

Australia invests \$13.6M to support mental health of new and expectant parents

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The new program will extend funding for existing national perinatal mental health and wellbeing services



The Australian Government is supporting expectant and new parents providing \$13.6 million through its \$43.9 million Perinatal Mental Health and Wellbeing Program to extend vital national perinatal mental health services under Perinatal Anxiety and Depression Australia (PANDA) helpline.

Almost 100,000 Australian parents are affected by perinatal depression and anxiety each year. One in 10 women experience this while pregnant and one in seven in the year after birth. Men can also experience perinatal mental illness.

Reports say, since March 2020, the number of new callers to the PANDA helpline has doubled. In May 2020, the Australian Government provided \$320,000 additional funding to the helpline and in September a further \$350,000 in funding to ensure that the helpline is able to meet the increased demand from parents impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in Victoria.

Dedicated perinatal mental health support, perinatal loss and bereavement peer support, and perinatal mental health promotion and training will be delivered by trusted organisations right across Australia. This will complement the work being done by Primary Health Networks in ensuring tailored local mental health services are available on-the-ground in every community.

The new program will extend funding for existing national perinatal mental health and wellbeing services including:

- PANDA's National Perinatal Anxiety and Depression helpline
- Red Nose's helpline and peer support
- Sand's helpline and peer support
- the MumSpace website (www.mumspace.com.au) which hosts the MumMoodBooster treatment program and the MindMum smartphone app

This funding builds on the \$1.3 million delivered to Sands Australia for an intensive support service to families affected by stillbirth, as well as \$3 million for national education and awareness programs to demystify stillbirth and reduce its incidence

announced last year.

The Australian Government continues to prioritise better mental health, with an unprecedented \$5.7 billion to be spent on mental health in 2020–21.