Let’s talk about it

UP TO 1 IN 5 EXPECTING OR NEW MOTHERS WILL EXPERIENCE PERINATAL ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION.

We want every new parent to be aware that this serious illness might affect them so they can know what’s happening and get help quickly.
It didn’t take long for new mum Shannon to experience the symptoms of postnatal anxiety following the birth of her daughter Sophie. “It hit me quickly,” she says. “I had no appetite, my hands kept shaking, I kept getting waves of panic coming over my body accompanied by hot flushes. My mind was racing with panicked thoughts and even the most basic tasks felt impossible. It was debilitating. I didn’t think I could cope with the demand of being a parent every day.”

Shannon called PANDA and was comforted by the skilled, compassionate counsellor on the other end of the line. PANDA helped Shannon understand what was happening to her and put her in touch with a mother baby unit in Sydney. Shannon and baby Sophie stayed there for 6 weeks. When they came out, she felt much better able to meet the challenges of being a parent.

Shannon recently had another baby, this time a son, Eddie. Unfortunately she developed severe postnatal anxiety this time around too. She experienced similar symptoms – the racing mind, panicked thoughts, shaking hands – and once again she called PANDA when she identified what was happening to her.

We helped her get back on track. In addition, Shannon had a mental health team call her twice a week in the early days. This, combined with weekly counselling sessions, medication, exercise and a great deal of family support meant Shannon was able to manage the illness second time around without needing to go into a mother baby unit.

Shannon is now fully recovered and wants to share her story to educate others about perinatal anxiety and depression. “I want to say to other women and men that no matter how dark your days are, it does end. Also, never be afraid to seek help and tell someone you are struggling. The more help you seek and accept, the quicker your recovery will be.”
About PANDA

PANDA – Perinatal Anxiety & Depression Australia supports women, men and families across Australia to recover from perinatal anxiety and depression, a serious illness that affects around 100,000 Australian families every year.

The term ‘perinatal’ refers to the period from conception through to one year after birth. ‘Antenatal’ covers the pregnancy period, while ‘postnatal’ refers to the first year after the baby’s birth.

Perinatal anxiety and depression has many faces and does not discriminate. It can affect expecting and new mums and dads from all backgrounds and cultures, and have devastating consequences for individuals and families if left untreated.

Signs and symptoms can include constant sadness or crying; panic attacks; persistent, generalised worry; sleep problems unrelated to the baby’s needs; lethargy; loss of confidence and self-esteem; and withdrawal from friends and family.

PANDA runs Australia’s only specialised National Helpline that supports new and expecting mums and dads affected by anxiety and depression. We also work to raise awareness in the community of this common and serious illness so that families can recognise what is happening and seek help early. We want to ensure that no family suffers longer than necessary.

Alongside our Helpline PANDA’s two websites www.panda.org.au and howisdadgoing.org.au provide vital information to support families from all corners of Australia – and even those outside Australia. PANDA’s websites include real stories from real families who share their stories to help others. These personal stories provide a crucial connection for new mums and dads who are visiting these sites and are struggling to understand what’s happening to them.

PANDA’S MISSION:

To reduce the impact of perinatal anxiety and depression through information, awareness raising and services.

Natasha’s story

Natasha says she hit rock bottom twelve weeks after her baby daughter was born. “I had a panic attack and finally admitted I needed help,” she says.

The twelve week mark was a turning point; but looking back, Natasha suspects she was living with postnatal depression from the minute her daughter was born. Right from the start she was struggling to breastfeed due to her daughter’s reflux and not getting much sleep. Often she would drift off to sleep only to be woken by her crying baby. As a result she quickly became exhausted.

“I felt like I was just a milk machine. I wanted my life back. I would lie in bed hating life. And then the guilt would set in and the vicious cycle would continue.”

Natasha and her husband both knew something was very wrong. Natasha spoke to family members, surprised at how many spoke about going through postnatal depression themselves. Then she found the number for PANDA and spoke to one of our telephone counsellors.

