

25 years on: How one mum's story changed the future for thousands of Australian parents

- 25 years ago, one devastating suicide prompted family and friends to step forward and rewrite the story of perinatal depression and anxiety (PNDA) support in Australia
- Today, despite significantly higher awareness, new data reveals over a quarter of parents remain unsure where to find help¹, while suicide remains among the leading causes of death for new mothers²
- As Gidget Foundation Australia marks its 25th anniversary, the organisation reflects on decades of progress and the lives changed while looking ahead to meet growing demand and the evolving needs of expectant, new and potential parents

EMBARGO 16 July 2026: 25 years ago, one devastating suicide prompted family and friends to step forward and rewrite the story of perinatal depression and anxiety (PNDA) support in Australia. Today, as Gidget Foundation Australia marks its 25th anniversary, the organisation has grown into the nation's largest and leading provider of perinatal mental health services, with demand continuing to rise and clients supported increasing by 29% in FY26 compared with FY25.

In 2001, there was limited formal recognition of perinatal mental health in policy frameworks. In fact, debates about whether to screen for depression during pregnancy and postpartum were only just beginning.

In Sydney, a young mother nicknamed 'Gidget' died by suicide while experiencing postnatal depression. In the wake of this devastating loss, her closest family and friends came together to form not-for-profit Gidget Foundation Australia, with the aim of preventing the silent suffering experienced by parents like Gidget.

Jarrod Bowditch, Gidget's best friend and Chair of Gidget Foundation Australia's Board, reflects, "What began as a desperate need to make sense of our grief, has transformed into an organisation that is providing much needed support for expectant, new and potential parents across Australia. It has been incredible to witness and be a part of this growth. The true impact of the 135,000-plus free* perinatal psychological therapy appointments delivered by Gidget Foundation Australia over the past 25 years is measured not in numbers, but in the parents, babies and families who received support when they needed it most.

"Over the past 25 years, Australia has made enormous progress in recognising perinatal mental health and reducing the stigma surrounding it. With the dedication of our founders, the support of healthcare partners and government, Gidget Foundation Australia has grown from a grassroots initiative into the nation's leading provider of perinatal mental health services."

Today, perinatal depression and anxiety (PNDA) is a recognised public health issue. However, despite significantly higher awareness among healthcare professionals, policymakers and the general public, perinatal mental health continues to be shaped by misconceptions, stigma and shame.

New survey data commissioned by Gidget Foundation Australia reveals that nearly a third (31%) of parents would have liked their healthcare provider to have asked about their mental health during the perinatal period, and fewer than one in five (18%) parents experiencing PNDA symptoms were referred for professional help¹. While over a quarter of parents (28%) were still unsure what help was available, a third (33%) believed their symptoms were not severe enough to seek support¹.

The findings also point to the internal pressure parents can carry, with more than two in five (41%) often feeling they are not 'good enough', while two in three (67%) felt unprepared for the emotional demands of raising a child¹.

These insights point to a broader gap between awareness and meaningful support.

This pressure is further compounded by rising digital influences. Nearly a third of parents (30%) admit they compare their parenting journey to what they see online or on TV, while one in five (20%) worry about judgement from friends and family¹, adding another layer of strain during an already vulnerable period.

Gidget Foundation Australia's CEO Arabella Gibson adds, "The 25 year anniversary is a time to reflect on the lives we have changed and the progress we have made towards perinatal mental health education, awareness and accessible specialised care. Gidget Foundation Australia's 25 Year campaign marks the incredible milestones and the real impact of our services through the lived experience stories of 25 brave and courageous parents.

"Our aspiration is to transform the face of perinatal mental health for generations to come. To have turned a devastating loss into a national organisation that is breaking down barriers and ensuring expectant, new and potential parents can access the support they need is something we are incredibly proud of."

