



**MEDIA RELEASE – 13<sup>th</sup> August 2018**

## **Free psychological counselling for parents dealing with perinatal depression and anxiety available in western Sydney Stockland shopping centre**

Expectant and new parents who are experiencing perinatal depression and anxiety (PNDA) are now able to access GP-referred, free psychological counselling sessions at a new Gidget House, which officially opened at Stockland Merrylands, in the heart of western Sydney, today.

The new Gidget House offers free counselling services up to six days a week, and employs local psychologists, including specialists proficient in Arabic and Farsi – helping meet the needs of the local area, which people from more than 120 nationalities call home.

This is Gidget Foundation Australia's fifth Gidget House and its first in Western Sydney, with other services located in North Sydney, Karitane at Randwick, The Mater at Crows Nest and North Shore Private at St Leonards.

NSW Health Minister, the Hon. Brad Hazzard MP, officially opened Gidget House at Merrylands today [Monday 13 August].

Gidget Foundation Australia Ambassador and former PNDA sufferer, Antoinette Lattouf, hosted the launch event. The journalist, who grew up in Merrylands, said it is a really valuable and important service for local families.

“Speaking about mental health issues remains really taboo among many different cultural groups and hopefully Gidget House can help to break the stigma, particularly with psychologists who have language and cultural understanding. As a free service, it's also going to help families who would otherwise struggle to pay for specialist psychological counselling,” Lattouf said.

Amanda Hayes, General Manager, Retail Asset Management & Operations, at Stockland said of the initiative: “We are delighted to be partnering with the Gidget Foundation, providing dedicated space for an important support service for families in this growing area of Sydney. For almost 50 years, Stockland Merrylands has been at the heart of the local community, and with some 10 million customer visits to the centre each year, Gidget House can make a real difference in raising awareness and access to services for Perinatal Depression and Anxiety.”

Arabella Gibson, CEO Gidget Foundation Australia said the partnership with Stockland is a wonderful collaboration. “We are both grateful and thrilled to team up with Stockland to provide comprehensive psychological counselling for new parents in Western Sydney. The services on offer at Gidget House Merrylands will mean that so many more mums and dads will have the support they need during this vulnerable and often isolating time in their parenting journey.”

Pregnancy brings joys along with challenges. Gidget Foundation Australia and Stockland recognise the importance of emotional wellbeing for new parents, and the need to provide them with support and services.

Previously known as postnatal depression, perinatal anxiety and depression during pregnancy and early parenthood (the perinatal period) affects almost 100,000 Australians each year, equating to 1 in 5 new mums and 1 in 10 new dads.

Gidget is the nickname of a vibrant young mother from Sydney who took her own life while suffering from unrecognised postnatal depression. She hid her suffering from even her loving family and friends. They created the Gidget Foundation determined that what happened to Gidget would not happen to others.



Today, Gidget Foundation Australia assists thousands of expectant parents and their families each year. This is through its free psychological services at Gidget House, as well as its newly developed Start Talking Telehealth Program, offering video psychology sessions nationally.

**Gidget House at Stockland Merrylands**

Open from 13 August 2018

1 McFarlane Street &, Pitt St, Merrylands

Located in the Community Room near Centre Management

Bookings will be managed via the Gidget Foundation

Ph 1300 851 758 | [www.gidgetfoundation.org.au](http://www.gidgetfoundation.org.au)

[facebook.com/GidgetFoundation](https://facebook.com/GidgetFoundation) | [instagram.com/gidgetfoundation](https://instagram.com/gidgetfoundation) | [twitter.com/GidgetFndation](https://twitter.com/GidgetFndation)

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*For further information, interviews or images, please contact:*

*Arabella Gibson at Gidget Foundation Australia, 0412 906 157 or [arabella.gibson@gidgetfoundation.org.au](mailto:arabella.gibson@gidgetfoundation.org.au)*

*Holly Frendo at Stockland, 0410 991 141 or [holly.frendo@stockland.com.au](mailto:holly.frendo@stockland.com.au)*