



**Te mate Tuatea, me  
te mate Pōuri o Aotearoa  
Perinatal Anxiety &  
Depression Aotearoa**



Submission for  
ACC (Maternal Birth Injury  
and Other Matters)  
Amendment Bill

February 2022

*E tūtaki ana ngā kapua o te rangi, kei runga, kei runga te Mangoroa e kōpae pū ana.  
The clouds in the sky close over, but above them spreads the milky way.*

## Our Vision

To eliminate the stigma around perinatal mental health in Aotearoa New Zealand.

## Our Mission

To eliminate the stigma around perinatal mental health in Aotearoa New Zealand by championing awareness and facilitating best practice in perinatal mental health and wellbeing to ensure all families have access to appropriate information and support.

## Our Values

We are known for our:

Manaakitanga - caring

Whakamana - respect

Pono - truth

Tikanga - the right way, integrity

Kotahitanga - unity, inclusiveness

# Whakataki / Introduction to PADA

Thank you for the opportunity to connect with you.

PADA looks forward to continuing to build a strong and constructive relationship with you, your team and other politicians as we all work together to improve equitable outcomes for all wāhine and whānau during the perinatal period.

We know there are plenty of opportunities to improve the way we care for families at the start of their parenting journey.

We believe the engagement with, and involvement of, stakeholders across the sector is essential to achieve better outcomes for all wāhine and their whānau during the perinatal period, irrespective of cultural, ethnic, religious or sexual orientation. Early investment - starting from conception - has lifelong benefits.

At PADA we know there is a window of opportunity with every new pregnancy. The longer we wait, the worse long-term issues become.

# Perinatal mental health at a glance

**57,753**

the number of  
births in 2020

**suicide**

is the leading cause  
of maternal death in  
Aotearoa

**50%**

of women who  
suffer with  
anxiety or  
depression in  
pregnancy will  
develop perinatal  
depression

**4.3%**

of fathers  
experience  
high levels of  
depression after  
childbirth

**12%**

percentage of  
pregnant women  
have severe  
anxiety or  
depression

**2.3%**

of fathers suffer  
depression through  
their partners  
pregnancy

**30%**

of relationships  
break down after  
birth - rising to  
43% if they are  
multiple births

Māori/Pasifika/Asian  
wāhine are

**7 times**

more likely to suffer  
from perinatal distress

## **Mātou nei / About PADA**

PADA is a national charity that provides advocacy and awareness through facilitation, training and developing tools for health care providers who support whānau with anxiety and depression due to pregnancy, childbirth and early parenting.

Before PADA, there was no national umbrella organisation for perinatal mental health in New Zealand. A brainstorming day in 2009 was attended by representatives from a range of agencies and organisations connected with perinatal distress issues. They identified interests in, aims and objectives for a national networking group for perinatal distress. This led to PADA becoming an incorporated society in 2011 (previously known as the Perinatal Mental Health New Zealand Trust).

## **Tā mātou mahi / PADA's work**

Work PADA does includes:

- Delivering seminars around the country for care professionals who work with whānau during the perinatal period
- Acting as a hub to create collaborative networks in local communities and throughout Aotearoa New Zealand
- Developing targeted education programmes for the health sector
- Producing resources to upskill care professionals
- Raising awareness and championing perinatal wellbeing in our communities
- Advocating and lobbying for improved services and equitable access to them
- Supporting and resourcing perinatal support groups throughout the country
- Maintaining and developing a credible and information rich website
- Using social media to disseminate quality information to a wide audience
- Promoting and facilitating inter-disciplinary collaboration to create improved access and services for whānau
- Creating public awareness of perinatal distress

# Submission

Perinatal Anxiety & Depression Aotearoa would like to provide an oral submission to emphasize the ACC legislation needs to ensure that all birth related injuries are covered.

Birth Trauma Aotearoa state “It is suggested that 85% of New Zealand women and birth givers suffer childbirth injury. We also know that 1 in 3 birth givers report their birth as traumatic.

