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# Parenting Research Centre – Final Report

Empowerment Fund

# Acknowledgement of Country

The Parenting Research Centre acknowledges and respects the diverse Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of this country and the Elders of the past and present.

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# Project summary

The Parenting Research Centre (PRC) set out to design, build and test a digital platform for the Me as a Parent Scale (MaaPs). The MaaPs provides a simple, validated, and widely used method of measuring parenting self-efficacy in both research and service delivery to families. The ability to use the MaaPs through an online platform was anticipated to increase its reach across the child and family services sector. Benchmarking was also anticipated to support improvement opportunities for practitioners working with parents, and support organisations to evolve their services through data-driven insights. This work responds to growing expectations across the child and family services sector for stronger outcomes evidence, more consistent measurement and better use of data to improve service quality and accountability.

In terms of specific outcomes, this approach was intended to:

- Improve ease and quality of data collection and entry
- Automate scoring, leading to greater accuracy in results
- Improve understanding of interpretation of scores and capacity to benchmark scores against population level data and like similar services to identify further opportunities for intervention and support
- Improve understanding of how to use outcomes data (such as MaaPs) to support decision-making regarding practice, within a continuous practice improvement approach
- Improve ability to interpret MaaPs scores over time as part of reporting on outcomes of early intervention programs (through centralised data and visual dashboard reporting).

## Key achievements/findings

The PRC, in collaboration with our technology partner Action Lab, developed an online platform for administration of the Me as a Parent Scale (MaaPs). The MaaPs is a widely adopted measure of parenting self-efficacy, a key outcome of many parenting-focused early intervention services. Administration of the MaaPs and its short form has relied largely on manual and fragmented processes, without systems support that would facilitate consistent reporting, benchmarking and sector-wide learning. Shifting the MaaPs to an online platform addresses this challenge by streamlining administration and building a central repository of parenting self-efficacy data accessible across organisations and programs.

## Insights

### Learnings for the organisation

- Our partnership with Action Lab at Monash University as a technology and design partner yielded valuable insights into human-centred software development and technology-driven innovation.
- Our planning and development work benefited from the development of a comprehensive Sustainability Plan early in the course of the project, which provided clarity about rollout, next steps and prioritisation of features.

## Learnings for the broader social services sector

- Data security and consumer privacy emerged as key considerations. While these are always a priority for family services organisations, this project further developed the understanding of how to manage this in a digital environment.
- For practitioners and agencies to have confidence in the platform, it was necessary to develop an innovative approach to privacy where no identifying information is stored in the platform itself, yet practitioners are still able to track consumers.
- The issue of optimising workflows and offering efficiency to users emerged as essential for effective use of outcomes data. Through our consultation and design process, we identified inefficient systems as a major barrier to data use for practice improvement.
- Developing and establishing new systems requires careful analysis of the existing systems that are in place. Our consultations with sector representatives reinforced the importance of fitting within existing workflows and avoiding 'one more platform' that users have to navigate.
- Capacity to export data can enable streamlined reporting for organisations, for both internal practice improvement processes and for obligations to funders.
- Our sector-based reviewers recognised the value of having a structured system for consent, assessment, and client information, as well as the flexibility enabled by shared access to client records across teams.

## Additional information

We are currently working on next steps for the phased roll out of the online platform within the sector. This will include ongoing iterative development and adaptation of the platform to further improve fit with users' needs.

These next steps also include plans to expand the platform to include additional tools beyond the MaaPs to continue to increase the value we are able to offer the sector through the platform. We are also committed to integrating the platform into our existing continuous practice improvement framework to further support data-driven decision-making regarding practice and enable collaborative practice across the sector.

We are in the process of establishing partnerships with service providers as early adopters to participate in our roll out of the platform. These partners would receive access to the platform, support with implementation and continuous practice improvement, while contributing to the future functionality and refinement of the platform. Further information is available via the contact detail below.

## Enquiries

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