



Australian Women Against Violence Alliance

Committee Secretary  
House of Representatives Select Committee on Workforce Australia Employment Services  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Committee Secretary

### **Submission on the role of *ParentsNext***

#### **Who we are**

The Australian Women Against Violence Alliance (AWAVA) brings together women's organisations and individuals across Australia to share information, identify issues and their solutions, to respond to and prevent violence against women and their children. AWAVA ensures that women's voices and particularly marginalised women's voices are heard by governments, amplifying the work of its member organisations and Friends & Supporters.

#### **Submission by the National Council of Single Mothers & their Children**

AWAVA strongly supports the positions advocated by the National Council of Single Mothers and their Children (NCSMC), and endorses their submission. While AWAVA has a range of concerns with *ParentsNext* and its implementation, and the impact it has on the wellbeing of women and children generally, we are specifically concerned regarding the program's treatment of victim-survivors of domestic and family violence.

While employment participation can be a pathway away from violence, employment services do not specialise in treating trauma and do not have the specialist knowledge required to support women and children escaping violence. Forced interactions of this nature can, on the other hand, retraumatise and compromise the safety of victim-survivors.

AWAVA specifically submits that *ParentsNext* requires redesign and re-branding, moving it away from its current punitive approach, towards a model that enhances choice, control and opportunities for parents, as was originally intended. There should be no compulsion for participation, particularly for women experiencing and/or escaping violence. The safety of women and children must be prioritised, particularly in light of the Australian government's recent endorsement of the *National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children*.

Your sincerely (on behalf of AWAVA)