



MEDIA RELEASE

May 12, 2019

Coalition support for better mental and emotional health for Australian families commended

Australian mothers, fathers and families would benefit from a substantial renewed commitment to digital screening and independent advice to support better perinatal mental and emotional health announced by Prime Minister Scott Morrison today.

The Coalition's commitment of \$16.6 million would support the Centre of Perinatal Excellence (COPE) in its work to build better emotional and mental health and resilience for pregnant women, fathers and new mothers, complemented by \$20 million to boost digital screening in public hospitals through a national partnership agreement.

These measures would increase early detection of mental and emotional health problems by extending world-leading digital mental health screening, meaning help can be provided to those who need it sooner – especially given that 74 per cent of women do not seek help until they reach crisis point.

"This is a wonderful Mother's Day gift for Australian mums, dads, babies and families who all need more support during this precious time of life," COPE Executive Director Dr Nicole Highet said today.

"Just like early and routine ultrasound screening or breast cancer and cervical cancer tests, early and routine mental health screening would benefit women and strengthen Australian families.

"Better screening and timely, accurate, independent information will ensure more women and men get help when they need it to avoid or reduce the impact of anxiety, depression and other emotional and mental health issues arising during pregnancy or in the 12 months following birth.

"With up to one in five women suffering from anxiety, one in ten experiencing depression during pregnancy and more than one in five men also experiencing mental or emotional health challenges it is clear that more needs to be done to ensure happier and healthier mothers and families."

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The funding includes:

- \$14.3 million over three years to provide tablets, training and other digital infrastructure to public hospitals so they can access iCOPE – an efficient and effective digital screening platform which is multilingual, generates instant reports to guide health professionals, collects data to inform better services and provides consumers with tailored information on their screening outcomes in their own language
- \$800,000 over three years to support Ready to COPE, a free e-newsletter which is written for women who are pregnant or had a baby in the last 12 months. Ready to COPE currently has almost 5,000 subscribers, who get information and expert advice including on body image, changing friendships, managing advice and expectations, mummy guilt, ante/postnatal depression and anxiety, stress, self-care and shifting identities. The funding will include translating a new Ready to COPE Guide for men into 10 languages and adaptation for Indigenous men
- \$1.5 million over three years to support a public awareness campaign for Ready to COPE to promote its availability to Australian women and men.

The Coalition has also committed to \$20 million to a national partnership agreement to encourage uptake of iCOPE over public hospitals.

"The Coalition's commitment announced by the PM today is truly great news, and we call on all parties to match this pledge to continue bipartisan support for better mental and emotional health for Australian women, men and families through these vital programs," Dr Highet said.

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Contact: Dr Nicole Highet – COPE Executive Director, 0438 810 235 or nicole.highet@cope.org.au