



press clip

LIFTING THE FOG

ZILKA GROGAN

It was Cathie Knox's personal experiences with postnatal depression that inspired her to get involved with the Gidget Foundation.

A chance conversation led to her diagnosis with the illness and Ms Knox, now CEO of the foundation, was able to seek help.

"I spent about two years in a fog of despair and in my case I was very lucky to be diagnosed," she said.

"Women are often not diagnosed and often don't have the self awareness to realise they have a problem that they can get help for."

The Gidget Foundation was formed in 2001 following the tragic death of Gidget, a local North Shore woman, who committed suicide after the birth of her first child. She left behind a six-month-old baby.

Gidget's family and friends established the foundation to promote awareness about postnatal depression and its impact on families. About 20 per cent of women will suffer from postnatal depression, with a further 10 per cent of men suffering from the illness. On September 25 the Gidget Foundation will host a ladies lunch. Billed as a "celebration of motherhood" it will celebrate the essential role of mothers.

"Motherhood in the 21st century is often overlooked and often women as mothers feel that they have become irrelevant," Ms Knox said.

The lunch will be hosted by comedian Julia Morris, with Mosman GP Dr Penny Adams as guest speaker. More than 450 women

ranging in age from 20 to 80, and most of them from the North Shore, will attend.

Ms Knox encourages women who are experiencing the symptoms of postnatal depression, such as lack of sleep, changes in eating patterns, tearfulness and an overwhelming sense of sadness and grief, to speak to a health professional.

"Their early childhood centre nurse, local GP, obstetrician or midwife are all available to help new mothers after the birth of their child," she said. "There are a lot of psychological changes with having a baby, suddenly their whole identity has shifted. Often women just need validation of the difficulties they are experiencing."

Ms Knox hopes that events like the ladies lunch will increase awareness of postnatal depression so that some of the stigma associated with the illness can be overcome leading more women to seek help.

Antenatal mental health screening is carried out for all public maternity patients. However, patients in the private system are not necessarily screened. North Shore Private Hospital and the Gidget Foundation are currently undertaking a pilot screening program to test all pregnant patients for postnatal anxiety, depression and domestic violence.



Have you or someone close to you experienced postnatal depression? Share your story at www.mynorthside.com.au.



Cathie Knox with Gidget supporter and midwife Therese Brooker and her son William