“The counsellor helped me understand I was in grief. I was grieving that the reality of my life as a mum was not the life I had expected. Once I knew this I started to take action.”

Natasha found a local counsellor near where she lived in Perth. She focussed on her own physical and mental wellbeing to help ensure she was better able to care for the wellbeing of her baby. Breastfeeding became easier, which meant the baby cried less and Natasha was finally able to get some proper sleep.

For Natasha, asking for help was the hardest step, but once that was taken the road ahead was much clearer. “Once I let go of that need to be perfect and in control and asked for help I was actually able to take back control of my life and just love my beautiful baby girl.”
TALKING ABOUT PERINATAL ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION: PANDA’s Helpline

Every day on PANDA’s Helpline we learn about the experiences of families across Australia as they deal with perinatal anxiety and depression and postnatal psychosis. While perinatal anxiety and depression is common (affecting around one in five expecting and new mums) most families are caught completely by surprise when it happens to them. Postnatal psychosis can be particularly shocking considering its severe impact.

PANDA’s National Perinatal Anxiety & Depression Helpline was established in July 2010. It is unique in its purpose: to address the specific emotional and mental health needs of expecting and new parents. Each day we speak to families from right across Australia as they struggle to deal with depression or anxiety during their pregnancy or with their new baby. Getting help early is the key to getting better sooner and reducing the long term impact of this serious illness.

With more than 10,000 calls each year our team know how to talk about this sensitive issue.

Callers to PANDA’s Helpline are supported by someone who really understands how they are feeling and knows how to help them take the first step to recovery. PANDA’s Helpline is run by both professional staff and peer support volunteers. This ensures the service is effectively informed by people who have personal experience of postnatal anxiety and depression and has the additional benefit of providing a volunteer work force to complement the paid telephone counsellors.

An outgoing follow-up service is crucial to PANDA’s service model. These calls provide vital support while mums connect with the local services they need to recover.

Perinatal anxiety and depression affects people from all sorts of backgrounds and calls to PANDA’s Helpline certainly reflect the diversity of this great land. We take calls from across the country – from city areas as well as regional, country and remote Australia. It is important to us to know our services are reaching people wherever they live.

We also speak with families from a vast array of cultural and language backgrounds – often using professional interpreters to support the call. While the vast majority of our calls come from women (89%) men also use PANDA’s Helpline – so we think we have Australian families covered.

An 8.3% increase in calls to the PANDA Helpline over the 2016-17 financial year means that more families were able to be supported by our Helpline team.

"I called PANDA in a very distressed state. I found it so hard to even make the call. By the time I got off the phone, I was calm, had stopped crying and was ready to tell my family and get help."

Josephine kept telling herself that she was lucky. She had a healthy baby boy, a loving husband and lived in a beautiful part of regional Western Australia. But there was another side to her life as a new mum: a two hourly feeding regime, a baby who was losing weight despite regular feeds and a growing feeling of overwhelm as exhaustion kicked in.

"I was convinced it was my fault," she says. "Due to lack of sleep, I felt that I couldn’t give him the love, attention and happiness that he deserved. Weeks went by with me living in a daze where I was forgetful, alone and generally feeling inadequate. I felt disconnected from the world. I reached the conclusion that Benjamin, and his dad, would be better off without me."

At one of their regular appointments to talk about Benjamin’s weight loss, Josephine’s GP asked how she herself was doing. Josephine immediately burst into tears. The GP diagnosed her as having developed postnatal depression and referred her to a psychiatrist.

"Having the doctor confirm that I was not in a good place and that I needed help to get out of this was a relief," she says. "I didn’t have to simply toughen up by myself and wasn’t simply being weak."

Supported by the love of her husband, the expertise of her psychologist and the compassion of her local mother’s group and friends, Josephine gradually recovered. She made a conscious effort to take care of herself through exercise, meditation and catching up with friends. In so doing, she felt better able to care for Benjamin, who slowly began putting on weight.

