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1 July 2018

Discussion Paper

ParentsNext National Expansion
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1. About this Discussion Paper

1.1. Purpose of this Discussion Paper

Through consultation, the Department of Employment (Department) aims to:

- provide interested parties with an opportunity to express their point of view
- gain input that may improve the delivery and outcomes of the program
- involve Indigenous communities in the design of ParentsNext, and
- identify any barriers to effective implementation of the national expansion of ParentsNext.

Feedback provided will contribute to the final design, purchasing arrangements and implementation of the program.

1.2. Questions and Feedback on this Discussion Paper

The Department has provided questions to guide the discussion. We welcome any and all comments on this Discussion Paper. The Department will hold consultation sessions from mid-September 2017 and two consultation webinars. Further details will be published on the Employment Services Procurement Information website (employment.gov.au/employment-services-procurement-information).

Feedback may also be made in writing before 5.00 pm (Canberra time) 5 October 2017 by email to the Employment Services Purchasing Hotline (espurchasing@employment.gov.au). Feedback or comments received after this date may not be considered by the Department. By providing feedback or comments on this Discussion Paper you or your organisation will be taken to have agreed to, or to have acknowledged that:

- the Department may use, modify, take into account, retain and copy feedback or comments
- the Department may (or may not) publish feedback or comments
- respondents are responsible for any costs incurred in providing feedback or comments
- any response confers no right, advantage or benefit in any future procurement of services.

To ask a question or seek clarification about this document during the feedback period, you may contact the Hotline on 1300 733 514 (Monday to Friday, 9.00 am to 5.00 pm Canberra time) or email (espurchasing@employment.gov.au). Responses by the Department to questions or requests for clarification will be provided as soon as practicable.

The Department does not intend to publish any submissions it receives. However, responses to questions or requests for clarification may be published for the benefit of all interested stakeholders without identifying the source of the question or request for clarification. If you think your question or request for clarification contains confidential or commercially sensitive information, please identify this clearly so the Department can ensure the information is appropriately protected.

Please monitor the Employment Services Procurement Information website (employment.gov.au/employment-services-procurement-information) for updated information.
1.3. Summary of Guiding Questions

**Indigenous**

How can organisations demonstrate that they are culturally competent?
How can providers engage with local and Indigenous communities?
How can providers utilise Indigenous businesses and organisations?

**Service Offer**

Alongside meeting with participants quarterly, what further services should ParentsNext providers offer?
Are the proposed Participation Fund expenditure categories sufficient to support parents to address barriers to employment and to meet the goals set in their Participation Plan?
What more can be done to influence providers and participants to achieve more sustainable outcomes?

**Providers**

How can ParentsNext be delivered across an entire Employment Region at the same time as encouraging effective delivery and better local connections?
How can providers deliver services in regions with a smaller population across a larger area?
How can technology assist to deliver services to parents, particularly in regional areas?
How can providers engage with parents about program delivery?

**Engagement—participation requirements and compliance**

Given ParentsNext is mandated for some parents, how can we ensure their positive, early engagement?
How can providers better assist parents to transition to a new employment service provider (e.g. jobactive) when exiting ParentsNext?

**Quality and performance**

How can the Department measure a provider’s engagement with parents?
What Key Performance Indicators will reflect that the objectives of the program are being met?
2. ParentsNext

2.1. Introduction

For many parents, particularly women, caring for young children means less time spent in the paid workforce. People can gain valuable new skills and social networks through parenting but they can also risk losing work-specific skills and the confidence to enter paid employment. For parents already in receipt of Government income support payments, this can increase the risk of long-term welfare dependency. ParentsNext is a pre-employment program that provides early intervention assistance to parents with young children. ParentsNext providers help parents to identify their education and employment goals and refer them to local activities and service providers who will help them achieve these goals. Parents participate in activities related to their needs and family circumstances. By being involved in ParentsNext, parents gain confidence and feel empowered by developing the skills to engage in paid work; appropriate skills that are right for them and their families when the time is right.

ParentsNext has operated in ten locations across Australia since April 2016. It has engaged thousands of parents and had a positive impact on their lives and those of their young children. Feedback from both parents and providers has been extremely positive.

