

Minister for Child Protection SA

Direct Experience Group

Communique November 2024

Update

The Direct Experience Group (DEG) held its 5th formal meeting on the 18th November 2024.

Information from the meeting

The meeting was chaired by DEG Chairperson Hayley Brown and nine out of ten core members were in attendance.

A significant focus of the meeting was receiving a report back on recommendations provided so far directly from the Minister for Child Protection Hon Katrine Hildyard who attended for part of the day. The Minister also offered her priority focus areas to assist the development of DEG's 2025 workplan.

In addition, DEG members worked to finalise 2024 workplan areas Topic Area #3 **Accountability and Transparency** and commence Topic #4 **Access to information, advocacy and parenting/ family support**.

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.
- Basic review of the Child and Young Person Safety (and Support) Bill 2024
- Developing understanding of key problem areas and impact
- Defining change needed
- Development of Theory of Change

Minister Hildyard expressed her deep appreciation for the hard work, considered recommendations and personal commitment made by DEG members throughout 2024.

Minister Hildyard pointed to the Statement of Commitment to Parents and Families, included in the draft legislation as one of the most tangible outcomes of DEG advice.

Hildyard acknowledged that in the time she had with DEG at the meeting, she would not be going through each recommendation made by DEG in 2024. Instead, and on speaking about ongoing reform, Minister Hildyard acknowledged the influence of DEG as part of all her advisory groups. She stated DEG's insights and ideas are considered along with the information coming from young people in the care system, feedback from the 2023 Child Protection and Family Support Symposium and the response to draft Child and Young Person Safety (and Support) Bill 2024.

Hildyard reaffirmed her commitment to listening to parents, family members and others with direct experience of the Child Protection and Family Support system. She encouraged further sharing of lived experience examples in how DEG frame the need for their recommendations.

Questions and discussion with the Minister and DEG covered:

- Improving rooms for better family access.
- Building partnerships with families
- What therapeutic support can be given to children and families separated by the system. Including children whose siblings are in out of home care and kinship carers.
- Utilising Family Group Conferencing for more families, and for different reasons.
- Lived experience input into training for other key stakeholders including DCP staff and Foster Carers

Findings and Recommendations, regarding **Accountability and Transparency** and **Access to information, advocacy and parenting/ family support** and the **2025 Work Plan** will be presented to the Minister for Child Protection in January 2025.

Chairperson

The meeting was chaired by DEG chairperson Hayley Brown.

Attendance

The meeting was attended by 9 Core members in person (identity withheld)

Coopted members

- Hon Katrine Hildyard MP (Minister for Child Protection, Minister for Women & the Prevention of Domestic, Family & Sexual Violence, Minister for Recreation, Sport & Racing)
- Matt Pearce (Ministerial Adviser to the Hon Katrine Hildyard MP)
- Rachael Dean – DEG Peer Support Worker (Life Without Barriers)
- Breony Carbines – DEG Executive Office/Facilitator (The Reily Foundation)
- Nadia Bergineti – Chief Executive Officer (The Reily Foundation)
- Kerrie Mcann – (Life Without Barriers)

Meeting Close

The next meeting of the Direct Experience Group will be held in the first quarter of 2025.

Approved Quotes

“We are quite a diverse group, but the work we have done on accountability and transparency has shown how common our experiences are. It was a difficult area but shows how much we all want to be united for change in regard to this topic. The recommendations made by the Direct Experience Group are a way to learn from the past and move forward” (**Jacinta Morey DEG Deputy Chairperson**)

“Our recommendations are working towards the vision for a time when parents and families feel encouraged to willingly reach out to the Department of Child Protection and Family Support services for help, advise and support. At the moment many parents and families are afraid to engage for fear of reprisal, judgement and at worse the removal of their children.” **(Hayley Brown DEG Chairperson)**

“Striking a balance between managing risks to children and supporting parents for lasting change is crucial to protecting the best interests of children. If we are to develop effective statutory Child Protection laws, policies and practice, it is even more important that they are consistently upheld and implemented with professional competence and cross-office and cross-team consistency. Accountability and transparency must be the Department’s priority, with full recognition of the considerable power it holds in making life-altering decisions for children and their families.” **(Hayley Brown DEG Chairperson)**

“We hope that the experiences of the Direct experience Group serve as important reminder that when a parent that becomes involved in the Child Protection and Family Supports sector, they are almost always at a disadvantage due to a range of vulnerabilities and challenging circumstances. DEG see it as crucial that other families receive fair, equitable and accessible support delivered by trauma-informed and child focused approaches This will help parents and family members understand the direction of their children's case, increases engagement with the Department and empower them to take proactive steps to address any concerns raised producing better outcomes for children and young people.” **(Hayley Brown DEG Chairperson)**