

Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights

PO Box 6100,

Parliament House

Canberra ACT 2600

Tuesday 5 May 2021

To Whom It May Concern

ParentsNext: examination of Social Security (Parenting payment participation requirements - class of persons) instrument 2021

Domestic Violence NSW (DVNSW) thanks the Senate Standing Committees on Community Affairs for the opportunity to provide a submission to the inquiry into ParentsNext. Please accept this letter as DVNSW's submission.

DVNSW is the peak body for specialist domestic and family violence services in NSW, providing a representative and advocacy function for over 80 specialist domestic and family violence services across NSW, and the women, families and communities they support. DVNSW represents the voices of hundreds of survivors of domestic and family violence who have been forced to participate in ParentsNext at great detriment to themselves and their families.

DVNSW endorse the full submissions of DV Vic and DVRCV, and the National Council of Single Mothers & their Children.

DVNSW is unsupportive of the ParentsNext program due to its negative human rights implications on women and their children, many of whom are victim-survivors of domestic and family violence. The expansion of the ParentsNext program was based upon the findings of an evaluation that was conducted prior the inclusion of the Targeted Compliance Framework (TCF) which is the most harmful element of the program. DVNSW member services have grave concerns about the punitive nature of ParentsNext, the lack of clear and transparent information and the negative impacts on family safety where access to income support is removed. Income support is a human right which enables families in Australia to live more healthy and safe lives. Programs such as ParentsNext which prevent access to income support for vulnerable families rather than support them should be discontinued.

Key Recommendations:

1. DVNSW calls on the Federal Government to immediately discontinue ParentsNext as a 'compulsory program with a punitive compliance framework'.
2. If the first recommendation is not accepted, DVNSW recommends to increase ParentsNext providers' domestic and family violence literacy through specialist-informed training and education, clarify grounds and evidence for exemption, and ensure consistency with international human rights law.
3. If the first recommendation is not accepted, DVNSW recommend that the Targeted Compliance Framework (TCF) be removed, and the program become voluntary.

Upon discontinuation of this program, improved supports for this cohort of parents to return to work should be developed with considered input from specialist domestic and family violence specialist organisations.

If you have any questions, please contact CEO Delia Donovan on ceo@dvnsw.org.au or Policy and Research Manager, Renata Field on renata@dvnsw.org.au

Yours sincerely



Delia Donovan
Chief Executive Officer, DVNSW