2.2. Some ParentsNext Experiences

Kirsty* is an Indigenous woman. When she started in ParentsNext she said she was interested in working in the Indigenous services sector. With her provider, Kirsty identified the barriers she must address to reach her goal and potential solutions. Kirsty undertook some voluntary work with local Indigenous organisations, however, this was not assisting her to progress. Kirsty and her provider then identified some training so she might gain some relevant skills. After a false start in a youth worker course, Kirsty’s provider assisted her to prepare her résumé and apply for a traineeship in a Cert III business administration course. Kirsty is now a full-time trainee and very pleased.

Mel* has two children and recently settled in Australia with her partner. She had previously worked as a teacher and needed some help getting her qualifications recognised and updating her teaching skills. When Mel first commenced in ParentsNext she lacked confidence in her abilities and needed help networking. ParentsNext supported Mel to gain confidence in her own abilities and connected her with professional development workshops. Mel gained some relief teaching positions and hopes these will lead to further employment opportunities.

Lynn* is a single parent with limited support. She has three children aged 11, 5 and 4 years. All Lynn’s children attend school or pre-school. During discussions with her ParentsNext provider, Lynn confessed that she feels very stressed and anxious about supporting her three children alone. Through the support and understanding of her provider, Lynn came to the conclusion that she wanted to be a good role model for her children. This motivated her to obtain some part-time work at a local restaurant. Lynn is now hoping to save some money and eventually work in the beauty industry.

*names have been altered
To build upon the achievements of ParentsNext, in the 2017-18 Budget the Australian Government announced that it will invest $263 million to expand ParentsNext nationally from 1 July 2018. Expanding the program will enable around 68,000 parents to benefit annually. With approximately 96 per cent of ParentsNext participants expected to be women, including around 10,000 Indigenous women, the program will complement a range of other Government initiatives designed to increase female participation in the workforce.

2.3. Key Features of ParentsNext

It is intended that all parents participating in ParentsNext will receive assistance to plan and prepare for employment. This support will include:

- Tailored assistance to develop a Participation Plan that identifies their education and employment goals, taking into account current and anticipated employment opportunities in the community.
- Assistance to plan for, and participate in, relevant activities that, while taking into account their caring responsibilities and family circumstances, will help them progress towards their goals (for example, Year 12 study for those who left school early).
- Regular contact, at least quarterly, with a provider who will work to build a rapport with parents to determine their individual work goals and family responsibilities. This will include understanding the unique barriers to employment (vocational or non-vocational) they may face (for example, lack of confidence; experiencing domestic violence; family breakdowns; mental and physical health issues; access to affordable housing; or the absence of career counselling).
- A welcoming environment that caters to the needs of parents and their children, providing space for children at appointments and additional support for parents.
- Connecting parents with appropriate activities through referrals to local service providers, or provision of services by ParentsNext providers where service gaps are identified.
- Career coaching, including career pathway planning.
- Information about existing resources in their local community, including local Indigenous services and Vocational Educational Training Centres.
- Assistance to connect with child care providers, help with accessing financial assistance for child care, and assistance to identify alternative strategies to meet caring responsibilities.
- Enabling (wherever possible) a ‘warm handover’ on exit from ParentsNext (for example, a joint meeting between the parent, employment provider and ParentsNext provider).
- Encouraging parents to become involved in the delivery of their local ParentsNext service.

2.4. What will success look like in ParentsNext

ParentsNext is an engagement and referral program. Benefits can be both tangible and intangible and vary between parents. Early signs that providers are delivering ParentsNext effectively will be successful parent engagement and feedback that parents feel supported by their provider, believe that participating in the program is worthwhile, and are empowered to make informed employment choices. Tangible benefits parents are able to gain from the program include attaining an education qualification, assistance with their résumé, or obtaining some valuable work experience. In addition, the intangible benefits will also make the program a success—such as a parent improving their parenting skills or gaining the confidence to take the first step toward employment.
Parents – Success of ParentsNext

“She explained everything at the start, but she’s really helpful. I can send her a message whenever I want and I could go in and see her today.”

“My participation plan was totally based off what I was bringing up.”

“I didn’t like it at first. I thought ‘no I don’t want to do it I just want to sit at home with my kids and look after my kids’ but now it’s getting me up and I’m doing things and now I’m at home I’m going ‘God I need to do something,’ so it’s good....people need to do something. Even if it’s taking your kids out, getting your kids involved in what you are doing. Yeah. It’s good.”

