

Parents and Carers Reference Group Meeting 4

Thursday 16 October 2025

Communique

The Parents and Carers Reference Group (PCRG) held its fourth meeting on Thursday 16 October 2025 (virtual meeting).

The meeting was opened by Ms Jacqueline Hrast, Acting Group Manager Family Wellbeing, Department of Social Services (DSS), as proxy for the DSS co-Chair Ms Letitia Hope, Deputy Secretary Families and Communities. Ms Hrast, alongside co-Chair Jamie Crosby, Chief Executive Officer of Families Australia, facilitated the meeting, with support from Ms Janaya Cox, Acting Branch Manager Early Childhood and Parenting Wellbeing. The meeting was attended by 14 PCRG Members, including ten parents and caregivers and four representatives from peak body organisations. At this meeting, the PCRG discussed four items:

1. The Australian Centre for Child Protection presented to the PCRG to seek feedback on the development of a National Child Safety Training package for the early childhood education and care (ECEC) sector. Members discussed what helps parents and caregivers feel confident that their child is safe and supported in early learning environments to help inform the development of child safety training for ECEC workers.
2. Representatives from the University of Melbourne, Professionals and Researchers in Early Childhood Intervention (PRECI), and Advocating for Children with Disability (ACD) provided an overview of the *National Best Practice Framework for Early Childhood Intervention*. Members noted early experiences shape a child's future health and wellbeing, and the importance of supporting families with quality, tailored support to give their children the best chance to thrive.
3. The Department of Health, Disability and Ageing provided an overview of the Thriving Kids initiative. Members discussed the importance of looking holistically at what supports and services can better support families and children outside the NDIS when designing Thriving Kids.
4. DSS provided an overview of potential policy priorities for child and family programs administered by the department. Members affirmed the importance of policy priorities centred on the themes of empowering parents, caregivers and families and having strong integration of services, supported by a quality workforce. Members noted a particular focus on ensuring services are accessible, evidence-based and inclusive.

It was also noted that 13 PCRG members had participated in a consultation session on the Early Education Service Delivery Prices Project on Tuesday 16 September 2025, facilitated by Deloitte Access Economics. That dedicated consultation session was part of a broader community consultation process to understand the true cost of delivering high-quality and safe ECEC.

Meeting attendees

Department of Social Services

- Jacqueline Hrast (co-chair), Acting Group Manager, Family Wellbeing
- Janaya Cox, Acting Branch Manager, Early Childhood and Parenting Wellbeing

Peak body representatives

- Jamie Crosby (co-Chair), Families Australia
- Diana Harris, Proxy for Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY)
- Janet Williams-Smith, Early Childhood Australia
- Georgie Dent, The Parenthood

Parent and carer representatives

- Sara Barker, NT
- Lauren Binns, SA
- Eve Buckley, VIC
- Sarah Cummings, NSW
- Nicole El-Hage, VIC
- Carly Grubb, QLD
- Kristy Jones, TAS
- Ravi Krishnamurthy, ACT
- Malinda Savage, QLD
- Dinah Thomasset, QLD

Officials / advisers

- PCRG Secretariat

Guests

- The Australian Centre for Child Protection
- Department of Education
- Three members of the Consortium for the National Best Practice Framework for Early Childhood Intervention
 - University of Melbourne
 - Professionals and Researchers in Early Childhood Intervention (PRECI)
 - Advocating for Children with Disability (ACD)
- Department of Health, Disability and Ageing