

Media Release

Budget Announcement, May 11, 2021: Expansion of iCOPE Digital Screening Platform to identify vulnerable expectant and new parents

On 11 May, 2021, the Treasurer, The Hon Josh Frydenberg announced the expansion of the Hospital to Home Perinatal Mental Health Check for a further two years, now until July 2025. This comes following the initial announcement on 12 May 2019, when the Hon Scott Morrison MP, Prime Minister of Australia, announced the time-limited investment of \$36 million over three years to establish a new Hospital to Home and Wellbeing Program.

Of this investment, funding will be provided to the Centre of Perinatal Excellence (COPE) to roll out iCOPE, our [digital mental health screening tool](#), in every public maternity hospital and maternal and child health centre in Australia.

Funding is also earmarked for a National Partnership Agreement with state and territory governments to encourage the uptake and delivery of iCOPE, and/or to expand services for perinatal support in the community sector.

Engagement of states and territories

Since the initial announcement, the Commonwealth established a state and territory senior officials steering group to provide a mechanism for engagement to ensure successful implementation of the Hospital to Home and Wellbeing Program in addition to other funded areas in mental health.

State and territory governments have been engaged by the Commonwealth via nominated senior officers to plan the rollout across jurisdictions.

About the program

The Program is designed to support public hospitals and maternal and child health centres in the provision of routine screening in line with best practice. Following extensive and successful trials of the iCOPE Platform across multiple healthcare settings, this is the chosen Platform that will be implemented under the Program.

The funding for the program will include the provision of digital screening access to maternity hospitals engaged in the Program. This will enable expectant mothers and fathers to be screened in line with the National Guideline.

This world-first digital approach to screening will also facilitate screening and reporting in multiple languages. Currently screening tools is available in twelve languages, and this will be expanded through funding provided through the Program.

COPE Founder and Executive Director Dr Nicole Highet said: “We welcome the extension of this valuable program to support the early detection of those mothers and fathers who may be struggling in the transition to becoming a parent.

“We have experienced huge demand for the Platform from around the country. This solution will facilitate universal screening whilst supporting health professionals with instant clinical reports. It will also empower consumers with information pertaining to their personal screening results and link them to referral pathways.”

End

Media Contact:

Dr Nicole Highet – 0438 810 235

Note: COPE can also arrange comment from clinicians who have used the iCOPE Platform across a range of healthcare settings.