Providers - Success of ParentsNext

“It’s trying to get them before they become welfare dependent and make those changes now...I actually love the program and see the changes that are actually happening.”

“I think out of all my experience in the industry...this is one of the most sensible, practical, progressive, cycle-breaking programs I’ve been involved with.”

“A lot of the parents expressed their social isolation as being one of the major barriers because they do lose those social networks when they’re not in the workforce and it becomes a case of them and the kids and not much in the way of networks outside of that. So it’s about sort of breaking down those barriers and linking them in with other supports to help them improve on their confidence.”

“You can work together on the short-term and long-term goals because there’s no pressure to push them out into employment just to get an outcome.”
3. Indigenous

The Government is committed to working with Indigenous Australians to improve their livelihoods, including through improved employment opportunities. Despite evidence that Indigenous parents have a strong interest in returning to the labour market, they are around five times more likely to be in receipt of Parenting Payment than non-Indigenous Australians. Culturally appropriate assistance is required for them to reach their goals.

3.1. Culturally Appropriate Servicing

Providers delivering ParentsNext will be expected to provide culturally appropriate services tailored to individual and local needs. Awareness and sensitivity to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures will be particularly relevant in the intensive stream where there are a higher proportion of Indigenous parents.

Organisations working with Indigenous parents will be required to demonstrate a commitment to the process of reconciliation through valuing and supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, knowledge and peoples. Integral to the core business of the organisation will be effective and inclusive attitudes, policies and procedures; culturally sensitive monitoring mechanisms, and the allocation of sufficient resources to foster culturally appropriate behaviour and practice at all levels of the organisation. These practices will enable an organisation to assess and make improvements to its operations with the clear objective of improving engagement, policy and program delivery and producing better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities.

Cultural competence focuses on the attributes of the service provider and service provision and is best viewed as an ongoing process that organisations continue to strive towards.

How can organisations demonstrate that they are culturally competent?

3.2. Specialist Indigenous Providers

The Department will be looking for providers able to strongly engage with local and Indigenous communities and that demonstrate the capability to service the specific needs of Indigenous parents as well as non-Indigenous parents. The Department aims to create opportunities for Indigenous Australians to deliver the program and attract providers who specialise in working with Indigenous Australians.

How can providers engage with local and Indigenous communities?

How can providers utilise Indigenous businesses and organisations?
4. The ParentsNext Service Offer

4.1. Location

From 1 July 2018, the national expansion of ParentsNext will be delivered in all non-remote areas across Australia, with a more intensive stream offered in 30 locations.

4.2. Streams

The national expansion of ParentsNext will consist of two streams; an intensive ParentsNext stream which will operate in 30 locations focused on encouraging Indigenous parents to prepare for employment; and a targeted ParentsNext stream aimed at assisting the most disadvantaged parents in non-remote areas.

4.3. ParentsNext Eligibility

ParentsNext will aim to assist the most highly disadvantaged parents, including early school leavers and those who have been assessed as having barriers to employment.

The Department of Human Services will assess parents’ eligibility for the program and refer those who are required to participate under social security law to the provider.

The eligibility criteria for ParentsNext will differ between the intensive stream and the targeted stream. For a parent to be eligible for the intensive or targeted stream they must meet the below eligibility criteria.

4.3.1. Compulsory Participants

- Have been receiving Parenting Payment for the last six months;
- Had no earnings during this period;
- Have a child aged under six years;
AND meet one of the following groups:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Located in the 30 intensive locations</th>
<th>All non-remote areas (excl. intensive locations)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early school leavers aged under 22 without year 12 and who have a youngest child at least six months of age; or</td>
<td>Early school leavers aged under 22 without year 12 and who have a youngest child at least one year of age; or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are assessed as being highly disadvantaged and have a youngest child at least six months of age; or</td>
<td>Are assessed as being highly disadvantaged and have a youngest child at least three years of age; or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have a youngest child at least five years of age.</td>
<td>Are in a jobless family and have a youngest child at least five years of age.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.3.2. Entering ParentsNext Voluntarily

Where a parent does not meet the compulsory eligibility criteria and resides in an intensive stream location, they may be able to enter the program voluntarily. For instance, parents on Parenting Payment who are assessed as not having high barriers to employment can still participate in the intensive stream voluntarily.

