MEDIA RELEASE

Perinatal Mental Health Australia Appoints Founding CEO

Alicia Yelavich to lead Australia's national peak body for perinatal mental health

30 September 2026, Sydney: Perinatal Mental Health Australia (PMHA), Australia's national peak body for perinatal mental health, has announced the appointment of Alicia Yelavich as its Founding Chief Executive Officer.

The appointment marks an important milestone in PMHA's evolution as it strengthens its role as the national voice for perinatal mental health. The peak body brings together organisations, clinicians, researchers, policymakers and lived experience advocates to improve outcomes for Australian parents, babies and families. Established following the success of Perinatal Mental Health Week, PMHA provides year-round leadership to strengthen sector collaboration, advocacy and awareness.

Ms Yelavich has played a leading role in the growth of Perinatal Mental Health Week since 2021, helping transform the campaign from a sector initiative involving 26 organisations into a nationally recognised movement engaging more than 68 organisations across Australia. Since 2022, she has also worked alongside sector leaders to explore, shape and ultimately establish Perinatal Mental Health Australia, helping develop the vision for Australia's first dedicated national peak body for perinatal mental health.

With more than 18 years' experience across marketing, partnerships, advocacy, fundraising and organisational growth, Ms Yelavich brings extensive leadership experience from the not-for-profit, health and corporate sectors. She also brings lived experience of perinatal anxiety and depression, giving her a deeply personal understanding of the importance of accessible support for families.

PMHA Chair, Arabella Gibson, said Ms Yelavich's appointment comes at a pivotal time for the sector.

> *"Few people have contributed more to bringing the perinatal mental health sector together over the past five years than Alicia. She has been instrumental in the growth of Perinatal Mental Health Week and has been a driving force behind the discussions, planning and collaboration that ultimately led to the establishment of PMHA."*
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> *"The success of Perinatal Mental Health Week demonstrates what is possible when the sector works together. PMHA is the natural evolution of that collaboration, and Alicia has helped shape that journey since the earliest conversations began."*
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> *"Alicia understands both the opportunities and challenges facing our sector because she has been at the centre of many of the conversations that led to PMHA's establishment. She is a respected connector, collaborator and advocate whose passion for improving outcomes for parents and families is evident in everything she does."*
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> *"As PMHA enters this next chapter, the Board was confident Alicia was uniquely placed to lead the organisation. She brings a rare combination of strategic leadership, advocacy experience, sector relationships and lived experience that will be invaluable as we grow our impact and influence nationally."*

PMHA Board Director and Peach Tree Perinatal Wellness CEO, Vivianne Kissane, said the appointment would strengthen PMHA's ability to unite the sector around a shared national agenda.

> *"Alicia understands that meaningful progress depends on genuine collaboration across organisations, disciplines and communities. Her ability to bring people together around a shared purpose will be vital as PMHA builds a strong, inclusive national voice for perinatal mental health."*

PMHA Board Director and Perinatal Wellbeing Centre CEO, Dr Yvonne Luxford, said Ms Yelavich brought a clear focus on translating collective expertise into better outcomes for families.

> *"PMHA has an important role to play in connecting evidence, practice and lived experience so that families can access the right support, wherever they live. Alicia brings the strategic leadership and sector insight needed to turn our shared ambition into practical national impact."*

PMHA Company Secretary, Karen Edwards, said strong governance and accountability would underpin the organisation's next phase.

> *"The Board is committed to building PMHA on a strong and sustainable foundation. Alicia's clarity of purpose, collaborative approach and commitment to accountability give us great confidence as the organisation establishes its governance, grows its membership and advances its national priorities."*

Ms Yelavich said she was honoured to lead PMHA into its next phase of growth.

> *"Having been involved in the growth of Perinatal Mental Health Week since 2021 and witnessing firsthand what can be achieved when organisations come together around a shared purpose, I am incredibly honoured to lead PMHA into its next chapter."*
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> *"PMHA has been shaped by a collective vision from across the sector. This appointment is not about one individual. It is about building on the extraordinary work already happening across Australia and creating a stronger national platform for collaboration, advocacy and change."*
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> *"My role is to build on that foundation, strengthen collaboration, amplify our collective voice and help ensure perinatal mental health receives the national attention, investment and leadership it deserves."*
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> *"Together, we have an opportunity to create lasting change for parents, babies and families across Australia."*

As Founding CEO, Ms Yelavich will lead the implementation of PMHA's strategic priorities, national advocacy efforts, member engagement, sector collaboration and oversight of Australia's annual Perinatal Mental Health Week campaign.

The appointment comes at a time of growing recognition of the impact of perinatal mental health on Australian families and increasing momentum for coordinated national leadership, advocacy and policy reform.

About Perinatal Mental Health Australia

Perinatal Mental Health Australia (PMHA) is Australia's national peak body for perinatal mental health, bringing together organisations, clinicians, researchers, service providers and lived experience advocates to strengthen collaboration, advance awareness and advocacy, and improve outcomes for Australian families during pregnancy and the early years of parenthood. PMHA leads the national coordination of Perinatal Mental Health Week and works to drive system-wide change through collective action.

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