



05 AUG, 2026

They loved their sons, but didn't enjoy new motherhood

Daily Advertiser, Wagga Wagga

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Maryam Sulaiman

WHEN Olivia Mullan and Jessica Anderson welcomed their sons into the world, they expected the joy of new motherhood. Instead, both Riverina mothers were caught in a turbulent roller coaster of guilt, severe anxiety, and unspoken mental health struggles—a quiet crisis playing out in homes right across regional areas.

As demands for local perinatal mental health services continue to grow, figures estimate that each year more than 400 parents in Wagga and more than 670 across the wider Riverina region will experience perinatal mental health challenges.

Yet, many suffer in silence.

Gidget Foundation Australia research conducted by PureProfile shows 28 per cent of regional NSW parents have struggled with their mental health during pregnancy or after birth and didn't seek support.

Even more alarmingly, data shows 43 per cent of parents in regional NSW believed their symptoms were not severe enough to seek support.

When Ms Mullan had her son William in 2015, she faced a severe mental battle after birth.

"I had no prior mental health issues, prior to having postpartum, postnatal depression and anxiety," the Wagga mother said.

At the time, Ms Mullan was a single mother living in Sydney, where she was admitted to a hospital in a private mother and baby unit for three weeks.

Looking back, she knows how different her journey could have been had she been living locally at the time.

"If I had been here in Wagga and experienced a deterioration in my mental health postpartum, I would have been taken to the mental health unit here and separated from my son," she said.

Despite being a nurse and aware of perinatal depression and anxiety, Ms Mullan said asking for help during such a challenging time can be difficult for any parent.

"Sometimes we are afraid to admit that we're not

perfect, and it is a hard slog," she said.

"You're a new parent... and when you experience these thoughts and feelings, it can really impact your daily life."

That heavy sense of isolation is a feeling Griffith mother Ms Anderson knows all too well. Following the birth of her son Thomas, she suffered severe depression and anxiety.

"I felt this all-consuming sense of overwhelm and failure. I felt disconnected from myself, and I felt guilty because I loved my son so deeply, yet I wasn't enjoying motherhood the way I thought I should," Ms Anderson said.

"The anxiety and overwhelm controlled every part of my day. Simple things like showering or leaving the house felt impossible.

"I realised I couldn't get through this alone."

She said the support from Gidget House helped her get through some of the darkest times after the birth.

"For the first time, someone wasn't telling me to 'just

enjoy this stage'," she said.

"They listened. They helped me understand that what I was experiencing had a name, that I wasn't a bad mother, and that recovery was possible.

"That changed everything."

Local support is available at Gidget House Wagga, located at the Tresillian Family Care Centre, which provides local parents with free perinatal mental health psychological therapy support.

Gidget Foundation Australia is a not-for-profit organisation that exists to support the mental health of expectant, new and potential parents to ensure they receive accessible, timely and specialist care.

■ If you or someone you know needs support, contact Lifeline on 13 11 14 or the Gidget Foundation on 1300 851 758.



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Jessica Anderson with her son Thomas, went through a challenging time after birth but found the support from Gidget House. Picture supplied