Parents who relocate to a targeted stream location after receiving services in an intensive stream location can choose to continue to be serviced by their current intensive stream provider. In this case, they would continue to have access to the Participation Fund and outcomes. Parents who participate in the ParentsNext (intensive stream) voluntarily, do not need to meet the eligibility criteria of compulsory participants (such as age of youngest child, having no declared earnings in the previous six months, or having been in receipt of Parenting Payment for the previous six months).

4.4. Regular Contact

Providers must meet regularly with each participant to discuss their goals, check on progress and help them identify activities that will help them achieve their goals. Generally, ParentsNext providers are meeting with participants more than four times a year. Based on this, ParentsNext providers will be expected to meet with participants at least quarterly under the new arrangements.

Alongside meeting with participants quarterly, what further services should ParentsNext providers offer?

4.5. Intensive Stream

The intensive stream recognises that more needs to be done to boost the labour force participation of Indigenous parents, and aims to support the Closing the Gap employment target. This stream will support both Indigenous and non-Indigenous parents by providing more intensive ParentsNext services in the ten existing highly disadvantaged ParentsNext locations, and in 20 additional locations where a higher proportion of Parenting Payment recipients are Indigenous.

As the intensive stream caseloads will include a higher proportion of Indigenous parents, ParentsNext providers will be expected to deliver appropriately tailored assistance, including a high level of Indigenous community engagement for Indigenous parents.

Providers delivering services in the intensive stream will have access to additional support to help parents prepare for employment and gain employment. Additional support will include:

- funds to assist parents to pay for services such as mentoring, training, post-placement support, work-related assistance and non-vocational assistance
- outcome payments when a parent completes an education course or gains sustainable employment, and
- access to Wage Subsidies and Relocation Assistance to Take up a Job.
The intensive stream locations are:

- **NSW**: Bankstown*, Wyong*, Shellharbour*, Dubbo, Inner Sydney, Mid Coast, Orange, North Coast and Tamworth
- **NT**: Darwin-Palmerston and Alice Springs
- **SA**: Port Augusta & Whyalla, Playford* and Port Adelaide,
- **QLD**: Cairns, Logan*, Rockhampton*, Toowoomba, Mackay and Townsville
- **WA**: Kwinana*, Perth-South, Perth-East, Geraldton and Broome
- **TAS**: Burnie* and Brighton
- **VIC**: Greater Shepparton*, Hume* and Mildura

*Denotes current ten locations.

4.5.1. Employment Focus

The intensive stream of ParentsNext will have a stronger focus on supporting parents, including Indigenous parents, into work. To ensure this, ParentsNext providers will be able to access additional funds so they can assist parents to access and participate in services that will help them prepare for employment. These additional funds are in the form of a Participation Fund, outcome payments, Wage Subsidies and Relocation Assistance to Take up a Job reimbursements.

4.5.2. Outcome Payments

Intensive stream providers will be entitled to an outcome payment when a participant they are assisting achieves either an education attainment or sustainable employment. ParentsNext providers will receive $300 for each outcome achieved. Outcomes will need to be verified and will be claimed through the Department’s IT system.

4.5.3. Employment Outcomes

Intensive stream ParentsNext providers will be able to claim an Employment Outcome once a participant achieves sustainable employment. Sustainable employment is achieved when a participant is in paid work for an average of at least 15 hours per week (30 hours per fortnight) over a period of 12 weeks. Where a participant is connected to a ParentsNext provider and a jobactive or Vocational, Training & Employment Centre (VTEC) provider and is placed into a job, the ParentsNext provider and the other provider will be able to claim an outcome payment.

4.5.4. Education Outcomes

It is proposed that an Education Outcome will be paid for the completion of any of the following:

- a Certificate III (or above) course
- Year 12 attainment, and
- the Skills for Education and Employment (SEE) program.

Intensive stream ParentsNext providers may be paid more than one education attainment outcome for each participant, as long as the attained education is of a higher level than the participant had previously gained; including any attainment prior to participating in ParentsNext.
What more can be done to influence providers and participants to achieve more sustainable outcomes?

4.5.5. Participation Fund

To assist parents to prepare for employment, ParentsNext providers in the intensive stream will have access to a pool of funds called the Participation Fund. ParentsNext providers will receive a $1,200 credit for each parent commencing in the program which they can use to claim reimbursement for goods and services that genuinely support and assist parents to plan and prepare for employment.

