs associated with delivery of Brave's SEPT program, investment of approximately \$15,000 per participant has the potential to save approximately \$633,000 of the average lifetime cost for young parents. As referenced earlier, research from Think Impact indicated for every \$1 invested into SEPT, approximately \$4.51 of value is created.

Brave has also utilised its Mentor workforce to avoid unnecessary and inefficient duplication of service provision. Brave's Mentors are place-based and a core part of their role is knowing and connecting with the local community and its services. Between 1 July 2022 and 31 October 2022, Brave made 520 referrals to other services. In doing so, Brave ensures each parent comes to know, and be embedded in, their local community and access the appropriate services they have available to them. This enhances the support they receive, rather than duplicates, and ensures a more considered and holistic approach to the young parent's wellbeing and care.

750

Each year, Brave provides support to approximately 750 children through their parents participation

In addition to improving each participant's wellbeing, connecting with Brave and enrolment in the SEPT program contributes positively to the lives of the participants' children; each year, Brave provides support to approximately 750 children through their parents' participation in the Brave program. In Think Impact's research, several participants spoke about the changes that were already occurring to their parenting skills including their growth in confidence and better understanding on how to meet their children's needs. Outcomes include early intervention with developmental concerns and referrals to appropriate support in addition to enrolment in early learning organisations. As a result of the SEPT program, Brave has reported an increase in participant attendance and connection with maternal and child health services that improves confidence in parenting and wellbeing outcomes. This underscores an intergenerational benefit that will have compounding positive outcomes for these children well into the future. As a result, these children are more likely to experience better health and school outcomes, enabling them to thrive and reach their full potential as they grow up and in later life.

Brave's innovative Mentor program was, and continues to be, co-designed with SEPT participants through careful and meaningful consultation. In 2023, the organisation's youth advisory group was reformed and a group of 11 past participants were recruited. The group provides input to service delivery aspects of Brave's operations and is a key function of the organisation's continuous improvement activities. This cohort of young parents could act as a potential resource for future consultation in program design for Australian policymakers. Government, in fact, have already utilised this consultation; when Brave's CEO was invited by Minister Rishworth and Minister Aly to participate in the National Early Years Summit to help develop the Australian Early Years Strategy, the Early Years Taskforce also requested Brave invite a young parent and their Mentor to attend too. Brave's program participant, Ella, was invited to address the plenary and share her experiences as a young parent. A representative from the Department of Social Services noted Ella made a valuable contribution and thanked her for speaking.

# Case Study

## Ms J

Ms J is a 21-year-old Aboriginal young woman with a 10-month infant. Ms J was in a family violence relationship, trying to flee and secure safe and stable housing for herself and her infant. Ms J was isolated and had experienced social anxiety. Ms J saw the value of a program that could help her and her son to make some changes in their lives. Ms J was also seeking support with parenting and preparing for future training and employment.

Ms J spoke of feeling overwhelmed at the thought of being a single parent, had experienced postnatal depression, and given her mental health and learning difficulties, she was seeking the support of Brave to assist her to identify a pathway for next steps for her future. When she first met with her mentor, Ms J was not sure how to take her first steps.

Ms J benefited from the structure of her SEPT Pathway Plan and the support of her mentor which provided her with step-by-step strategies for working toward establishing her own business, including enrolling in a course, getting her licence, and securing stable housing. To support Ms J to establish a safe environment for herself and her child, her Brave mentor successfully guided her through the application for housing and financial aid to furnish her home.

Ms J's time in the program has also shifted her perception of herself. Ms J was deeply appreciative of the support she was provided by her mentor, and her availability to provide emotional support during her 'hard days'. This included practical parenting tips and strategies and general encouragement to keep trying when she just wanted to give up.

Through the work with her mentor, she gained confidence in herself, ability as a parent, and to build her social connections.

# The potential impacts of Brave's work beyond FY24

## EXTENDING THE SUCCESS OF SEPT & THE IMPACTS & CONSEQUENCES OF FUNDING

Brave delivers a positive intergenerational impact for young Australians and their families. Through multiple iterations of the SEPT program, participants have achieved goals such as re-entering and sustaining consistent education, gaining employment and reaching financial stability, along with improving how they care for their own and their children's wellbeing. Without the guidance of a Mentor, these types of goals were previously unattainable for each participant.

Brave has the capacity, experience and expertise to continue its support and reach more young parents, their children and their families. Each year, Brave has more than 450 participants enrolled and positively impacts the lives of over approximately 750 children through participation of their parents. Each participant who pass through the SEPT program tenaciously persevere and hold hope for a better future for themselves and their children, despite the ongoing and complex difficulties they have to navigate.

Currently, Brave is funded until 30 June 2024 through the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet's Office for Women. Although Brave has successfully assisted 1400 expecting and parenting teens, there is a high demand for its services. Brave has accrued a lengthy wait list in some jurisdictions but is limited in its ability to meet the need due to the number of mentors who are currently funded. With adequate funding, Brave Foundation has the workforce, network, knowledge and expertise and proven success to maintain its services beyond 30 June 2024.

With ParentsNext concluding on 1 November 2024, the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) Taskforce is now considering alternatives. The Australian Government has committed to developing a new voluntary program in its place; however there are limits to its scope:

- The exclusion of young parents in any form of paid employment,
- No specialised stream for young parents,
- Not operating in remote areas, and
- Not being available to people during pregnancy (except for select exceptions such as a parent who is pregnant and has a child under six).

