

Minister for Child Protection SA

Direct Experience Group

Communique August 2024

Update

The Direct Experience Group (DEG) held its 4th formal meeting on the 19th August 2024.

Information from the meeting

The meeting was the first with a nominated member led Chairperson in place and the first with all ten membership spots filled.

The focus of the Quarterly meeting was progressing DEG'S 2024 Workplan areas:

Topic #2: **Assessment and Investigation** and Topic #3 **Accountability and Transparency**

Preparation activities prior to meeting included:

- Collating of Direct Experience Insights
- Review of Child and Young Person's Safety Act (2017) available DCP policy and practice documents.
- Developing understanding of key problem areas and impact
- Defining change needed
- Initial development of Theory of Change

Jackie Bray, Chief Executive of the Department for Child Protection attended the group. This was the second meeting attended by Ms Bray and she reiterated that she is enthusiastic about developing relationship with DEG members, hearing directly from the group and developing open communication.

Ms Bray took a range of questions relating to the assessment and investigation processes of the Department for Child Protection. Noting that the DCP Assessment Framework DCP is not publicly available.

Questions also pertained to possible areas of improvement. Covering practice models and initiatives from interstate and international settings.

Topics included:

- Blind Assessment Model utilised in the United States, which shows results in reducing practitioner bias.
- Possibility of extending Family Group Conferencing to all children and families coming or in contact with DCP
- Funding Model and ensuring supports for children, parents and families are resourced during the assessment phase to reduce number of children in out of home care.
- Improving the information provided to parents, so complaints and FOI process is reserved for genuine complaints or FOI requests.

- Possibility of a short term live-in parental assessment centre similar to the Parent assessment and skill development services provided community residential setting model in Victoria.
- Language in legislation and the importance of proposed Bill containing language around safety and support for families.
- Questions and explanations around redacted practice documents and investigative processes.

Findings and Recommendations, regarding *Assessment and Investigation* will be presented to the Minister for Child Protection on 1st October 2024.

Chairperson

The meeting was chaired by newly appointed DEG chairperson Hayley Brown

Attendance

The meeting was attended by all 10 Core members in person (identity withheld)

Coopted members

- Rachael Dean – DEG Peer Support Worker (Life Without Barriers)
- Rebecca St Clair – DEG Peer Communication Specialist (The Reily Foundation)
- Breony Carbines – DEG Executive Office (The Reily Foundation)
- Nadia Berginetti – Chief Executive Officer (The Reily Foundation)
- Kerrie Mcann – (Life Without Barriers)

Meeting Close

The next meeting of the Direct Experience Group will be held on the 18th November 2024.

Approved Quotes

“The investigation and assessment phases carried out by child protection workers can lead to life-altering decisions. Enhancing documentation standards is crucial for comprehensively assessing a family’s needs, ultimately serving the long-term best interest of children and our future generation” (Hayley Brown DEG Chairperson)

“I’m proud of the work that the Minister’s Direct Experience Group has done to put forward these 11 recommendations to help improve processes, with the goal of keeping children safe and thriving at home by empowering parents, families and communities”. (Jacinta DEG Deputy Chairperson)

“We want processes that give parents a chance to prove we can parent in a safe environment” (DEG member: Re Victorian parent assessment facilities)

“When I had a case worker who took the time to get to know me things changed” (DEG member: support for reunification by DCP case workers)