

7 March 2019

Senate Standing Committees on Community Affairs
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Dear Committee Members

Inquiry into ParentsNext, including its trial and subsequent broader rollout

Thank you for your email dated 28 February 2019. I write to provide a response in relation to a number of matters as outlined below.

1. Hansard transcript

I have marked up proposed changes to the Hansard transcript as per the hard copy notes attached to this email.

2. Question taken on notice

Question (page 54 Hansard)

CHAIR: I found that very useful, Mr Bourke, but it didn't answer my question. My question was: how many of the people – let's face it; there's a large bulk of people who are being referred who are mothers – are those who need those types of intensive supports, and how many are those, as Ms Fraser articulated, who actually don't need assistance for community engagement? If you could all take that would be helpful.

Anecdotally the ParentsNext team report that participants who are in the Targeted stream require a different level of support to those within the Intensive stream. We have found that generally those within Targeted stream often have higher levels of education, English and communication skills but still benefit from assistance in some areas such as up-dating their resume or study/course referrals.

We currently have 162 Targeted participants (29% of our caseload). Of those 162, 42.5% are flagged as CALD background and 40% of our Targeted participants have achieved Year 12 schooling or above. This compares to our Intensive stream participants where 59% are flagged as CALD background and only 34% have achieved Year 12 schooling or above.

As an indication of the type of financial support participants require, our data shows the majority (more than 50%) of our claims for reimbursement from the participation fund (ie. for Intensive stream participants only) relate to the category 'participant support'. This includes such things as Licence/Registration fees (Police checks, WWC, First Aid, White Cards), clothing/uniforms for employment/courses, laptops for online study, career counselling and driving lessons. The second biggest category of claims from the participant fund is for study/course fees.

3. Additional information for the committee

During the inquiry hearing family violence was raised as an issue. Based on anecdotal experience, it is likely that many clients accessing ParentsNext are experiencing a number of inter-connecting vulnerabilities related to financial and other social issues from mental health to family violence. As an agency supporting those who are vulnerable, our approach is to engage with consumers in relation to whatever matters are arising for them, and to prioritise any issues of potential risk, such as family violence.

In our view, ParentsNext has the best chance of meeting its objectives if the service providers are given a certain measure of flexibility and discretion. We recommend providers have the ability to support participants with issues as they present. This includes responding to and making referrals for anyone impacted by family violence.

We also suggest that the Inquiry consider undertaking *in camera* focus groups with participants to canvas their views in relation to this and other matters raised by the Inquiry.

Yours sincerely

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