Many people consider physical and/or psychological injury to be “just a part of birthing” – this does not have to be the case and, when injury arises, everyone deserves treatment and support”

Physical Birth Trauma can include Caesarean Section, Perineal Tear, Pelvic Floor Muscle Damage, Pelvic Organ Prolapse, Labial Tears or Fistula.

Psychological injuries can include Postnatal Depression, Anxiety or Post Traumatic Stress Disorder PTSD.

A traumatic birth experience is associated with postpartum mental health problems, including depression and PTSD. Poor mental health in the postnatal period can alter a woman’s sense of self, and disrupt family relationships. Difficulties with early mother-baby bonding can negatively influence a child’s social, emotional and mental development. In addition, the experience of a traumatic birth can influence a woman’s future decisions regarding where, how, and with whom she gives birth. Therefore, the consequences of a traumatic birth experience can be substantial and wide-ranging for women and their families.

One in 25 women develop PTSD after childbirth with many more developing some trauma symptoms. It can be caused by a range of traumatic experiences, particularly those involving emergencies where the woman fears for her own or her baby’s life.

Women who develop PTSD after traumatic birth typically find themselves reliving the birth through flashbacks and nightmares, and often find that their extreme anxiety and sense of being on high alert makes daily life unbearable.

Having a baby should be one of the happiest and most exciting days of a women's life. Unfortunately, this isn't always the case. When events go awry during childbirth, the consequences can be devastating for the baby and the parents. Many mothers go into labour having researched her options and with a birth plan in place. Unfortunately, even a birth that started well, can turn into a scary and sometimes terrifying ordeal. Sadly when things go wrong during labour, this can lead to the baby suffering life changing brain injuries and the mother having to undergo emergency treatment to deliver her baby, will undoubtedly experience feelings of trauma.

**There is a wonderful window of opportunity to make a significant difference during the perinatal period. If we can get it right at this time, there are untold benefits for all whānau as well as wider Aotearoa New Zealand.**

**We would like to draw your attention to key areas we need you to support to make a real difference.**

- The bill does not include psychological trauma or injury – support services for this injury related to birth are severely lacking and challenging to access.  
**Recommendation: Extended cover to include psychological injury relating to childbirth.**
- The list of injuries covered by the bill is exhaustive. Unfortunately, this list excludes many injuries that occur during birth.  
**Recommendation: For ACC legislation to be drafted to ensure that all birth-related injuries are covered.**
- The Bill does not provide retrospective cover – those who are already injured, or who sustain an injury prior to 1 October 2022, are excluded from this cover.  
**Recommendation: Include cover for those who are currently suffering from an injury sustained prior to 1 October 2022.**
- The Bill does not currently include cover for injuries to baby sustained during birth.  
**Recommendation: That any injury to the birthing person and their baby sustained during birth be covered by legislation.**
- At present, the process women and birth givers need to go through in order to apply for injury cover is unnecessarily onerous at a time when parents are already exhausted, let alone physically debilitated.  
**Recommendation: Streamline the application and support process to be consumer-friendly.**

**Recommendation: Birth-related injury to be diagnosed by a midwife, obstetrician/gynecologist, GP or physio. This will ensure a faster, more streamlined application and support/treatment process.**

**Recommendation: Considering we understand the impacts of both physical and psychological ill health related to child birth, PADA recommends that every person who gives birth in Aotearoa is offered at least 3 physical and 3 psychological support sessions post-birth, as part of standard care, with the option to extend this support out to further sessions if needed.**

### Spend \$1 now to save \$17 later in a child's life

Early investment - starting from conception - has well proven lifelong benefits. There is a window of opportunity with new pregnancy, to nurture an engaged mother and whānau with a new baby.

The longer we wait the more our long term issues worsen.

With around 60k births per year in Aotearoa, how much money do we need to create positive prevention processes? "Let's spend our money on parenting – parents and children, not on prisons." - Sir Peter Gluckman