Building on its founding mission, Gidget Foundation Australia has spent the past 25 years developing a comprehensive, nation-leading model of care to meet growing demand for perinatal mental health support, which have supported over 17,500 families across Australia. Today, more than 200 perinatal mental health clinicians deliver free* psychological support services across Australia, complemented by a range of innovative programs designed to improve access, promote early intervention and ensure families receive timely care.

In addition to face-to-face support through its network of Gidget Houses, Gidget Foundation Australia offers nationwide telehealth services and specialist-led Gidget Village group therapy programs. Gidget Foundation Australia has also established the Gidget Training Institute, providing specialised education and certification pathways for nurses, midwives and mental health professionals.

To meet increasing demand, Gidget Foundation Australia has invested significantly in workforce development, strengthening Australia's specialist perinatal mental health workforce through clinical training, supervision, accredited professional education and the introduction of Australia's first Graduate Diploma in Perinatal Mental Health.

Ms Gibson adds that while the organisation has achieved a lot in 25 years, the data shows the job is far from done. "A lack of understanding about perinatal depression and anxiety remains widespread, and too many parents are still not receiving the timely recognition or support they need.

"With demand for our services rising nationwide, we are committed to expanding our reach through new locations and innovative programs, ensuring access to support is never a barrier to getting help," Ms Gibson says.

Approximately 100,000 parents in Australia experience perinatal depression and anxiety each year. With one in five mothers and one in ten fathers affected³, reinforcing the scale of unmet need and the urgency of expanding specialised support services nationwide.

Gidget Foundation Australia has expanded its national footprint with 46 Gidget Houses located across all states and territories. A further six Gidget House locations will open in the coming months.

25 years on, Gidget Foundation Australia continues to honour Gidget's legacy by working to ensure no parent must navigate perinatal depression and anxiety alone. While awareness has grown and services have expanded, persistent barriers remain, highlighting the need to ensure every Australian parent can access timely, appropriate support.

For more information about Gidget Foundation Australia's 25 Year Anniversary, visit www.gidgetfoundation.org.au/25-years



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About Gidget Foundation Australia

2026 marks Gidget Foundation Australia's 25-year anniversary. Gidget Foundation Australia is a not-for-profit organisation that exists to support the mental health of expectant, new and potential parents to ensure they receive accessible, timely and specialist care.

As the leading national provider of perinatal mental health services, Gidget Foundation Australia provides year-long, free* individual and group perinatal mental health psychological therapy services delivered in-person and via telehealth. Gidget Foundation Australia invests in its 200+ clinicians through innovative training, mentoring and supervision to meet growing demand.

To access perinatal mental health support – those affected need to speak to a GP about a referral and a Mental Health Treatment Plan or contact Gidget Foundation Australia's Client Experience Team on 1300 GIDGET to discuss support options specific to their needs.

Although there have been incredible advances in perinatal mental health awareness, education and support since 2001, there is still so much more to do. Gidget Foundation Australia's key focus for the next 25 years is to transform perinatal mental health for the next generation.

About Gidget

Gidget was the nickname of a vibrant young mother who tragically died by suicide while experiencing postnatal depression, a diagnosis she kept close to her heart.

Together, her loving family and friends created Gidget Foundation Australia determined that what happened to Gidget would not happen to others.

About the Citations

1. Gidget Foundation Australia survey, November 2025

The data by Gidget Foundation Australia was carried out on a sample of 1,069 Australians in November 2025. Methodology: The data sample was weighted against ABS data for age, gender and location using an online survey that is independently conducted and verified PureProfile.

2. Maternal deaths in Australia, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), November 2025

https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/mothers-babies/maternal-deaths-australia?utm_source=copilot.com

3. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, November 2024

<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/mothers-babies/perinatal-mental-health-screening-australia/contents/what-is-perinatal-mental-health>

* *The cost of services provided through Gidget House are funded through Medicare bulk billing. There are no out-of-pocket costs for up to 10 individual psychological therapy sessions per calendar year. A referral from a GP and a mental health treatment plan are required.*