It is anticipated that providers’ use of these funds will fall into one of nine broad expenditure categories: pre-employment training; accredited training; non-accredited training; work related expenses; work experience; mentoring; post-placement support; professional services and participant support. The Department recognises that parents’ needs will be varied and linked to their individual and family circumstances. By having broad categories, it is expected that providers will be encouraged to support parents when and how they need it.

There will also be a limited number of prohibited purchases including costs toward the delivery of ParentsNext; goods or services that should be delivered using the service fee; purchases made prior to the commencement of ParentsNext; subsidies, gifts, cash and other incentives for parents and employers; penalties, fines and court fees; and reverse marketing.

Are the proposed Participation Fund expenditure categories sufficient to support parents to address barriers to employment and to meet the goals set in their Participation Plan?

4.5.6. Wage Subsidies

Wage Subsidies are a financial incentive designed to encourage employers to hire eligible parents in ongoing jobs by contributing to the initial costs that occur when hiring a new employee. Wage Subsidies can help to build a business and give employers greater flexibility in their hiring options.

All Wage Subsidy placements must average at least 20 hours per week over the six-month duration of the Wage Subsidy agreement. Wage Subsidy Payments to the employer must not exceed 100 per cent of the participant’s wages over the six-month period.

Providers make payments to the employer prior to seeking reimbursement from the Department. Access to Wage Subsidies is only available to parents being serviced in the intensive stream.

4.5.7. Relocation Assistance to Take up a Job

Relocation Assistance provides assistance to long-term unemployed eligible parents to relocate to take up ongoing work, and can help employers to find staff outside of their local areas where needed.
Up to $9,000 (GST exclusive) is available for eligible parents with a dependent child or children who move to a regional area. Up to $6,000 (GST exclusive) is available if the participant moves to a capital city with their dependent child or children. Relocation Assistance is only available to parents being serviced in the intensive stream.

Providers enter into an agreement with the participant prior to the move, and make payments for goods and services on behalf of the participant (for example: bond; removalists; car hire; petrol vouchers; and school uniforms) prior to seeking reimbursement from the Department.

### 4.6. Targeted Stream

The targeted stream will provide parents of young children with all the key features of ParentsNext to improve their work readiness by the time their children start school. Parents will be provided with regular and tailored servicing that will help them to identify their education and employment goals. Parents will be referred to activities that will help them reach these goals, taking into account their individual and family needs. Parents with barriers to employment will be connected to local service providers that will help them address these barriers, and be provided with assistance to access childcare.

This ParentsNext stream will be delivered to eligible disadvantaged parents with young children who live in the areas of the 51 Employment Regions which are not part of the intensive stream (see Intensive stream at 4.5 above for the list of intensive stream locations). Providers servicing the targeted stream of ParentsNext will not have access to funds through the Participation Fund, outcome payments, Wage Subsidies or Relocation Assistance.
5. Providers

The Department is seeking to engage organisations who can offer assistance to parents, including those who can service Indigenous parents. These organisations can be existing providers of employment services including, but not limited to, those that deliver ParentsNext, jobactive, Transition to Work, the Community Development Programme and Disability Employment Services; not-for-profit and for-profit organisations; and non-government organisations.

5.1. Service Areas

ParentsNext will be delivered in 51 Employment Regions. Additional information on Employment Regions can be found at www.lmip.gov.au.

It is intended that organisations will be able to propose that they deliver ParentsNext in both the intensive and targeted streams within an Employment Region or propose to service only part of an Employment Region. All Employment Regions will need to be covered by at least one ParentsNext provider. Some of the more isolated regions may be best serviced using alternative techniques, including the use of technology.

Organisations will be expected to put forward proposals to deliver ParentsNext in a specific region. If the region crosses the ParentsNext stream boundaries, proposals will need to reflect service provision in both ParentsNext streams. ParentsNext providers will be expected to nominate sites from which they deliver services in the region, and demonstrate how these sites, including outreach sites, will sufficiently cover the local needs of the geographic area. Generally, ParentsNext services should not be co-located with employment services (such as jobactive) unless there is a clear physical delineation between the ParentsNext services site and the employment services site.

