

**Torres and Cape**  
Hospital and Health Service



# Mental Health and Pregnancy

Sarah Davies-Roe



**Queensland**  
Government

*We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of this country and recognise their connection to land, wind, water and community. We pay our respects to them, their culture, and to the Elders both past, present and emerging*

*We recognise the role and ongoing importance of culture within birthing and parenting practices that have occurred across thousands of years and the significance this plays in the social and emotional wellbeing of family*

*I would also like to recognise the babies, young children, parents and families experiencing challenges to mental health and social emotional wellbeing during pregnancy, infancy and early childhood. We are deeply grateful to those who share their lived experiences, stories and recommendations to help improve services for expectant and new parents, babies, children and families.*

# What is “Perinatal”?

- In Queensland, the perinatal period can be defined as the time frame commencing preconception/conception through to 2 years from the end of a pregnancy.
- Other states may define this period as preconception to 12 months
- This period of time is considered to be a high-risk time for mental health concerns to arise.



# More than just physical and biological.....

- Whilst there is a significant biological and physical component to becoming a parent, the process of becoming a mother or father requires a psychological reorganization of identity, relationships and place in the world.....



# What is Perinatal Mental Health?

- Approximately 16% of women and 10% of men will develop a significant perinatal mental health condition in this period
- Perinatal Mental Health conditions are more than “PND” – it includes not only depression but any mental health condition – anxiety; psychosis; eating disorders
- Perinatal Mental Illness occurs on a continuum like any other illness – mild to moderate and severe.
- Suicide is a leading cause of maternal death in Queensland

# Early Intervention and Screening

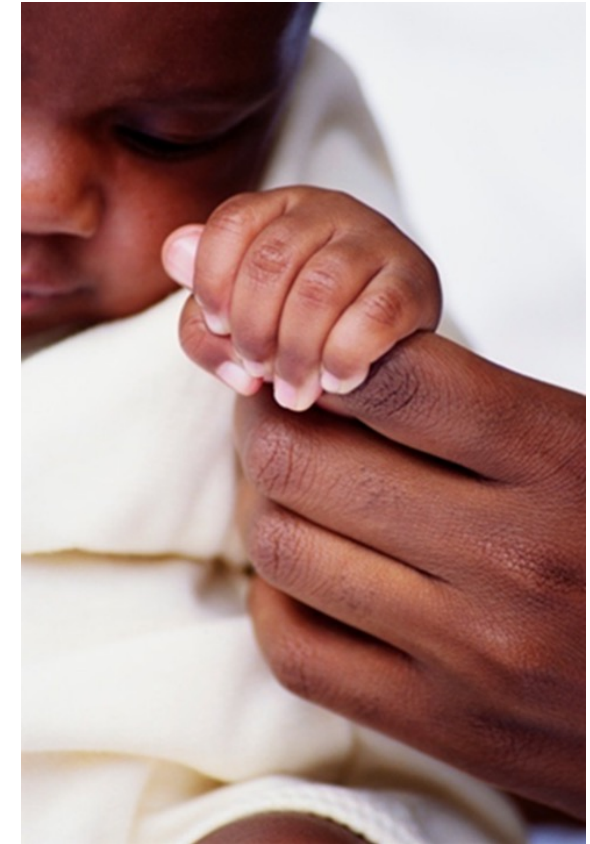
- Universal screening of women during the perinatal period support awareness, early identification and treatment of mental health concerns
- Provides an opportunity to identify psychosocial supports needed and link into these
- Supports conversations about emotional wellbeing
- Uses validated tools, research has found high levels of acceptability amongst both women and health care providers

# More than just mothers and fathers?

‘There is no such thing as a baby; there is a baby and someone’

Donald Winnicott

Infant’s early development and social and emotional wellbeing is greatly affected by the mental health of the adults who care for them.





# Take home messages....

Mental health conditions are common in the perinatal period – universal screening enables us to identify those who need extra support early

It's OK to ask for help

There is support available, and the sooner conditions are assessed and treated; the sooner recovery is possible

# Learn More....

## Infant Mental Health

[Infant mental health learning pathway - Emerging Minds](#)

## Perinatal Mental Health

[Basic Skills in Perinatal Mental Health – COPE](#)

Any questions?