

MEDIA RELEASE - 7 November 2019

## **\$877 million: Annual Cost of Perinatal Depression and Anxiety in Australia**

AUSTRALIA – Perinatal depression and anxiety is costing Australia \$877 million annually, according to new PwC Australia analysis prepared for Gidget Foundation Australia. The analysis was produced with contribution from Gidget Foundation Australia, PANDA Australia, Peach Tree Perinatal Wellness and Perinatal Wellbeing Centre. Together, these four leading perinatal mental health consumer organisations have formed the Perinatal Mental Health Consortium. *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.

Arabella Gibson, CEO of the Gidget Foundation Australia, 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.

Viv Kissane, CEO of Peach Tree Perinatal Wellness says, “The findings are staggering but not unexpected given that the perinatal period, during pregnancy and the first year after birth, is a time of great change for both parents. We believe understanding the cost of perinatal depression and anxiety to Australia will assist with awareness raising to help ensure families are receiving the support they need during the critical early parenthood stage.

Julie Borninkhof, CEO of PANDA says, “Perinatal depression and anxiety is a complex and far-reaching issue that requires holistic prevention and treatment. There are also different risk factors among fathers and partners, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities and LGBTIQ+ communities compared to the general population that need to be taken into account. For example, almost half of fathers are not aware that men can experience postnatal depression as well as women.”

Dr Yvonne Luxford, CEO of Perinatal Wellbeing Centre, said “I am so excited to have a current study on perinatal mental health that is specific to the Australian situation and so strongly evidence based. It will be really useful in helping us to ensure better access to care for families who need it, as well as identifying pathways for collaboration and prevention. The high costs incurred by government, communities and families as a result of perinatal mental health conditions also point to the significant burdens placed on the perinatal mental health services sector; many small organisations are working extremely hard to provide these services despite being chronically under-funded and relying heavily on the generosity of donors and volunteers.”

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 child ADHD diagnoses.

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 \$1.5 billion three years after the birth of a baby. This is made up of \$195 million in health costs, \$1.3 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.”

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### ***Perinatal Mental Health Consortium***

*The Perinatal Mental Health 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.*

### ***PwC***

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**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>

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