How can ParentsNext be delivered across an entire Employment Region at the same time as encouraging effective delivery and better local connections?

How can providers deliver services in regions with a smaller population across a larger area?

How can technology assist to deliver services to parents, particularly in regional areas?

5.2. Caseloads

Estimates of expected participant numbers in each Employment Region are provided at Appendix A. It is expected that average caseload numbers will be around 400 to 500 participants, although numbers may be smaller for some locations. It is proposed that providers will be referred a share of participants in a region based on their market share. Organisations can propose alternative caseloads if they have a good business case—for instance a small Indigenous organisation proposing to service their Indigenous community may propose servicing a caseload of potentially 80 parents.
5.3. Funding—Up-Front Payment

It is proposed that both streams in ParentsNext be funded by a partial up-front payment at the start of each six months (approximately $1,200 per annum for each person), proportional to their expected caseload (estimated as part of their market share). Once a provider’s caseload exceeds what they were originally funded for, the provider will be paid for every additional participant who commences in the program. If a provider’s caseload does not exceed what they were originally funded for, the Department does not intend to recoup any of the up-front payment. The up-front payment is intended to support smaller provider organisations, including Indigenous organisations, by creating greater financial certainty and helping providers to meet establishment costs.

The size of the up-front payment will be proportional to the size of the expected caseload:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expected caseload</th>
<th>up-front payment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-99</td>
<td>95% of expected caseload</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100-249</td>
<td>85% of expected caseload</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>250-399</td>
<td>75% of expected caseload</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>400 upwards</td>
<td>65% of expected caseload</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.4. Training

The Department will provide training to successful providers on the ParentsNext program and the Department’s IT system. It is expected that providers will attend these sessions.

5.5. Parent-led Governance Mechanisms

To ensure services provided by ParentsNext providers are relevant and engaging at both the individual and community level, providers will be required to encourage parents to be actively involved in the delivery of their ParentsNext program. Providers will be responsible for setting up parent-led governance frameworks. These frameworks should include parent servicing feedback mechanisms and provide an opportunity for parents to have input into areas such as how the provider engages with the local area and relationships with relevant service providers, and to provide input into the types of activities that the provider offers.

5.6. Engagement—Participation Requirements and Compliance

While the majority of parents participating in ParentsNext will be required to do so under social security law, ParentsNext is primarily an engagement and referral program focused on preparing parents for employment. There are no compulsory job search requirements and parents will not be required to accept a job. Participation requirements and compliance requirements in ParentsNext are used to ensure that contact with the most vulnerable parents and families is maintained, so they are provided
access to a range of services that will improve their family well-being and long term economic security. Requiring parents to participate in early intervention programs like ParentsNext can have a positive impact. Parents who are required to participate will need to:

- Attend regular scheduled appointments to engage with their provider and identify education and employment goals.
- Enter into a Participation Plan that will set out their goals and a pathway to reach these.
- Actively participate in a compulsory activity which will assist them to meet their goals. Parents will be empowered to select activities that are tailored to their individual goals and suit their individual family circumstances. There are no hourly requirements for compulsory activities.

Providers will actively support parents to help them meet their participation requirements. However, providers will also ensure that a parent’s participation requirements are appropriate for the parent. For example, it may not be appropriate to include a full-time education course (25 hours per week) for a young parent with a six-month old who has unstable accommodation. Instead, this parent may be supported to connect with local housing services and a parenting support group to meet their participation requirements.

The new targeted compliance framework to be implemented in July 2018 (subject to the passage of legislation) will apply to ParentsNext. Under the new compliance framework, parents who do not fulfil their requirements may have their payments suspended until they re-engage, and may incur demerits. Parents will generally have to miss a minimum of five appointments in six months without good reason before they actually lose money.

Before facing any loss of money, parents who are having difficulty meeting their requirements will have their capabilities assessed by their provider and then the Department of Human Services. Parents with circumstances that affect their ability to meet agreed commitments will be able to renegotiate their Participation Plan at any time.

If parents are persistently and deliberately non-compliant, they will still have an opportunity to demonstrate their compliance before losing some or all of their payment. Payments made in respect to children, such as Family Tax Benefit, will be unaffected by penalties.

