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MEDIA RELEASE

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\$16.6 million investment for perinatal mental health services

The Australian Government is building on its commitment to support the mental health and wellbeing of expectant and new parents by investing \$16.6 million into nine new projects as part of the Perinatal Mental Health and Wellbeing Program.

It is estimated that up to one in ten women experience depression while pregnant, and one in seven women in the year after birth. Men can also experience perinatal mental illness, with approximately one in ten expectant and new fathers experiencing depression, anxiety or other forms of emotional distress in the perinatal period.

The \$16.6 million, provided as part of the Emerging Priorities Grant Opportunity, will support innovative projects that address gaps in national perinatal mental health service delivery, education and training.

Among the grants, Karitane, a non-profit leader in parenting services, will receive \$9.44 million over four years for its National Perinatal and Infant Mental Health – Connect and Care Program.

This project will provide a national triage and referral system for parents experiencing moderate to severe perinatal mental health concerns, and help these families navigate the mental health system.

Other projects to be funded include:

- \$2.59 million for the University of Newcastle to deliver the SMS4dads digital prevention and early intervention service, for fathers, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander fathers, living in rural and remote regions
- \$1.36 million for Transitioning Well Pty Ltd to develop and deliver digital resources to assist owners/operators of small businesses support the mental health and wellbeing of employees who are new parents or are expecting a baby
- \$750,000 for the Centre of Perinatal Excellence (COPE) to review and update *Mental Health Care in the Perinatal Period: Australian Clinical Practice Guideline*
- \$750,000 for Possums for Mothers and Babies to deliver training and professional peer support for health professionals and new parents in rural communities

- \$650,000 for Western Sydney University to develop and deliver a digital national learning resource to improve the mental health literacy of young mothers
- \$520,000 for Western Sydney University to develop and deliver a perinatal mental health training program for clinicians who provide care for women in pregnancy, birth and the early postnatal period
- \$290,000 for an alliance of perinatal mental health organisations led by the Gidget Foundation Australia to deliver a national awareness campaign held annually in November during Perinatal Mental Health Week, and
- \$250,000 for the Murdoch University Ngangk Yira Research Centre for Aboriginal Health and Social Equity to produce health practitioner training materials and develop a mobile phone-based app version of the *Baby Coming You Ready* assessment and screening program for Aboriginal women.

The Perinatal Mental Health and Wellbeing Program aims to improve the range of services available for expectant and new parents experiencing or at risk of perinatal mental illness, or grieving after miscarriage, stillbirth or infant death.

As part of this program, we also announced \$13.56 million on 1 January 2021 to provide continued support to existing funded organisations, including Red Nose, Perinatal Anxiety and Depression Australia (PANDA) and the Parent Infant Research Institute, bringing the total investment in perinatal mental health services since 2019 to a record \$118.1 million.

The 2021-22 Budget also included a further \$47.4 million to support the mental health and wellbeing of new and expectant parents as part of the \$353.9 million investment in women's health and historic \$2.3 billion for the National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan.

Our Government continues to make mental health and suicide prevention a national priority, with expenditure on mental health services and supports expected to be an unprecedented \$6.3 billion in 2020–21 alone.

Anyone experiencing distress can seek immediate advice and support through Perinatal Anxiety and Depression Australia (PANDA) helpline (1300 726 306), Beyond Blue (1300 224 636), Lifeline (13 11 14), or the Government's digital mental health gateway, Head to Health (www.headtohealth.gov.au).

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