



Perinatal Anxiety & Depression Australia

Pre-budget submission 2022-2023

About PANDA

Perinatal Anxiety & Depression Australia (PANDA) is the national perinatal mental health lead organisation, supporting and representing expecting and new parents to understand and recover from perinatal mental illness, including anxiety and depression, psychosis, and suicidal ideation. We operate under four main areas:

Helpline Services:

PANDA operates Australia's only National Helpline supporting expecting and new parents affected by perinatal mental health in communities across Australia. [PANDA's National Helpline](#) delivers phone-based support to families Monday to Friday 9:00am to 7:30pm (AEST/AEDT) including public holidays. Funded solely by the Commonwealth Department of Health, our Helpline team provided support through 42,500 calls in 2021. This would not have been possible without the additional \$1.9 million investment in our services.

Information, tools, and resources:

PANDA maintains a website with valuable information and advice for expecting and new parents, including a free online [Mental Health Checklist for Expecting and New Parents](#). This is a self-screening tool for people to assess their wellbeing and seek professional support if necessary. PANDA's Checklist has struck a chord in the community since its launch in October 2018 and has now been completed by over 83,000 individuals. In 2021, PANDA launched a suite of print, online and video resources for CALD communities, with more being added to this suite in 2022.

Community engagement:

PANDA's national Community Engagement volunteer program harnesses the voices, passion, and energy of those who have recovered from perinatal mental illness and vulnerability. Known as PANDA Community Champions, they help raise awareness, reduce stigma, and share a message of hope and recovery. Over the past four years, PANDA has built an informed and engaged [Community Champion Network](#) which has now grown to over 340 members with lived experience of perinatal mental health issues. This Network informs our day-to-day activity, helps develop national guidance and advocates for awareness opportunities and service models. Through this volunteer peer workforce, we firmly place lived experience at the centre of everything we do.

Training, education, and provider support:

PANDA provides sought-after and valued practice support and patient information resources to child health nurses, midwives, and other perinatal health providers across Australia. We deliver regular professional development activities, online workshops, and in-service sessions. PANDA runs a national community of practice and a growing [Clinical Champion Network](#) with 270 registered clinical champions.

PANDA provides online resources and training to facilitators of group programs for vulnerable and isolated children and families. PANDA has worked tirelessly to launch the [PANDA Learning Hub](#) - an online Learning Management System (LMS).

What we know

Perinatal anxiety and depression impacts approximately 100,000 Australian families every year - *1 in 5 mums and 1 in 10 dads*. However, our data shows these rates have increased at an alarming rate since March 2020, due to COVID-19 fear and stress. Families are being displaced and financial pressures have been at an all-time high for many new and expecting families.

Prior to COVID, 1 in 5 mums and 1 in 10 dads experienced perinatal anxiety and depression, but we know this rate has increased to about 1 in 3 mums and 1 in 7 dads experiencing mental illness in the perinatal period

We know:

- Perinatal mental illness is common, and a critical public health issue.
- Some families, including LGBTIQ+ parented families, CALD, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families face additional challenges to their mental health in the perinatal period.

Where we need to focus our resources

PANDA recommends the Australian Government continues to target and invest in the perinatal mental health and wellbeing of the Australian community. We also recommend ongoing commitment *across the sector* in the 2022/2023 Financial Year Budget, making further provision across the following areas:

1. To meet the ongoing demand for support in the perinatal period, increase PANDA National Helpline service hours to include weekends and extend weekday support from 8:00 am to 10:30 pm.
Funding request outlined below
2. Continue to address gaps in service delivery and unmet treatment needs for parents experiencing perinatal mental ill-health. Ensuring commissioned services work collaboratively and build service data and workforce capability.
No further funding required at this time.
3. Maintain investment in a national perinatal mental health screening program (currently delivered by COPE), with an aligned national approach to reporting and monitoring screening rates.
No further funding required at this time.
4. Build and fund targeted programs to increase awareness of perinatal mental ill-health and perinatal mental health service access in underserviced and harder to reach communities (specifically CLAD, ATSI and LGBTIQ+ families).
5. Develop and implement a program to work with expecting and new fathers to raise awareness and break down stigma about perinatal mental ill-health for fathers.
6. Develop resources to assist workplaces to promote awareness and understanding of perinatal mental ill-health for expecting and new parents and engage workplaces to support the mental health of expecting and new parents.
7. Increase awareness of postnatal psychosis and service access for women experiencing postnatal psychosis so that symptoms can be recognised early, and treatment options activated.
8. Urgently fund research and service trials to address perinatal suicide for expecting and new parents.
9. Fund promotion and expansion of PANDA'S Learning Management System (LMS) including development of content tailored to GPs, obstetricians, mental health professionals, midwives and child and family health nurses with strong engagement with professional bodies/colleges.
10. Fund the rapid expansion of a peer (lived experience) workforce across PANDA and other perinatal organisations to help design and deliver high-impact, high-volume, and high-value projects.
PANDA could undertake this activity for an additional \$650,000 in 2022-2023 and would seek ongoing funds to support this activity to 2025.
11. Fund national perinatal health and mental health service mapping, an online “way finding” platform and corresponding navigational supports.

Our ask in 2022-2023

Building on the Australian Governments significant investment in PANDA in 2021, PANDA's core focus is on addressing gaps in service delivery and unmet treatment need for parents experiencing perinatal mental ill-health. An identified way of meeting this unmet need is by increasing our hours of operation into the evenings and across weekends.

PANDA's National Helpline is still unable to immediately respond to approximately 24 per cent of calls which occur outside of our operating hours of 9am-7.30pm. These are calls from expecting and new parents who are seeking urgent support when they are at their most vulnerable. **For an additional \$6,358,552 (over 3 years) PANDA could deliver Helpline services 7 days per week (every day of the year).**

PANDA seeks urgent additional investment in either of the following national service options, noting our preferred recommendation would be Option 2:

Option	Hours of operation	Total funds required over 3 years (GST excl.) to 2025.
Option 1	Extended Hours - Saturdays, Sundays 9:00am to 7:30pm	\$5,240,307
Option 2	Extended Hours – Weekdays, Saturdays, Sundays and Public Holidays 8:00am to 10:30pm	\$6,358,552

PANDA welcomes the opportunity to discuss the 22/23 budget request options, and the long-term recommendations in more detail.

We look forward to providing further information and approaches through detailed proposals and costings.

PANDA National Helpline Service Expansion 2022-2025	\$6,358,552
TOTAL INVESTMENT 2022	\$2,057,184.58

Yours sincerely



Julie Borninkhof
Chief Executive Officer- PANDA
Mobile: 0430 496 460
Email: julie.borninkhof@panda.org.au