

Media Release

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EXTRA MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT FOR NEW PARENTS

New parents will soon have better access to the vital mental health support they need, with an investment from the Andrews Labor Government to expand and reform community perinatal mental health teams across the state.

One in five women will experience a perinatal mental health concern between conception and the time their baby is 12 months old, with anxiety and depression the most common types of illness. For women who experience a perinatal mental health illness, up to one in eight of their partners will also experience a mental health condition.

With lockdowns and restrictions on women having visitors in hospital, the pandemic has placed even more stress on new parents – and an investment of \$6.89 million will help meet the extra demand to ensure every new parent who needs support can get it quickly, and close to home.

The extra support adds to the \$20 million already delivered this year for perinatal mental health services across the state, including \$10 million for six Parent Infant Units across Victoria for women with severe mental illness and their infants, and \$7.2 million for the Perinatal Emotional Health Program to deliver community, family-centred services.

These services focus on parent-infant attachment up to the first year of the baby's life, as well as helping other vital services to deliver perinatal mental health supports – including the Perinatal Anxiety and Depression Association.

Work to rebuild Victoria's mental health system is well underway with a record \$3.8 billion funded in the *Victorian Budget 2021/22* to implement every recommendation made by the Royal Commission into Mental Health System.

The Royal Commission outlined the critical importance of perinatal mental health for parents with their infants, taking a family-centred approach.

The Royal Commission also recommended people with lived experience of the mental health system are put at the heart of its reform – and this extra perinatal support will ensure those who have experienced mental health concerns as new parents can use their experiences to support other new families.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Mental Health James Merlino

"We can't expect new parents to give their newborns the best start in life without first looking after themselves – and this extra support will make sure every Victorian who needs support can get it quickly."

"We're not wasting a moment getting on with the job of rebuilding our mental health system from the ground up for every Victorian – and delivering for young families is a key part of supporting our state's mental health."