



## Media Release

# **Gidget House Manly Opens *and* NSW Deputy Premier announces \$1 million commitment to support perinatal mental health for expectant and new parents during COVID-19**

Today, while officially opening Gidget House Manly (NSW), NSW Deputy Premier, the Hon John Barilaro MP and the Minister for Mental Health, Regional Youth and Women, the Hon Bronnie Taylor MLC, announced a \$1 million commitment to Gidget Foundation Australia to continue its support of the perinatal mental health of expectant and new parents during the COVID-19 pandemic.

NSW Deputy Premier, the Hon John Barilaro MP, said that the pandemic has been an incredibly tough time for many Australians, but especially expectant and new parents.

“The NSW Government acknowledges the increased need to support perinatal mental health now more than ever, which is why we’ve committed \$1 million to Gidget Foundation Australia to assist in meeting the demand that these challenging times have placed on expectant and new parents. We could not be prouder to announce this funding today as we open Gidget House Manly.

“As a father of three daughters, I know first-hand how important it is to have access to a service like Gidget House for new parents and young families. Everyone’s parenting journey is different, but it is critical that new mums and dads have access to help when they need it. I want to thank and congratulate the Foundation for the amazing work they do. To see Royal Far West and Gidget Foundation Australia team up like this for the community is really exciting,” Barilaro said.

The new psychological counselling service will be opening at Gidget House Manly, located in the former Royal Far West Medical Centre, now revitalised by WOTSO at 19-21 South Steyne, on 7 July 2020. In partnership with Royal Far West, Gidget House Manly provides free face-to-face psychological counselling sessions for GP-referred expectant and new parents experiencing perinatal depression and anxiety (PNDA). Due to COVID-19, all appointments are currently being conducted by [telehealth video-counselling](#) (or telephone) until further notice.

Arabella Gibson, CEO of Gidget Foundation Australia, said, “We are incredibly grateful for the NSW Government’s commitment to both perinatal mental health and our organisation. In a survey that we conducted recently, 81% of expectant and new parents admitted to being more anxious since the start of COVID-19. We want expectant and new parents to know that we are here for them, and that we will do whatever we can to support them.

“For the Gidget Foundation today is an extra special day as we team up with Royal Far West to provide comprehensive psychological counselling for expectant and new parents on the Northern Beaches. We are launching Gidget House Manly now, rather than waiting for the end of the outbreak, because we know of the heightened levels of stress being experienced. These services will mean that many more mums and dads will have the support they need during this vulnerable and isolating time in their parenting journey.”

Gidget House Manly is the sixth Sydney metro site, joining its sister-services in the expanding [Gidget Foundation Australia](#) network of Gidget Houses, which also includes Taree, Dubbo, Queanbeyan and Coffs Harbour in regional NSW, Toowoomba in QLD, and Clayton in Victoria. The Gidget Foundation and Royal Far West recognise the importance of supporting the emotional wellbeing of expectant and new parents – now, more than ever.

Lindsay Cane AM, CEO Royal Far West, said “We’re delighted to join forces with Gidget Foundation Australia to support expectant and new parents with psychological counselling in the Northern Beaches. Our charity has been supporting the health and developmental needs of country children and their families for nearly 100 years, and we understand all too well the value of targeted support at the right time. We couldn’t be prouder to help provide our local community with this invaluable service.”

Minister for Mental Health, Regional Youth and Women, the Hon. Bronnie Taylor MLC, said there can be no doubt that babies are a blessing, but when a baby arrives it can also be one of the most challenging times in a mother's life.

“Sometimes we can forget that it can be a stressful, lonely and overwhelming time caring for a newborn. I acknowledge the wonderful staff from the Gidget House centres; they are passionate about helping families in their hour of need and I’m proud to be part of a government that supports Gidget Foundation Australia,” Taylor said.

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#### **About Gidget Foundation Australia**

Anxiety and depression during pregnancy and early parenthood, the perinatal period, affects 1 in 5 new mums and 1 in 10 new dads. Gidget is the nickname of a vibrant young mother from Sydney who took her own life while suffering from unrecognised postnatal depression. She hid her suffering from her loving family and friends. They created the Gidget Foundation, determined that what happened to Gidget would not happen to others.

Gidget Foundation Australia assists thousands of expectant parents and their families each year through its [Gidget House](#) face-to-face services (with an increasing number of locations), its [Start Talking](#) telehealth program and Emotional Wellbeing antenatal screening programs conducted through participating hospitals.

#### **About Royal Far West**

Royal Far West is one of Australia’s oldest and most respected charities and is the only national charity dedicated to the developmental health and wellbeing of Australia’s country kids. Established in 1924, Royal Far West provides a truly integrated service and offers health, education and disability services for country children and their families at the Centre for Country Kids in Manly, as well as virtually via Telecare and in local communities.

Through a team of more than 80 paediatric specialists, Royal Far West supports children aged 2-12 with a range of concerns including speech and language delays; behavioural and conduct disorders; early life trauma and mental illness; autism, attention deficit and hyperactivity disorders.

#### **For further information, interviews or images:**

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Gidget Foundation Australia exists to promote the importance of emotional wellbeing among expectant and new parents, their healthcare providers and the wider community to ensure that those in need receive timely, appropriate and supportive care.