



Media Release - 19 August 2019

## **Collaboration for Better Mental Health Care of Australian Parents: Perinatal Mental Health Consumer Consortium Forms**

Supporting the emotional wellbeing of Australian parents is a team effort.

With more than 100,000 expectant and new parents affected by perinatal depression and anxiety each year, working collaboratively to reach and support these parents is essential.

A consumer consortium of the leading providers in perinatal mental health care has recently been formed to harness the expertise, care and passion at the heart of each organisation and to create greater impact.

The CEOs of these organisations including Gidget Foundation Australia, PANDA, PANDSI and Peach Tree Perinatal Wellness have come together to collaborate, and they recently met with The Hon Greg Hunt MP, Minister for Health, to discuss their plans.

Arabella Gibson, CEO of Gidget Foundation Australia hopes to see significant change in the way that mental health is discussed.

“1 in 5 new mums and 1 in 10 new dads will experience perinatal depression and anxiety, and 50% of new parents will experience adjustment disorders. The emotional wellbeing of expectant and new parents needs to be treated in the same way that we consider our physical wellbeing during pregnancy and the first year of parenthood. The more we can support new parents, the more lives we can not only save but allow to thrive,” Gibson said.

With suicide remaining the leading cause of maternal death, collaborating as a consumer consortium has the power to create real and significant change, and to further reduce the stigma around perinatal mental illness.

A united group of organisations with such a vast range of expertise and lived experience, provides a powerful opportunity to collaborate and amplify the advocacy efforts of each organisation.

Terri Smith, CEO of PANDA sees the benefit of working together to support the best outcome for all families affected by perinatal mental illness.

“We want ensure that every expectant and new parent knows it is important to look after their emotional and mental health in the same way they would their physical health. Recognising signs of perinatal mental illness and getting help as soon as possible is crucial.”

Dr Yvonne Luxford, CEO of PANDSI is concerned that messages around perinatal mental health are not reaching all Australians.

“We are proud of our diverse community, but unfortunately programs and information promoting positive perinatal mental health outcomes can sometimes miss those who would benefit. Working together we can better ensure the development of inclusive messaging and care delivery that can help all parents across a range of cultures and languages.”

Viv Kissane, CEO of Peach Tree Perinatal Wellness hopes to see a commitment of funding towards a variety of treatment options and support services that can be delivered flexibly and are easily accessible to parents with infants and young children. “We can’t ignore the benefit of early intervention on the next generation. Our early life experiences impact on our life long health outcomes. Supporting parents to be emotionally well, and to have secure relationships with their children is a critical part of a healthy, thriving family and community”.

The consortium has plans to work together to promote better understanding of perinatal mental health amongst new parents, clinicians, the general public and decision makers. The consortium hopes to work inclusively with consumers to develop programs that provide screening, quality care and support and treatment services in a manner that best meets the needs of each parent.

#### **ENDS.**

Enquiries can be directed towards any of the following members of the Perinatal Mental Health Consumer Consortium:

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