



**Media Release – November 2019**

## **The \$877m annual cost of perinatal depression and anxiety in Australia revealed on the eve of Perinatal Mental Health Week, 10 - 16 November 2019**

AUSTRALIA – On the eve of Perinatal Mental Health Week 2019, it's revealed that perinatal depression and anxiety is costing Australia \$877 million annually. This is according to new PwC Australia analysis prepared for Gidget Foundation Australia, a national not-for-profit organisation offering free support services to families suffering emotional distress throughout pregnancy and the early stages of parenting.

*The Cost of Perinatal Depression and Anxiety in Australia* reveals that, in the first year, the economic costs alone equal \$643 million as a result of productivity losses associated with increased workforce exit, absenteeism, presenteeism and carer requirements.

Australia's \$877 million annual bill for perinatal depression and anxiety also includes significant health costs of \$227 million, comprising of increased use of primary, community and hospital services and increased risk of certain health conditions for both the parent and child. Further, the annual cost includes \$7 million in wellbeing impacts such as increased likelihood of developmental issues, depression, anxiety and childhood ADHD diagnoses.

CEO of Gidget Foundation Australia, Arabella Gibson, said: "Each year, one in five mothers and one in ten fathers or partners experience perinatal depression and anxiety in Australia. This study quantifies the widespread immediate and ongoing health, economic and wellbeing impacts of perinatal depression and anxiety on parents and children.

This analysis includes in its scope the cost of perinatal depression and anxiety to *both* parents to enable a broader understanding of its impacts to the individual, family and community more broadly. Another insight is that almost half (45%) of fathers are not aware that men can experience postnatal depression as well as women.

Marty Jovic, Partner in Health Economics and Policy at PwC Australia, said: "The findings of this study help to demonstrate the scale and breadth of the challenges we face in responding to perinatal depression and anxiety in Australia and highlight the importance of cross-sector collaboration to make the most of the many opportunities recommended throughout the report on prevention, early intervention, and tailored treatment."

Jen Vo-Phuoc, Director in Health Economics and Policy at PwC Australia, said: "This study also presents the medium and long-term health, economic and wellbeing costs in Australia of perinatal depression and anxiety, which rise to over \$1.2 billion three years after the birth of a baby. This is made up of \$195 million in health costs, \$1 billion in economic costs and \$14 million in wellbeing costs.

"It's clear perinatal depression and anxiety touches not only the parent having the experience but can also have impacts on the child and wider family, with some of these impacts lasting a lifetime. By presenting the medium and long term costs of perinatal depression and anxiety to both parents we hope to contribute to a broader understanding of its impacts on the individual, family and community more broadly," Vo-Phuoc added.

While much of the focus is often placed on the health of the child during pregnancy, and after birth, it is equally important that, as a community, we address the emotional wellbeing of the parents as well. During Perinatal Mental Health Week (10-16 November 2019), Gidget Foundation Australia strongly encourages the community to reach out to loved ones and start listening to what's not being said – the 'silent' signs of a new parent in need.

'Gidget' was the nickname of a vibrant young mother who took her own life while suffering postnatal depression. She hid her suffering from even her loving family and friends. They established the Gidget Foundation in her



memory, determined that what happened to Gidget would not happen to others. The Foundation's mission is to raise awareness and knowledge of the importance of emotional wellbeing as well as providing treatment services.

**Gidget Foundation Australia**

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**About Gidget Foundation Australia**

Gidget Foundation Australia is a national not for profit organisation. It exists to promote emotional wellbeing and to raise awareness of perinatal depression and anxiety amongst expectant and new parents, their families, their health providers and the wider community to ensure that those in need receive timely, appropriate and supportive care. Gidget Foundation Australia's programs include:

- Gidget Emotional Wellbeing Program, early intervention screening at hospitals
- Gidget House model of care, providing 10 free face to face psychological support sessions for families experiencing emotional distress during pregnancy and early parenthood
- Gidget Start Talking Telehealth Program, providing 10 free video call psychological counselling sessions for families experiencing emotional distress during pregnancy and early parenthood
- Education and awareness programs for health professionals and the community
- Advocacy and active memberships of professional networks
- Research and contribution to mainstream and professional publications
- Development and distribution of resources

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**Perinatal Mental Health Consortium**

This report was commissioned by Gidget Foundation Australia and the Perinatal Mental Health Consortium. This Consortium is a collaboration between four leading perinatal mental health consumer organisations in Australia: Gidget Foundation Australia, PANDA Australia, Peach Tree Perinatal Wellness and Perinatal Wellbeing Centre. With a vast range of both clinical expertise and lived experience, the Consortium's united voices aim to amplify perinatal mental health and wellbeing, and advocate for the best outcomes for all Australian families.



**Notes to editor:**

**Table 1** Summary of economic costs by impact domain and time period

| Impact domain | Year one | Years two to three |
|---------------|----------|--------------------|
| Health        | \$227m   | \$195m             |
| Economic      | \$643m   | \$1.0b             |
| Wellbeing     | \$7m     | \$14m              |
| Total         | \$877m   | \$1.2b             |

**Table 2** Summary of cost elements by impact domain

| Impact domain | Cost elements                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|---------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Health        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased use of primary and community health services (parent)</li> <li>Increased use of hospitals (parent)</li> <li>Increased risk of chronic diseases (parent)</li> <li>Increased risk of substance abuse (parent)</li> <li>Increased risk of low birth weight and premature birth (child)</li> <li>Reduced immune system response (child)</li> <li>Increased likelihood of asthma and respiratory conditions (child)</li> </ul> |
| Economic      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased workforce exit (parent)</li> <li>Absenteeism (parent)</li> <li>Presenteeism (parent)</li> <li>Increased likelihood of family breakdown (wider family)</li> <li>Carer requirements (wider family)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Wellbeing     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased risk of depression (child)</li> <li>Increased risk of anxiety (child)</li> <li>Increased risk of ADHD (child)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |