



MEDIA RELEASE

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Pregnant women and new mums in NSW get help for better mental and emotional wellbeing through new free fortnightly e-newsletter

Pregnant women and new mothers across NSW will have access to simple, trustworthy and timely information to build and maintain better mental and emotional health with the launch of a free fortnightly e-newsletter, Ready to COPE.

The launch follows new research findings showing half of women in NSW have low awareness of mental health issues during pregnancy and many hid their true feelings from those close to them.

In line with the new [Australian Clinical Guideline](#) – which recommends that all perinatal women have access to reliable information to support better mental and emotional health – Ready to COPE provides insights, comfort and strategies for emotional wellbeing and information on where to get help if needed.

The e-newsletter is produced by the Centre of Perinatal Excellence (COPE), which led the development of the Guideline and works to support safer and healthier Australian mothers and families.

COPE Executive Director Dr Nicole Highet said Ready to COPE would support women during pregnancy and in the 12 months following birth and helps them embrace the highs and cope with any lows that they encounter on their journey.

“Being truly healthy during this unique period in life means a woman must look after her physical and mental wellbeing, but too often the emotional and mental health challenges experienced during this time are overlooked, misunderstood and not spoken about.

“This can evoke intense feelings of isolation and shame, and worsen feelings of stress, depression and/or anxiety,” Dr Highet said.

The extent of these issues is revealed in COPE’s extensive research with over 1,200 women across Australia who have experienced anxiety and/or depression in pregnancy or in the year following birth.

When asking a subsample of these women questions about their own emotional and mental health in their first pregnancy (n=699), low awareness of common mental health conditions was revealed with 48% of women in NSW indicating that they “probably had symptoms of depression and anxiety in pregnancy, but they did not recognise them”.

High expectations, shame and denial were also indicated, with 49% per cent of women surveyed from NSW stating that they “hid their true feelings from their family and friends”.

“The launch of Ready to COPE means the best information can be easily accessed by all Australian perinatal women – including the many women who may experience ante or postnatal depression and/or anxiety.”

Key features of Ready to COPE include:

- Content on the signs and symptoms of common mental health conditions, including when, how and where to seek help if needed as well as how to talk to others who may be experiencing these conditions.
- Content on common emotional challenges including changes in relationships, struggling with body image and self-identity, managing pushy advice and unrealistic expectations for birth and motherhood, overcoming mummy guilt, coping with stress and much more.



- Delivery in a portable, free, confidential and mobile-friendly format.
- Links to getting help across the entire series of nearly 50 newsletters.
- Content is underpinned by the Guideline and the latest expert advice.
- Can be instantly updated to reflect new research and feedback.

“Ready to COPE does not judge and will help women set their own realistic expectations for motherhood. It includes practical and helpful strategies to help women cope through difficult times and emotions, and importantly, will provide advice on why, how and when to seek help.

“This is especially important when three out of four women do not seek help until they reach crisis point.”

With funding from the Federal Government, COPE will be translating Ready to COPE into 10 different languages and will develop a version of Ready to COPE for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

Women can sign up for the newsletter at www.readytocopeco.org.au for timely information throughout their pregnancy and the first 12 months of motherhood.

View the Ready to COPE [promotional video](#) and [posters and graphics](#) for promoting Ready to COPE are available to download for free.

For further information or to arrange an interview:

Dr Nicole Highet on 0438 810 235 or via nicole.highet@cope.org.au