



The Hon. Daniel Mookhey, MLC
52 Martin Place
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Hon Daniel Mookhey MLC,

Re: Brave Foundation NSW 2024-25 Pre-Budget Submission

Brave Foundation is pleased to share our New South Wales 2024-25 Pre-Budget Submission for your consideration. Brave's submission clearly aligns with the NSW government's commitment to support families with cost-of-living pressures. As explored in our submission, Brave operates a program called the 'Supporting Expecting and Parenting Teens' (SEPT) and provides a wrap-around service as an early intervention to ensure young families are equipped with access to the tools and resources they need to thrive. Young mothers experience a disproportionate disadvantage and are more likely to be reliant on income support payments and have lower levels of education. Over a 12-month period Braves Mentors walk alongside each participant to achieve the goals they have set to support themselves and their children.

In 2022, NSW had the highest number of pregnancies of 15- to 19-year-olds around the country, so it is of particular importance for your state and government.

Brave established the SEPT program to achieve positive outcomes with young parents and their children to boost parenting confidence, safety, stability and ensure health development of their child and overall health of family members. Brave has strong connections with aligned organisations in NSW who refer regularly to our program. Through both independent and internal evaluations there is strong evidence supporting the program's success and having recently undertaken a Social Return on Investment assessment, the positive value of the program is clear. It is proven that Brave is already having a positive impact in NSW, but it is clear to us there is an opportunity to reach more expecting and parenting young people.

Our current federal funding does not provide us with the capacity to introduce new participants into the program, despite clear demand. We are asking for the NSW Government to jointly fund our SEPT program to ensure we can not only meet demand but expand our program. This would require an investment of \$1.15 million over three years.

I have also attached Brave's 2023 Impact Report and an extract from our Social Return of Investment report with our submission.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to me if you have any questions or would like to discuss our submission further.

Yours sincerely,

Jill Roche

Brave Foundation CEO



Brave Foundation NSW 2024-25

Pre-Budget Submission

About Brave

Brave Foundation (Brave) is an organisation founded, designed, and led by a village of individuals with shared lived experience of young parenthood. Brave is Australia's first national not-for-profit dedicated to supporting expecting and parenting young people. Since establishment in 2009, Brave has played a frontline role in providing the resources, referrals and education opportunities needed to facilitate happy, healthy and skilled families.

Through the flagship national mentor program Supporting Expecting and Parenting Teens (SEPT), Brave has 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. The program is available for parents aged 25 and under, who began parenting before they were 20, with most participants (60%) aged between 18 and 21. Brave currently supports nearly 30 parents aged 16 or younger. In NSW Brave has supported 159 young people through the SEPT program.

The core program was initially funded in 2018 under the Federal Government Department of Social Services Try, Test and Learn (TTL) Fund and is currently funded by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (Office for Women). Brave is also supported by the Tasmanian Government Department of Premier and Cabinet and philanthropic organisations, including multi-year funding from the Paul Ramsay Foundation.

About Supporting Expecting and Parenting Teens (SEPT)

Brave's SEPT program is an innovative mentoring program and 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.

Priority cohorts for SEPT are:

- 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

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 SEPT Mentor working from local hub sites, community organisations or via outreach across most Australian States and Territories. The hybrid delivery model means that staff can connect with young parents' face to face and via virtual channels. The virtual program has been particularly successful in supporting young parents in rural and remote locations and those experiencing isolation due to mental health or other complexities.

Brave Mentors are a professional workforce, coming from disciplines such as education, early childhood, maternal and child health, midwifery, youth work, community services and social work. SEPT uses the term 'mentor', chosen based on consultation with young parents. 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.

SEPT Mentors work intensively with young parents to build and develop goals and pathway plans and importantly, to link the parent with support and resources that will help them overcome barriers and achieve their goals. Brave 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.

Brave 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

Each SEPT Mentor manages a participant list, the number of which is based on working hours and the complexity of the presenting contexts. Brave also partners with and promotes existing expecting and parenting support services and educational opportunities. A core component of the program is to encourage 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 Social and Financial Value

Since 2018, Brave has supported over 1400 expecting and parenting teens, including approximately 30% that identify as young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents.

The program has achieved great success by supporting the holistic needs of 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; fostering personal and family wellbeing, and pursuing education, training or employment. Ninety-five per cent of participants complete the program and 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.

A core element of a Brave Mentors role is to know and connect with local communities. In 2022, Brave made 900 referrals nationally to community service organisations and government departments. 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 and wellbeing outcomes.

In addition, 750 children are also positively impacted annually 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. 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.

Analysis led by social impact specialists Think Impact, found that for **every \$1 invested in the SEPT program, \$4.51 of value is created**. When invested in, Brave delivers positive social value through the SEPT program.

Importantly, 92% of participants agreed the SEPT program had a positive impact on their lives and 97% motivated them in their life and parenting. This program's success is proven, and there is a clear need for it to grow to meet demand.

Growing Brave's Impact in NSW

Brave has expanded its impact in Tasmania by operating with both federal and state funding mechanisms. This model has meant rich place-based relationships and Brave is aiming to replicate this model around the country. Tasmanian Premier Jeremy Rockliff MP wrote a letter of support for Brave and is quoted saying 'I commend the Brave Foundation for its work in Tasmania and would encourage other States who are keen to pursue a similar partnership approach with the Federal Government to delivery intergenerational impact for both expecting and parenting young people, and their children.'

NSW is of particular importance to Brave as the program is already operating at capacity and is unable to accept new young parents into the SEPT program with the current level of federal funding. NSW also had the highest number of teenage pregnancies (between 15 and 19 years old) in 2022. With an investment of \$1.15 million over three years by the NSW Government Brave would be able to employ two additional mentors who could have a case load of 21 participants per year allowing the need in NSW to be met and the program to grow to allow for more expecting and parenting young people to be supported.

Brave have recently launched a Young Dads program funded by the Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation which has allowed Brave to expand the work with do specifically with fathers in NSW and Victoria. However, there is still a considerable need for additional capacity for families in NSW.

Recommendation

As a proven and successful provider of a critical service, we recommend the NSW Government support Brave by replicating the model of funding in Tasmania by co-investing with the Federal Government to grow our capacity to supporting expecting and parenting teenagers in NSW. There is a clear demand for additional mentors on the ground in NSW supporting participants. **Brave is therefore seeking a \$1.15 million investment for three years for two additional mentors to meet that demand.**