**Given ParentsNext is mandated for some parents, how can we ensure their positive, early engagement?**

**How can providers better assist parents to transition to a new employment service provider (e.g. jobactive) when exiting ParentsNext?**

**5.7. Activities**

Providers will work with parents to identify suitable activities to work towards their education and employment-related goals. A parent will agree to the activities they will undertake in their Participation Plan. Activities should be relevant to the parent’s goals, take into consideration individual and family circumstances, and be available locally or online.
Parents in the current program undertake activities such as education and training courses; non-vocational interventions such as counselling, health related assistance and parenting courses; employment; and a range of other activities, including other Government programs to assist them to become more work ready.

There is no required number of hours that a parent will need to undertake in an activity. However, activities will need to, at least, cover the period until the parent’s next appointment. Most parents will need to undertake a range of activities and services to achieve their goals, depending on their circumstances.

Providers will refer parents to activities, provide activities themselves or broker or purchase activities from other organisations.

Providers will need to record a parent’s activities using the Department’s IT system. Reporting requirements around activities will be outlined in relevant ParentsNext guidelines.

5.8. Exemptions

Life events impact all people. Some events may result in a parent not being able to fully engage in ParentsNext. For this reason, there are certain exemptions available for parents required to participate in ParentsNext. For the duration of the exemption, the parent will not have participation requirements. However, they may still elect to participate in the program voluntarily during the exemption.

Exemptions may be provided for circumstances that include domestic violence, pre-natal and post-natal relief, temporary incapacity, special family circumstances and major personal crisis. Further information regarding exemptions to participation requirements can be found on the Guide to Social Security Law website http://guides.dss.gov.au/guide-social-security-law.

Providers delivering ParentsNext will be delegated (under social security law) the power to grant a parent an exemption from their participation requirements in certain circumstances. The Department’s IT system and program guidelines will provide functionality and guidance to providers when granting exemptions.

If considered appropriate, providers may grant exemptions to parents who are subject to domestic violence. In situations where there is any suspicion of domestic violence, providers will be expected to refer parents to the Department of Human Services or to any other national or state-based services that offer advice, information and support concerning domestic violence.
6. Quality and performance

6.1. ParentsNext Quality and Performance Framework

The Department is committed to ensuring ParentsNext providers deliver a professional, culturally appropriate, high quality, and effective service to parents with young children. A ParentsNext Quality and Performance Framework will set out how the Department will monitor and assess provider performance and ensure providers are complying with the objectives of the program and meeting their contractual requirements.

It is anticipated that providers will develop and adhere to a:

- *service guarantee*—which will set out the standard of service delivery that participants can expect from a provider, including delivery of services in a manner that is sensitive to each participant’s culture and circumstances, and tailored to their individual needs, and

- *service delivery plan*—written for participants and outlining the assistance and activities they can expect providers to deliver.

As part of quality and performance assurance; the Department will conduct:

- Ongoing monitoring—the Department will monitor each provider’s performance using the Department’s IT system, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and contact with contract managers.

- Program assurance—assessment of providers complying with the *service guarantee*, *service delivery plan*, ParentsNext Deed, participant satisfaction surveys (during and post program) and any feedback received through the National Customer Service Line and/or the Ombudsman’s office.

- Performance assessment—formal assessments to be conducted over regular performance periods (for example, every six to twelve months).

**How can the Department measure a provider’s engagement with parents?**
6.2. Key Performance Indicators

In addition to compliance with the service guarantee, service delivery plan and formal performance assessments, the Department will consider achievements against KPIs when assessing the effectiveness, efficiency and quality of a provider’s service delivery.

KPIs should reflect engagement with parents, parents meeting their participation requirements and parents progressing on their pathway to employment.

What Key Performance Indicators will reflect that the objectives of the program are being met?

6.3. Work Readiness Assessments

ParentsNext aims to prepare parents for work. The primary aim of work readiness assessments is to measure a parent’s initial state of work readiness and open up a discussion with the parent about how to address any barriers they may face in becoming work ready. Work readiness assessments can also provide valuable information about the ParentsNext cohort, inform case studies and contribute to program monitoring and evaluation.

In the current ParentsNext program, the Department supports providers to focus on the work readiness of participants through the delivery of work readiness assessments using the Work Star™ instrument.

As part of the current Quality and Performance Framework for ParentsNext, providers are expected to report on participant case studies, some of which include work readiness assessment data.