"Looking back now, I am forever grateful that I admitted to the doctor that I wasn’t well. Opening up actually made me feel stronger. As soon as I felt I was allowed to show the people closest to me that I wasn’t coping I felt able to tackle this thing head on with their help."
KEY LESSONS FROM PANDA’S NATIONAL PERINATAL ANXIETY & DEPRESSION HELPLINE

Below are some of the key lessons we’ve learnt from operating PANDA’s specialist Perinatal Anxiety & Depression Helpline Service since 2010:

• Perinatal anxiety and depression occurs across a broad continuum and at its most serious can be life threatening.
• Perinatal anxiety and depression does not discriminate – it affects women and men from across the socio-economic spectrum.
• Many women are reluctant to seek help or simply don’t understand what is happening to them. 53% of callers to PANDA report having symptoms for more than 4 weeks before contacting PANDA including 8% who have had symptoms for more than a year.
• Delays in seeking treatment are often due to shame, stigma and judgement. Ultimately many women fear someone will take their child because ‘they are a bad mother’.
• Understanding that perinatal anxiety and depression is very common and treatable is a powerful step to recovery.
• There is still considerable stigma attached to mental illness – and this is particularly true for perinatal mental illness.
• Perinatal anxiety is less commonly understood than depression. An expecting mother’s anxiety during pregnancy can impact on the babies’ development and can also impact on the birth experience. Traumatic birth experience is a risk factor for postnatal mental illness.
• While many expecting mothers have heard of postnatal depression, many do not understand that antenatal depression (occurs during pregnancy) is almost as common.
• Grief and loss are significant contributing factors to perinatal distress. More than half our callers have experienced IVF, miscarriage, still birth, relationship breakdowns, complex trauma.
• Prior mental illness is a significant risk factor for perinatal anxiety and depression so it is important that women with a history of mental illness are effectively monitored for perinatal anxiety and depression during their pregnancy and after birth.
• Our callers often do not tell their primary health professionals about their experience of perinatal anxiety and depression. 72% of callers in our most recent audit period had not told their GP about their symptoms before calling PANDA’s Helpline.
• With increasing understanding of the direct and indirect impact of perinatal anxiety and depression on expecting and new fathers it is important to be aware of dad’s emotional health. This also applies to same sex partners.

Seeking help early is the best option to help women recover and develop a healthy relationship with their baby. Many expecting and new mothers and fathers need help to understand what is happening to them and encouragement to seek treatment.

Megan’s story

Megan had her second baby when her son was almost two. The pregnancy had been tough – the stress of looking after her little boy while managing the physical demands of pregnancy had contributed to her antenatal anxiety.

Things progressively got worse. Megan felt constantly anxious and struggled to sleep, even when her children were sleeping. She consulted her GP, who diagnosed postnatal anxiety and depression and prescribed medication. She started seeing a psychologist.

This was only the start of her long journey to recovery. The medication had to be altered, and the changes affected Megan’s moods and her appetite. She joined a group therapy class on the Gold Coast and was relieved to meet other mums who were struggling.

“I found it comforting to know I wasn’t alone and that what I had was an illness. It wasn’t my fault.”

However, Megan still had some way to go. Twelve months had passed since her daughter was born and she was at her “lowest of lows.” Megan and her daughter were transferred to a mother baby unit. To start with, it was a relief as it helped her catch up on sleep. But then the rollercoaster continued. Megan returned to hospital two more times over the next two years. “A black cloud followed me everywhere.”

Eventually, after the third hospital stay Megan started feeling better. Her medication was more effective and through exercise and self-care she started smiling again. She returned to work. Now, four years after the birth, she feels her relationship with her kids is healthy and strong. Megan’s story shows that even for the most severe and prolonged cases of perinatal anxiety and depression there can be light at the end of a long tunnel. Despite the illness taking three precious years from her life, it is now in the past.

Megan has turned her difficult experience into something positive by volunteering to become a PANDA Community Champion. She is sharing her story to help us raise awareness about perinatal anxiety and depression.
RAISING AWARENESS ABOUT PERINATAL ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION

It’s important to talk about perinatal anxiety and depression. We know that the sooner someone who is struggling with perinatal anxiety and depression seeks help, the sooner they can recover. They also reduce the risk of their symptoms becoming more severe.

