

**Date** Monday 15 November, 2010  
**Subject** **Funding grant to establish perinatal mental health screening in private hospitals**

In a first for private hospitals in Australia, perinatal mental health screening will be introduced at North Shore Private Hospital thanks to a new partnership between nib foundation and the Gidget Foundation.

The \$252,000 grant from nib foundation will enable the *Emotional Wellbeing Program* to be rolled out to all pregnant women attending the hospital for delivery, meaning more than 2,500 women will be screened annually for perinatal anxiety and depression.

nib foundation Chairman, Terry Lawler, said the delivery of the pilot program in the private health sector was a significant development for expectant mothers.

“We are proud to be supporting the establishment of such an important health and wellbeing program for Australian mothers, that will help raise awareness and understanding of perinatal anxiety and depression,” Mr Lawler said.

“All mothers deserve to receive this simple and effective screening process which can reduce mental health problems during the perinatal period, creating stronger families and better maternal and infant psychological outcomes,” he said.

Approximately 20% of mothers and 10% of fathers suffer from perinatal anxiety and depression, resulting in around 50,000 women and their families being affected by the issue each year.

Dr Vijay Roach, Chairman of the Gidget Foundation said despite the high prevalence of the issue, its awareness is poor in the community and among health professionals.

“Perinatal mood disturbance may manifest as insomnia, anxiety, inability to care for the baby, despondency and depression,” Dr Roach said.

“Currently, there is no screening available in the private health system, resulting in around 30% of women in New South Wales not receiving screening or psychosocial assessment,” Dr Roach added.

The program will see mothers screened and assessed antenatally by trained midwives. Those women identified as having anxiety and/or depression referred onto support services.

“Without the support of nib foundation, we would not be able to make this much-needed program a reality,” Dr Roach said.

“We also acknowledge the ongoing support of North Shore Private Hospital CEO, Greg Brown who has helped make this program possible through his personal interest and the enthusiasm of his staff,” Dr Roach added.

It's expected the program will be rolled out to other hospitals within the Ramsay Health Care Group following the completion of the pilot program at North Shore Private Hospital.

### **Media Opportunity**

An official launch will be held at **North Shore Private Hospital, Westbourne Street, St Leonards** on **Tuesday 16 November at 10.30am.**

Media representatives are invited to attend to photograph/film the launch.

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Interviews will be available following the conclusion of official proceedings.

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**About nib foundation**

In 2008, nib health funds established nib foundation – a not-for-profit charitable organisation – to support programs aimed at improving the health and wellbeing of all Australians.

The foundation is funded by a \$25 million donation from nib, which was raised through the issue of new shares at the time of listing nib on the Australian Securities Exchange in November 2007.

**About The Gidget Foundation**

The Gidget Foundation was established in 2001 following the tragic death of a young mother who took her own life, suffering from postnatal depression. Despite her close links to family and friends, the disease went unrecognised and untreated.

The Gidget Foundation is chaired by Obstetrician and Gynaecologist, Dr Vijay Roach, and is supported by a network of pro bono professional advisors. The mission of the Gidget Foundation is to promote awareness of perinatal anxiety and depression amongst women and their families, their health providers and the wider community to ensure that women in need receive timely, appropriate and supportive care.