

Shortage of specialist perinatal mental health clinicians tackled through inaugural Workforce Development Program

- **Gidget Foundation Australia saw a 127% increase in the demand for perinatal mental health services in 2021**
- **To address a nationwide shortage of specialist clinicians, Gidget Foundation Australia created an industry leading Workforce Development Program, to better support the 100,000 Australians impacted by perinatal depression and anxiety (PNDA)**
- **Commonwealth Acting Assistant Secretary for Mental Health Services Matthew Short will present the first cohort of 15 clinicians certifying their graduation from the Gidget Foundation Perinatal and Infant Mental Health Training and Development Institute**

Demand for perinatal mental health services has continued to surge year-on-year since the beginning of the pandemic. In fact, perinatal mental health charity, Gidget Foundation Australia (GFA), delivered 127% more clinical treatment services in 2021 than in 2020, which was already up by 69% in 2019.

To address the nationwide shortage of specialist perinatal mental health clinicians; exacerbated by the pandemic, the not for profit launched an innovative solution, the **Perinatal and Infant Mental Health Training and Development Institute**, to deliver the industry leading Workforce Development Program.

The free program offers comprehensive training and supervision to clinicians who have some clinical experience but limited perinatal mental health experience and are looking to develop skills and experience in the field.

Perinatal depression and anxiety impacts almost 100,000 Australians each year, equating to one in five new mums and one in ten new dads, with PNDA costing Australia \$877 million annually, [as reported by PwC](#).

Arabella Gibson, CEO of Gidget Foundation Australia, says that the increase in demand for their services required a strategy to allow more clinicians to gain clinical training, supervision and experience in perinatal mental health.

“This year has seen demand continue to rise with our clinicians delivering 51% more appointments in 2022, to date than in 2021. This increase has highlighted the need for growth within the specialist perinatal mental health field, which is why we’re thrilled to be able to offer this opportunity for health professionals to broaden their skills in perinatal work.

“With the support of the Commonwealth, Sydney North Health Network and NSW Government, the Institute developed a free program that offers comprehensive training and supervision to clinicians to build a stronger perinatal mental health workforce, while providing increased perinatal mental health treatment and support to families,” Ms Gibson says.

MEDIA CONTACT: For further enquiries and to RSVP please contact MediaCast on 07 3160 3370 or Amy Bramman amyb@mediacast.com.au

The GFA Perinatal and Infant Mental Health Training and Development Institute builds the workforce in the short term by utilising the expertise of senior clinicians to supervise and develop a less experienced workforce. This results in an immediate reduction in wait times to access services, while simultaneously building a stronger workforce with capacity to grow in the long term.

Over the last 12 months, Gidget Foundation Australia has recruited four expert clinical psychologists to train and supervise 15 clinicians in perinatal mental health, who are graduating from the Workforce Development Program.

To celebrate the inaugural graduation night, the 15 graduating clinicians will be presented with their certificates by **Matthew Short, Acting Assistant Secretary, Mental Health Services, Australian Government Department of Health** on 27th October at an event hosted at the Greenwood Hotel in North Sydney.

Psychologist, Alice Cole, has been a part of the Workforce Development Program and is based at Gidget House in Moruya in regional NSW, and shares her experience “Working within a rural area as a psychologist provides many joys and challenges, and I am truly passionate about mums, dads, and families in our area being provided with the same quality and accessibility of services than those in larger areas.”

“Being part of the Workforce Development Program through Gidget Foundation has allowed a network of support that I would not otherwise be afforded access to. In addition to specialist training and supervision, I believe the program has improved the quality of the service that I am able to provide for local families.”

“I am so thankful to be part of this network and able to provide perinatal mental health services within our area, which has been a gap in healthcare for many years, it is truly a privilege,” Ms Cole says.

Gidget Foundation Australia provides a range of clinical treatment programs which include free individual psychological consultations via face to face or telehealth, group treatment and early intervention screening, with 23 Gidget House locations now operating across Australia.

Gidget Foundation Australia are currently recruiting for the November 2022 intake of clinicians to take part in the Workforce Development Program. For more information on the program visit gidgetfoundation.org.au/health-professionals/pimhti/

About Gidget Foundation Australia

Gidget Foundation Australia (GFA) is a not-for-profit organisation that exists to support the emotional wellbeing of expectant and new parents, to ensure they receive timely, appropriate and specialist care. GFA provides a range of clinical treatment programs. These include individual psychological consultations (with no out-of pocket expenses) via face to face or telehealth, group treatment and early intervention screening.

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With more than 115 clinicians across Australia, GFA is the largest known contractor of perinatal specialist mental health clinicians delivering psychological services nationwide. The GFA workforce includes: clinical psychologists, registered psychologists, mental health accredited social workers and occupational therapists.

Media are invited to attend the event:

Thursday 27 October 2022, 5-7pm at Greenwood Hotel, Lounge Bar 6 Blue St, North Sydney