However, you can’t seek help if you don’t know something’s wrong. That’s why raising awareness across the Australian community about perinatal anxiety and depression is such a crucial task: indeed, it is at the core of PANDA’s mission.

We strive to get stories, information and resources out into the community so expecting and new mums and dads have the very best chance of knowing what the signs and symptoms of this common illness are, and that it is treatable. Our awareness raising is not about simply promoting PANDA’s Helpline – we want anyone who is struggling to recognise what is happening to them, and to seek support as quickly as possible.

We also encourage people to talk to their loved ones about perinatal anxiety and depression. For someone who is struggling, opening up about their difficulties is often the hardest step. Once on that path, they are already much closer to recovery.

We share stories and information through the media, from TV, radio and print media to online parenting publications and blogs. During 2016-2017 PANDA featured in hundreds of stories across a range of channels. We also shared stories and information through PANDA’s social media channels – Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. These helped grow our online community as well as generating conversations and awareness about perinatal anxiety and depression.

Our two websites also play a crucial role in helping people understand what perinatal anxiety and depression is, and how it might be affecting them. Our new website supports expecting and new mums and dads, as well as those who might be concerned about them. The website includes many stories from brave mums – and some dads – about their experience of perinatal anxiety and depression. They are talking about it so that others might feel safe to talk about their experience and get help.

Our How Is Dad Going website is aimed at expecting or new dads who are struggling themselves, or caring for their partner who is experiencing perinatal anxiety or depression.

PERINATAL DEPRESSION & ANXIETY AWARENESS WEEK 2016

Perinatal Depression & Anxiety Awareness Week was established by PANDA in 2005. For more than ten years PANDA has promoted the Week as an opportunity to raise awareness about perinatal depression and anxiety as well as raising PANDA’s profile as a perinatal mental health knowledge expert and specialist service provider.

During our 2016 campaign PANDA released data from research we conducted into community attitudes and understanding of perinatal anxiety and depression, along with data from PANDA’s Helpline. These figures helped us illustrate how common and complex the illness is, and to educate the community about the signs and symptoms. We gained extensive media coverage and encouraged conversations about perinatal anxiety and depression all over the country.

Our campaign reached nearly 4 million people in communities across the country via almost 100 articles and media appearances. The extensive coverage meant PANDA’s Helpline was significantly busier than usual, with up to twice the average number of calls on some days. We also saw increased traffic to PANDA’s website along with increased engagement through our social media channels.

Highlights

- 52 articles in online publications viewed by almost 1.2 million people
- 18 articles in print editions of Fairfax and News Ltd publications, with an estimated print readership of around 2 million people
- 14 radio stations broadcasting news stories with an audience of almost 400,000
- TV interview on ABC News 24 Breakfast with an audience of around 140,000 people
- 14 Champions told their stories to a range of media outlets, resulting in 20 articles across a variety of publications and channels including television, radio, print and online
- 31 social media posts to “bust a myth a day” and provide tips for carers – 541 new followers gained.

For the past two years we have run our Lunch Out Loud campaign in the lead up to Perinatal Depression & Anxiety Awareness Week. Lunch Out Loud events raise both awareness and funds.

For the 2016 campaign there were around 30 Lunch Out Louds held in a wide variety of locations right across the country. Twelve were held by PANDA Community Champions, with the rest held by a range of individuals and organisations both large and small. This is a significant increase on the previous year, and hopefully a base from which we can build even further in 2017.
**TALKING ABOUT IT WITH HEALTH PROFESSIONALS**

PANDA understands the crucial role played by health professionals who work with expecting and new mums and their families. These are the individuals and organisations who care for women and men as they transition to becoming parents. They are the ones who are best placed to identify when mums and dads are struggling and can direct them to support and treatment options if necessary.

PANDA has an opportunity to share our expertise with these health professionals so they understand the complexities of perinatal anxiety and depression and the feelings and experiences of people struggling with the illness. We know from many conversations on the Helpline that people find it hard to open up to health professionals about their difficulties. It is important that all health professionals are open to the signs of emerging perinatal anxiety and depression and are confident to assist. When health professionals ask direct questions it makes a difference.

