

# New voluntary parent support service

## – yourtown's advocacy submission



### What is it about?

The Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (the Department) is designing a new voluntary service that supports parents who care for young children. The new service will help eligible parent plan for their future education and employment goals. The Department sought consultation from existing Employment Service providers to share thoughts and ideas for the new service that meets parent' needs and delivers positive outcomes.

### Why is it important?

The Parliament of Australia, House of Representatives, House Select Committee Inquiry into Workforce Australia Employment Services in relation to the ParentsNext program 2022-23 culminated in the abolition of the program effective 30 June 2024. As a provider of the ParentsNext program, **yourtown** recognises the importance of providing a bespoke service to young parents aimed at providing pre-employment support.

### Some of **yourtown's** key messages:

#### 1. What does a new service mean for parents?

Providers need to have strong connections with support services to address individual needs, including staff who are appropriately trained in areas such as domestic and family violence, mental health first aid, diversity, and community engagement. Practice should be strengths-based, person centred, trauma informed, and culturally sensitive. A human-centred, co-designed approach is critical to the effectiveness of a voluntary service. Long term economic security of parents is essential as the core policy objective. The service should focus on capabilities and capacity building, and education goals alongside employment goals.

#### 2. Service features

The program should ensure that caring remains a priority for parents means that the model should not be a traditional 9-5 service model. It should have sufficient flexibility and enable a provider to tailor their service to deliver services that meet the needs of parents, such as digital delivery, some after-hours workshops or services, and offer choice to parents to align with their caring responsibilities, including providing self-help resources.

#### 3. Eligibility

The service should be for all parents who want to engage and upskill to increase their chance of finding employment when they are ready, including parents on other income support payments (e.g., refugees). Parents who are not eligible for income support (e.g., some migrant groups) should also benefit from the service, like the Group 2 young people in Transition to Work who are able to access support.

#### 4. Delivery

A place-based approach should be adopted where the service is tailored to the needs of the community which would vary depending on location and demographic composition. There should be one provider per designated service delivery area who should have skills and demonstrated experience in pre-employment and supporting parents. The provider should also have links with other services in the community to deliver a local community of practice.

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