It is anticipated that providers will use information gathered from assessments, such as work readiness assessments, to help with goal setting and planning. Over time, providers should be able to identify common issues facing parents they are servicing, and the strategies that work best, or are required, to address these issues.

The Department anticipates using work readiness assessment information to gain a better understanding of the ParentsNext caseload. Information gathered may help identify how characteristics such as eligibility group, age of youngest child, etc., may relate to work readiness and can inform future policy for parents.
7. Current Contract

The current ParentsNext Deed ceases on 30 June 2018. Current ParentsNext project providers will be required to submit new proposals if interested in continuing their provision of ParentsNext. A provider’s performance under current arrangements may be considered in assessing their continued suitability to deliver ParentsNext.

7.1. Transition Policy for Existing ParentsNext Participants

All participants commenced in the current program (around 13,500 as at 31 July 2017) will be transitioned to the new program, if they are eligible. The ten locations that are part of the current program will form part of the intensive stream in the new program.
8. Purchasing Arrangements

The procurement process will begin after the consultation period ends. An Exposure Draft will not be released as part of the procurement process. Please monitor the Employment Services Procurement Information website (employment.gov.au/procurement) for updated information.

The Department will select organisations to deliver ParentsNext through a competitive procurement process. The procurement process will seek proposals for both the intensive and targeted stream of ParentsNext. Current ParentsNext providers will also need to submit proposals to provide ParentsNext services for the Deed starting from 1 July 2018.

Procurement documents will outline selection criteria requirements that potential providers will need to respond to in their proposal. The selection criteria will be accompanied by supporting documentation, including forms and checklists to assist respondents to complete proposals. A draft Deed will also be available for the consideration of organisations during this period.

ParentsNext procurement activities will be advertised through the Government's procurement information system—AusTender. More information on how to register with AusTender can be found at www.tenders.gov.au. The Department recommends interested parties register their interest with AusTender.

8.1. Probity

The Department has appointed Maddocks as the external Probity Adviser to advise on the probity and integrity of the procurement process. The role includes developing an overarching Probity Plan that can be applied to the process, providing advice on Probity issues, conducting appropriate Probity training and advising on relevant security arrangements.

The Probity Adviser will observe and monitor, but will play no role in, the procurement process.

8.2. The Department’s IT Systems

ParentsNext providers will need to have access to and use the Department’s IT systems to deliver ParentsNext. It will interface with the Department of Human Services IT system. IT functionality will be available prior to July 2018, to enable the required set-up and training so that providers will be able to commence parents from 1 July 2018.
### APPENDIX A: Expected Participant Numbers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment Region</th>
<th>Intensive Total</th>
<th>Targeted Total</th>
<th>Employment Region Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Capital Region (includes ACT)</td>
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<td>811</td>
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<tr>
<td>Central West</td>
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<td>885</td>
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<td>555</td>
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<tr>
<td>New England and North West</td>
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<td>653</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Sydney Greater West</td>
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<tr>
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### Employment Region Details

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<tbody>
<tr>
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**ParentsNext - Northern Territory**

- **Darwin** (includes Alice Springs) - Employment Region Total: 681
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<tr>
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<td>Darling Downs</td>
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<td>Wivenhoe</td>
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## Employment Region

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<td>Murray and South East</td>
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<tr>
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<td>----------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hobart and Southern Tasmania</td>
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<td>North and North Western Tasmania</td>
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<td>-----------------</td>
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<td>-------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballarat</td>
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<tr>
<td>Barwon</td>
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<td>Goulburn/Murray</td>
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<tr>
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<td>South Coast of Victoria</td>
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<tr>
<td>South Eastern Melbourne and Peninsula</td>
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<tr>
<td>Western Melbourne</td>
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## ParentsNext - Western Australia

The data in this appendix is estimated participant numbers at the Employment Region level and includes parents listed in the 30 intensive stream locations.

### Employment Region Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment Region</th>
<th>Intensive Total</th>
<th>Targeted Total</th>
<th>Employment Region Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Broome</td>
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<td>Geraldton</td>
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<tr>
<td>Great Southern - Wheatbelt</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kalgoorlie</td>
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<tr>
<td>Perth North</td>
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<tr>
<td>Perth South</td>
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<tr>
<td>South West WA</td>
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<td><strong>Western Australia Total</strong></td>
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### Australia Total

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