These limits were confirmed by a representative of the DEWR Taskforce on 11 December 2023.

Although current providers of ParentsNext have been given contract extensions until November 2024, and the launch of the new service is planned for November 2024, Brave recommends the DEWR Taskforce consider the importance of the transition period to maintain specialist support for young families and ensure no Australian, or their child, is left without adequate and appropriate support. Expecting and parenting young people are particularly vulnerable and the benefits of early intervention and continuous support are immense and ongoing. ParentsNext and its next iteration are limited in their reach and risk leaving expecting and parenting young people, that Brave prioritises, behind.

Without transitional funding, Brave will be forced to disband its program and lose its experienced group of Mentors, including their collective expertise and experience, and also therefore, the participants and their children who benefit extensively from their guidance and support. This includes the loss of a female workforce of over 20 program delivery and program support roles which will likely occur in the months prior to June, as many will seek reliable employment to ensure financial stability.

Losing this workforce will not only mean the loss of a collective expertise and experience with expecting and parenting young people but it will mean the loss of this cohort achieving their goals, being referred to essential supports and services they desperately need but are unaware of, and, most significantly, the relationship with a person who champions, guides and supports them through a period of life that is incredibly complex to navigate. Recent consultations with young parents indicated that, in order to increase their positive experience with a support service, it is essential for them to hold a trusting relationship with a single, non-judgmental worker with strong relational skills.

Even in the unlikely scenario that Mentors do remain with Brave until June 2024, Brave would only be able to support half of the group it supported in 2023 and 2022. Employment of these Mentors accounts for over 87% of the funding Brave requires to continue operating and ensure the continuity of support for SEPT participants. With future funding of just under \$3 million, Brave can continue to support young Australian parents-to-be and parents, expand and improve its offering and continue to connect with the Australian Government to provide information and advice for better policy and programs after ParentsNext concludes.

This will ensure Brave can continue to serve 300 participants and serve as a foundation for Brave to progressively increase the organisation's reach to 600 participants per annum by FY26. With this scale, Brave estimates the cost per participant would decrease from \$15,000 to \$13,000 due to economies of scale.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

As a trusted partner to the Australian Government, Brave recommends a period of transition funding for its SEPT program to ensure expecting and parenting young people are cared for and guided through this period beyond June 2024 and before the next service is up and running in November 2024. Brave is ready and able to establish a program, based on the organisation's existing SEPT program, that would bridge the gap in program support between the conclusion of ParentsNext, the limitations of the proposed new service and clearly evident demand.

Brave is an effective, efficient, trusted and knowledgeable partner and is willing to contribute meaningfully and wholly to the DEWR Taskforce as it designs, establishes and launches the new service. However, it requires funding be allocated to Brave to ensure the continuity of the SEPT program in the meantime, and the ongoing potential for Brave to serve as a Centre for Excellence that harnesses the expertise needed to create holistic, innovative programs for young parents.

However, the above scenario depends on Brave continuing to exist.

Brave also recommends, pending the recommendation on funding, that the Australian Government contract Brave to work with partners and stakeholders to apply the organisation's successful approach in other jurisdictions. This would further support the transition period between ParentsNext and the new service in November 2024. Brave's approach is national, consistent and measurable and would be an appropriate and accountable program to be carried out by other organisations on behalf of the Australian Government as a transitional solution.

This model of licensing an approach has been successfully deployed by the Department of Social Services in multiple contexts. For example, DV Alert was developed by Lifeline and is now delivered by providers around the country. In another example, Money Minded Coaching was developed by the Brotherhood of St. Laurence and is now funded by the Department to be delivered nationally.



# Conclusion

Expecting and parenting young people require support, guidance and appropriate referrals from the time their child is conceived and until their child turns two years old. Brave, with its flagship innovative SEPT program, provides a holistic and comprehensive service that has proven, time and time again, to have a positive impact on the lives of its participants and their families.

Brave not only supports young people back into the workforce, it also helps them to attain goals to study and obtain an education, find secure housing, reach financial stability, learn how to be better and more prepared parents, to be embedded into their local communities and the services they can provide and, most importantly, to properly care for their own and their child's wellbeing.

This approach provides significant social and financial value to the participant, their child and taxpayers. The investment per participant is modest and the savings of up to over \$600,000 per participant are significant for Australia's economy and government spending. In addition to the economic savings, each participant and their child are more likely to live happier and healthier lives and be productive contributors to society.

In light of the submission and consequent recommendations in this submission, Brave puts forward the following for consideration.

- 1 The Australian Government allocate \$2,951,850 in funding to ensure Brave can continue its SEPT program beyond June 2024, maintain the employment of its specialised staff and ensure the quality of its program for current participants.
- 2 Recognise there are limits to the scope of the new voluntary pre-employment service for parents of young children to commence on 1 November 2024 - which will require supplementary services to be established.
- 3 Consider long-term sustainable funding arrangements that would support ongoing delivery and expansion of the SEPT program and ensure the DEWR Taskforce have the opportunity to work with Brave to adapt and apply the principles and approach of its SEPT program (or an equivalent).
- 4 Examine the ongoing potential for Brave to serve as a Centre for Excellence that harnesses the expertise needed to create holistic, innovative programs for young parents.