

Parents as Peer Leaders Project: At a glance

This project empowered families of children who are not connected to the NDIS to take charge of their child's development and thrive through connecting with Plumtree's trained parent peer workers. The families accessed co-designed resources and learned new skills in our evidence-based Now & Next program.



Families of children with developmental concerns not connected to the NDIS are isolated and face challenges in navigating community or specialist supports. While peer work in early childhood is not yet widespread, these families can benefit from connecting with knowledgeable parent-peers. Their lived experience and insights can provide vital assistance that complements the work of non-peer professionals during the early years.

Plumtree's parent peer workers contacted unfunded families by phone. They discussed their child's development and experiences in navigating support and received guidance

and resources, including video e-books on support for developmental concerns.

A key component of PPLP was delivering the capacity-building Now & Next program to these unfunded families. The 8-week peer-led program enabled them to set a vision and positive goals for the entire family via Pictability, our intuitive planning resource.

PPLP also trained and accredited parent leaders who became more confident in guiding their families. Some went on to inspire and support others in their community, amplifying the program's impact far beyond its initial scope.

Outcomes vs funded activities Parents as Peer Leaders Project 36 months



1008

non-NDIS families engaged
vs 545 target

- 788 families received program resources
- 672 parents completed Pictability vision and goal setting
- 425 completed Now & Next



73

Now & Next online groups held
vs 46 target

29

Now & Next groups co-presented by new facilitators
vs 24 target



36

peer leaders trained
vs 33 target to create sustainable peer leadership resources

9

Now & Next peer facilitators trained in 5 States

Non-NDIS families faced greater barriers than NDIS families but made larger gains in Now & Next

Significantly helped the most vulnerable families

Non-NDIS families had lower baseline levels of hope, empowerment and well-being compared to other Now & Next families as measured by our benchmark data and confirmed by our parent peer facilitators. They also had a higher no-show rate for session one (14.2% compared to 3.2%), lower completion (67.7% compared to 75%).

Despite the challenges, the families achieved larger increases in outcome measures than the Now & Next benchmark, although their final levels were below the benchmark. The outcomes suggest that non-NDIS families, although facing greater barriers, ultimately benefited from the Now & Next program with significant capacity gains.

+9.09% Hope	+ 9.3% Empowerment	+3.2% Wellbeing
87.6% Family goals achieved	80.6% Child goals achieved	77.7% Personal goals achieved

A model for future foundational supports

PPLP exceeded objectives, demonstrating the power of a peer-led approach in empowering families of children without NDIS funding. New skills and strengthened agency enabled them to better navigate the complex landscape of specialist and community support systems. The program presents a valuable model for future foundational support initiatives.

Recommendations from PPLP evaluation



Expand the use of paid parent peer workers

Encourage the integration of paid parent peer workers in early childhood intervention and foundational supports to enhance family engagement and create sustainable community resources.



Provide structured programs free for families

Offer programs like Now & Next to parents at no cost, so they do not have to choose between using NDIS funding for their child's therapy and their own capacity building.



Provide Now & Next to all families

The Now & Next program provides valuable support to all parents of children with developmental differences, delays, or disabilities, regardless of where they are in their journey. It provides the tools, knowledge and community they need to foster positive outcomes for their children and themselves.



Promote co-design and parent peer leadership

Continue to emphasise co-design and peer leadership in future initiatives, recognising their benefits in empowering families and creating lasting, positive changes in the disability sector.

To read the full PPLP Evaluation, go to <https://www.plumtree.org.au/now-next-our-growth-and-achievements/> or contact info@plumtree.org.au

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