

## Vital psychological support for new parents arrives in Victoria

- **Gidget House Clayton hosts official launch in partnership with Jean Hailes for Women's Health**
- **This launch marks the official opening of face-to-face services**
- **During 2020 Gidget House Clayton held over 500 telehealth appointments supporting expectant and new parents**

**EMBARGO: Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> May, 12pm.** Victoria's first Gidget House hosts official launch of face-to-face services this 3 May, after a year of delivering treatment through telehealth. Gidget House Clayton, which offers free psychological counselling services, launches ahead of World Maternal Mental Health Day (5 May) and will be officiated by Dr Katie Allen, Member for Higgins.

Whilst appointments have been running via telehealth throughout COVID, this launch marks the official opening. This means that Gidget's team of local perinatal Clinicians are now able to offer a blended service of online counselling with the added value of face-to-face interaction.

Since it 'virtually' opened its doors last year, Gidget House Clayton has helped over 90 Victorian families with 509 appointments.

Gidget House Clayton in partnership with Jean Hailes for Women's Health offers a service providing free psychological counselling sessions for GP-referred expectant and new parents experiencing perinatal depression and anxiety (PNDA).

CEO of Gidget Foundation Australia, Arabella Gibson says, "We commenced telehealth for Victoria's first Gidget House so that we could operate at the height of the pandemic. Unpredictable times provide even more challenges for those who are already experiencing perinatal depression and anxiety. Over the past year, we've increased our service provision in Victoria by 243%. Whilst it is unfortunate that there is such a need for this support at all, we're pleased to be able to help expectant and new parents when they are at their most vulnerable.

"A year on, Gidget House Clayton will officially launch to welcome even more expectant and new parents into our community. With the announcement of telehealth funding to be continued until the end of this year, we are pleased to be able to offer a blended service, mixing face-to-face and virtual appointments.

"We're delighted to be working with the team at Jean Hailes for Women's Health to expand our services for Victorians. Emotional wellbeing and mental health is equally as important as that of physical health. The long-standing commitment of Jean Hailes to women's health is the perfect complement to Gidget's services ensuring holistic support for expectant and new mothers," says Gibson.

Gidget House offers free counselling services by appointment and employs local Clinicians. The services on offer will mean more mums will have the support they need through a blended service of both online and face-to-face appointments during their most vulnerable times in their parenting journey.

Janet Hailes Michelmore AO, CEO of Jean Hailes for Women's Health says of the partnership, "We're thrilled to share the Jean Hailes Clayton medical clinic with Gidget House and incredibly proud of the work we've done so far.

“Gidget Foundation Australia’s personal and professional approach is invaluable for expectant and new parents and perfectly aligns with our aims and the support we offer. At Jean Hailes, we welcome women through all of their life stages and I’m so happy that we are officially launching Gidget House Clayton so that more people can benefit from both of our services.

“At Jean Hailes for Women’s Health, we support women across a range of health issues supporting specially designed education programs for all women and girls in Australia. It is important for us to actively support the development and implementation of crucial services such as the work of Gidget Foundation Australia as we’re all working towards the same goal,” says Hailes Michelmore.

Gidget House Clayton is the first Victorian Gidget House and joins its sister-services in the expanding Gidget Foundation Australia network of Gidget Houses in Toowoomba, Sydney and regional New South Wales.

Nicola Redhouse, a Gidget Angel, experienced perinatal anxiety after she gave birth to her eldest son.

“When my son was three months old, convinced I had failed at routine and that the problem likely boiled down to sleep and sleep deprivation, I got us in to a residential Sleep School program for three nights. The acute level of panic had tapered off but, aside from delighting in the deliciousness of my son, with whom I had formed a strong attachment, I was feeling little joy.

“When my son was six months old, I became kinder to myself. I got to a point where I thought, ‘Yes, this is very much your struggle in life, to find it hard to separate, and motherhood has thrown you into the most challenging emotional experience you could face in that regard, in having another human rely on you for their livelihood, but you need respite from this while you work all that out. You need some joy again’.

“Gidget Foundation Australia does wonderful things for men and women like me who need someone to talk to to help them navigate the emotional challenges of parenthood. Having a baby can be a very lonely time and this, coupled with existing struggles with depression and anxiety, can make it a difficult and painful experience. Having free access to people who understand and are available to talk to is vital to recovery and to getting yourself well and able to enjoy life with your child again,” says Redhouse.

Pregnancy and childbirth bring much joy along with a few challenges, and Gidget Foundation Australia and Jean Hailes recognise the importance of emotional wellbeing for expectant and new parents, and the need to provide them with support and services.

Interviews: Arabella Gibson, Janet Michelmore, and Nicola Redhouse will be available for interviews and photographs at the launch. Please contact MediaCast to arrange interviews outside this time.

-ENDS-

### **About Gidget Foundation Australia**

Previously known as postnatal depression, perinatal anxiety and depression during pregnancy and early parenthood (the perinatal period) affects almost 100,000 Australians each year, equating to 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 even from her loving family and friends. They created the Gidget Foundation, determined that what happened to Gidget would not happen to others.

Today, Gidget Foundation Australia assists thousands of expectant parents and their families each year and provides psychological services to parents in need through its Gidget House face-to-face services (at an

expanding number of locations), its Start Talking telehealth program and Emotional Wellbeing antenatal screening programs conducted through participating hospitals.

Gidget Foundation Australia is a not-for-profit organisation, supported by the community, the corporate sector, the medical profession, the NSW and Commonwealth Governments, and the media.

### **About Jean Hailes for Women's Health**

Jean Hailes for Women's Health is a national not-for-profit organisation dedicated to improving women's health across Australia through every life stage. Jean Hailes has a unique model, built on four pillars: education and knowledge exchange; research; policy; and clinical care, with two medical centres in Victoria.

Jean Hailes aims to translate the latest scientific and medical evidence to help inspire positive change in women and girls by improving their physical health and wellbeing. [jeanhailes.org.au](http://jeanhailes.org.au)

### **Arabella Gibson**

Arabella joined Gidget Foundation Australia in early 2017 after a 20-year career in executive leadership roles in the media and communications industry in both Australia and the UK.

Arabella has a passion for improving support systems for expectant and new parents by building emotionally resilient families. Since joining the Foundation, Arabella has expanded its Gidget House program, offering face-to-face psychology support to cover 3 states and a further 13 sites (14 in total). Under her leadership, the Foundation has introduced 3 new programs providing direct support: Start Talking, offering nationwide telehealth services for regional, rural, and remote communities; and Gidget Village, group therapy support and Gidget Virtual Village, a peer moderated support program for parents experiencing perinatal depression and anxiety.

### **Janet Hailes Michelmore AO**

Janet is daughter of the late Dr Jean Hailes and a passionate advocate of women's health. An important feature of Janet's work has been to identify and address gaps in knowledge and care with evidence-based programs designed to meet the changing needs of women right around Australia. Janet was instrumental in bringing to life the first national Women's Health Week in 2013, which has seen thousands of women across Australia take part in a week of online activities, videos, resources and information each year since.

**For further enquiries please contact MediaCast on 07 3160 3370**

Amy Bramman [amyb@mediacast.com.au](mailto:amyb@mediacast.com.au)

Cavill Stone [cavill@mediacast.com.au](mailto:cavill@mediacast.com.au)