PANDA helps health professionals to support women with perinatal anxiety and depression through a range of programs and activities:

- **Conference and event presentations:** speaking to a range of health professionals to help them make the mental health of mums a priority.
- **Training:** educating those who work with vulnerable mums and dads about perinatal anxiety and depression. PANDA teaches a core subject for maternal and child health nurses in training in Victoria.
- **Workshops:** drawing from conversations on the Helpline PANDA conducts professional education workshops about perinatal mental health.
- **Training pharmacists:** we were delighted to run a series of training activities with Priceline Pharmacists to help them to better understand perinatal anxiety and depression and the signs that a customer might be struggling.
- **Playgroups:** supporting people in the community to form and facilitate playgroups and social groups with a better understanding of the impact of perinatal anxiety and depression.

**Secondary Consultation:**

Through our Helpline work our telephone counsellors are often in contact with doctors, maternal and child health nurses, social workers and mental health teams. We are able to use these conversations to help share the important information we have learned through speaking with families on the Helpline. We are always keen to support health professionals to help their patients talk about perinatal anxiety and depression.

**TALKING ABOUT IT WITH DADS**

Most people are surprised to know that anxiety and depression can affect dads as well as mums. In fact around 1 in 20 expecting dads and 1 in 10 new dads will experience the illness. It can be difficult for dads to understand and admit what is happening to them.

PANDA has a website dedicated to men who may be struggling with the transition to becoming a dad experiencing perinatal anxiety and depression or who are caring for a partner who is struggling. Our How Is Dad Going? site has information, tips and advice for expecting and new dads as well as personal stories from dads. These stories show that the journey to becoming a dad throws up many challenges, and can sometimes lead to perinatal anxiety and depression for dads.

They also show that perinatal anxiety and depression is a temporary, treatable illness, and dads do recover.

[howisdadgoing.org.au](http://howisdadgoing.org.au)

**Wilfred’s story**

When Wilfred’s first son was born, Wilfred’s wife Janice suffered severe injuries during delivery which had a lasting impact on both her physical and mental health. Early parenthood was a difficult and stressful time for them both, but when Janice became pregnant again the situation deteriorated even further.

“I became really anxious about everything and it just got worse after he was born,” says Wilfred. “I would be unreasonably stressed and worried about simple things, as well as being easily distracted and losing concentration.”

Wilfred developed perinatal anxiety. It can affect men from all walks of life and all cultures. We know dads who are struggling with feelings of anxiety and depression often feel reluctant to make what they’re feeling a priority, and this is what happened with Wilfred. He found it difficult to speak to Janice about it – especially as she was going through so much herself. But once he spoke honestly about the difficulties he was facing, they both felt better placed to walk the road to recovery together.

Wilfred and Janice are now PANDA Community Champions. Why? "We want to help raise awareness and encourage other new parents to seek help early, before the issue is able to cause larger problems for their family."
SUPPORTING PANDA

PANDA is committed to providing services and raising awareness about perinatal anxiety and depression so the impact of the illness in the community is reduced.

We can only do this important work through the generosity of our many supporters: it is through their efforts and their kindness that we can deliver services and get crucial information, stories and resources into the community.

Our supporters raise funds for us in a range of ways:

- Donating to fundraising campaigns across the year.
- Becoming a fundraiser and organising or taking part in a fun run or other sporting event, movie night or raffle.
- Making a bequest and leaving an amount to PANDA in a Will.
- Hosting a Lunch Out Loud event: it doesn’t have to be a lunch, and it doesn’t even have to involve food or drink. The key is to have an event that raises funds but also encourages guests to have open and honest conversations about the joys and challenges of parenting.
- Workplace Giving: regular gifts from pre-tax income, organised through payroll.
- Donating through a business: allocating a proportion of profits to PANDA, or a certain amount per product sold. Or simply donating a specific chosen sum from a business to PANDA.

