



## Ministers

Department of Health and Aged Care

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# \$13.6 million to support the mental health of new and expectant parents

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the incidence and severity of perinatal depression and anxiety. Since March 2020, the number of new callers to the Perinatal Anxiety and Depression Australia (PANDA) helpline has doubled. 43% of all calls to the PANDA helpline come from Victoria.

### **The Hon Greg Hunt MP**

Former Minister for Health and Aged Care

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The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the incidence and severity of perinatal depression and anxiety. Since March 2020, the number of new callers to the Perinatal Anxiety and Depression Australia (PANDA) helpline has doubled. 43% of all calls to the PANDA helpline come from Victoria.

The Morrison Government is supporting expectant and new parents providing \$13.6 million through our \$43.9 million Perinatal Mental Health and Wellbeing Program to extend vital national perinatal mental health services.

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, with about one in 10 expectant and new fathers experiencing depression, anxiety or other forms of emotional distress.

Callers to the helpline are also presenting with more intense and enduring mental illness with call times rising from 15 to 30 minutes prior to COVID-19 to 30 to 45 minutes.

In May our Government provided \$320,000 additional funding for the PANDA 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.

The \$13.6 million in additional funding will ensure that PANDA and other key national programs will continue to support women and their families affected by perinatal mental illness, or experiencing grief after the death of a child during this challenging period.

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](http://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 Morrison Government continues to prioritise better mental health for all Australians, with an unprecedented \$5.7 billion to be spent on mental health in 2020–21.

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Mental health and suicide prevention