During 2016-2017 PANDA was lucky enough to have supporters right across Australia involved in lunches, dinners, morning teas, picnics, movie nights, birthdays, baby showers, pool parties, auctions and fun runs that all raised crucial funds to support our work.

To all our supporters, both individuals and businesses, who donated to PANDA or raised funds for us during the 2016-2017 financial year, thank you. Your generosity has had a real – even lifesaving – impact in the lives of people struggling with perinatal anxiety and depression.

CORPORATE RELATIONSHIPS

PANDA is always looking to work with businesses passionate about supporting our work either through sharing our messages to raise awareness of perinatal anxiety and depression, or through financial support.

We believe there are a range of benefits for businesses working with PANDA, including:

- Connecting with a health issue that affects 100,000 Australian families every year
- Demonstrating a commitment to expecting and new parents
- Linking to strong, clearly articulated values that resonate with numerous target markets
- Making a real difference for expecting and new mums and dads.

PANDA is in a unique position. We operate Australia’s only specialist perinatal mental health National Helpline to support women, men and their families experiencing perinatal anxiety and depression, along with their loved ones.

We have specialist expertise that is driven and informed by the lived experience of people who have experienced perinatal anxiety and depression and who have accessed PANDA’s services to seek support. We have built a unique and in-depth understanding of the experiences of people living with perinatal anxiety and depression.

PANDA has built a community of women and men whose lives have been improved – and sometimes even saved – through the support of the National Helpline. These individuals come from all walks of life and socio-economic groups.

We believe PANDA is a highly attractive potential partner to businesses that want to make a positive impact on the lives of mums, dads and families across Australia.

If this is you, let’s talk about it.
PRICELLE SISTERHOOD FOUNDATION: A TRUE FRIEND OF PANDA

The Priceline Sisterhood Foundation is committed to giving back to women in the community. The Foundation supports five charity partners. PANDA has been fortunate enough to have been one of those charities for the last six years.

The Foundation donates 100% of proceeds raised via a range of fundraising activities throughout the year directly to the nominated charities. Since its inception the Sisterhood has raised more than 2 million dollars through instore fundraising, featured products and direct donations. This model draws support from Priceline’s customers, suppliers, staff and franchisees.

The Priceline Sisterhood Foundation’s generosity has enabled PANDA to establish and build a range of programs including our hugely successful Community Champions program.

To the Priceline Sisterhood Foundation and the whole team at Priceline we say thank you. Priceline has also supported PANDA by sharing our important awareness message.

Priya and her husband Mithun operated a successful and very busy dental practice in central Victoria. Priya had experienced postnatal depression after the birth of their first son, Milan. It had been a difficult time, but it was the arrival of their second baby son, Yohan, that really put them to the test.

A month after giving birth Priya had to go back to work because the woman filling in for her had to leave. Baby Yohan hardly slept, so Priya would often spend much of the night awake with him, and then work through the day.

As the days went by, people around Priya noticed changes in her. She seemed distracted and rushed at work. Rather than being happy and chatty she would sit quiet and still between patients, worrying about whether she was doing her work well. One day she found herself in the staff room at work, unable to stop crying.

“I felt like the world was collapsing around me,” she says. “So many thoughts rammed through my brain and I struggled to talk normally.”

Priya and Mithun visited her GP who took one look and referred her straight to the emergency department of the local hospital. Priya was given medicine and advised to go home, where she would be monitored with in-home visits.

Priya says, “I wouldn’t leave my room. I wanted to be around my children but couldn’t bear the noise. I had so many ideas, so many thoughts. I sat on the carpet in a corner writing them in a journal all day long.”

Two nights later, Priya started having paranoid visions about a friend of the family, sure he was in danger. They got through that night, and the next morning Priya went back to hospital and was taken to the psychiatric ward. She was agitated by the slightest of sounds. Priya’s sister described seeing her in hospital: “I saw her walk out of her room, hunched over, walking unsteadily, staring at a corner of the room, not making eye contact and moving her hands with an air of uncertainty.”

After a few days, Priya came home and continued her treatment under the care of a psychiatrist, and with support from her family. Recovery was slow, and included a relapse some months later that led to a diagnosis of bipolar – not uncommon for women who experience postnatal psychosis. This time she reached out early for support, including from the PANDA Helpline, her psychiatrist and a psychologist.

Living with bipolar has meant some changes for Priya, including paying attention to her stress levels and prioritising rest and sleep. “I have stopped working as a dentist, and am trying to listen to my body and be kind to myself. I am using meditation, yoga and daily exercise, and I hope to be off medication one day.”

Priya is also passionate about sharing her story, so others can be aware of postnatal psychosis and have the best chance of finding treatment and recovering. Priya is pictured above sharing her story with over a hundred health professionals.
PANDA BOARD AND CEO

PANDA is governed by a skilled Board with representation from four Australian states/territories. Many of PANDA’s Board members have been personally affected by perinatal anxiety or depression.

TERRI SMITH
Terri brings a wealth of experience to PANDA as an experienced not-for-profit executive. She has previously served as CEO of a professional health association, Deputy CEO/ National Program and Policy Manager for Breast Cancer Network Australia and Director of Client Services for Moreland Community Health Services.

DR WILMA GALLETT, Chairperson
Wilma has a breadth of experience in senior management positions within the public and community services sectors, including founding CEO of The Salvation Army Employment Plus service. She has been a key policy influence in social reform and employment services and has participated in numerous senior government committees and forums.

BEN LANNAN, Vice Chairperson
A Partner at Pricewaterhouse Coopers, Ben brings over 17 years’ experience consulting in taxation matters to a range of corporations across industries. Ben is deeply committed to helping families experiencing perinatal depression after supporting his partner through postnatal depression.

NICKI BATAGOL, Secretary
Nicki is a Management Consultant specialising in change management and transformation programs who has worked in Australia and London across a range of industries from corporate to the public sector. Having been through her own personal experience of postnatal depression, Nicki is committed to raising awareness of the impact of perinatal depression and anxiety on families.

DOROTHY BELPERIO
Dorothy is an experienced Health Executive, who has established a range of mental health and community services over 20 years including Health Connexion, a business development and management consultancy. Dorothy was a 2010 Telstra Business Women’s Award Finalist, for leadership in developing mental health services in South Australia.

MATTHEW STEWART, Treasurer
Matthew brings over 40 years’ experience in financial and management accounting across Not for Profit, university administration, manufacturing and the security industry to PANDA. His experience also includes project management, internal auditing, insolvency and mentoring SME Directors.

TONY HOLLAND
Tony Holland is CEO of OzHelp and leads a team of 25 staff in the head office in Canberra, as well as the Pilbara and Darwin. Tony was previously CEO of the Arthritis Foundation, ACT, as well as Business Manager of Christian Schools Tasmania. Tony joined the PANDA Board in August 2016.

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REBECCA KHAIR
Rebecca is chair of the PANDA Board Charter Review Committee. Rebecca’s career has spanned legal and commercial roles; she has extensive experience in commercial property and is currently Senior Manager, Corporate Real Estate, at AGL Energy. Since becoming a mother in 2012, Rebecca has developed a passion for promoting the care and wellbeing of both women and men at risk of perinatal anxiety and depression.

KAREN MARSHMAN
Karen has worked in the field of mental health for over 20 years. She has worked therapeutically with individuals, youth and families and has lead organisations in private and NFP sectors in wellbeing management. She currently runs Let’s Talk, training and implementing early intervention strategies in organisations around mental health awareness. Karen joined PANDA in May 2017.

SAMANTHA PAGE
Samantha is the CEO of Early Childhood Australia and has held a number of governance roles including serving on the boards of ACOS, AIHW and Parentline ACT. Samantha has over 20 years of experience in the development and implementation of social policy and sector development projects in the public, private and NGO sector. Samantha joined the PANDA board in April 2017.

Sophie O’Shaughnessy left the PANDA Board in November 2016. Thank you Sophie for your significant contribution to PANDA’s Governance.