# Supporting men in early parenting is a key national strategy in promoting infant mental health

Presentation to

Australian Marce Society for Perinatal Mental Health 2019 Conference

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Professor Louise Newman The University of Melbourne

### Paternal perinatal depression matters

### Depressed dads negative effects

- Do less reading to infants
- Spank infants more
- Withdraw from interaction
- More irritable

Leads child behaviour problems Contributes Mothers' depression Costs a fortune



So of course we need screening and treatment

# Screening dads will happen

- NHS England 2018
- WA Perinatal and infant mental health 2018
- NSW Health 2020
- National? 2021

### But screening is just one part!

# Paternal perinatal positives

- What we need is involved, engaged, confident, committed dads who
  - Take time off work
  - Offer support to mother
  - Care for their baby
  - Share the load
  - Get help when needed



How do we help men to become these fathers?

# A culture shift is already here



# A culture shift is already here



### However

 "When we talk to dads, we hear just how hard it is for them to reach out for help. They tell us they really want to be there to support their new family, and they are embarrassed that they might need help when their partner has done the hard yards of pregnancy and labour".

Terri Smith, PANDA CEO

### A culture shift in services

"Men's commitment to parenting is considerably moderated by external factors such as attitudes and support from partners, family, work and community services"

WA Father inclusive practice guide

We need professionals who think about, value and communicate with fathers

### A culture shift everywhere

- Your workplace
- What you say and do
- What society & media say to him
- Policies in organisations
- National and state policies

# APLEN steering group

Emma Walsh CEO Parents at Work

Catherine McNair Head of Diversity & Inclusion, QBE

Kylie Fuller Head of Diversity and Inclusion, Telstra

Eric Mercier Management Consultant, KPMG

Gina De George Director of Inclusion, Diversity and Wellbeing, **Deloitte** 

Ryan Burke Executive Manager, Group Diversity & Inclusion, Commonwealth Bank

Amelia Britton Head of Diversity and Inclusion, **Norton Rose Fulbright** 

Jessie Pitts Diversity & Inclusion Manager, PwC

# Your workplace: what would a poster say to tell dads that you value them?

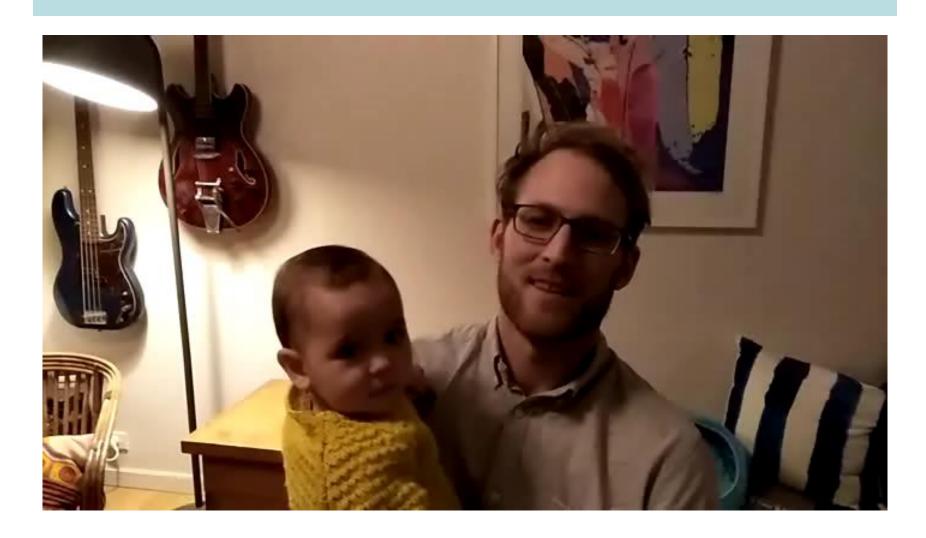
- Words
- Words
- Words
- Words

Picture of dad and baby?

# One piece of support sms4dads



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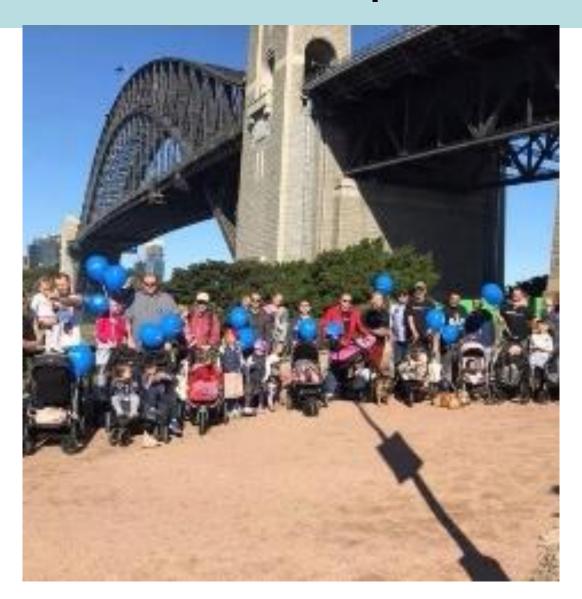


### What makes SMS4dads effective?

- Texts synched to needs
- Normalisation
- Prompts to interact
- Safety net Mood Tracker

Your involvement designing messages

# Dads Group Inc



### What makes Dads Group Inc effective?

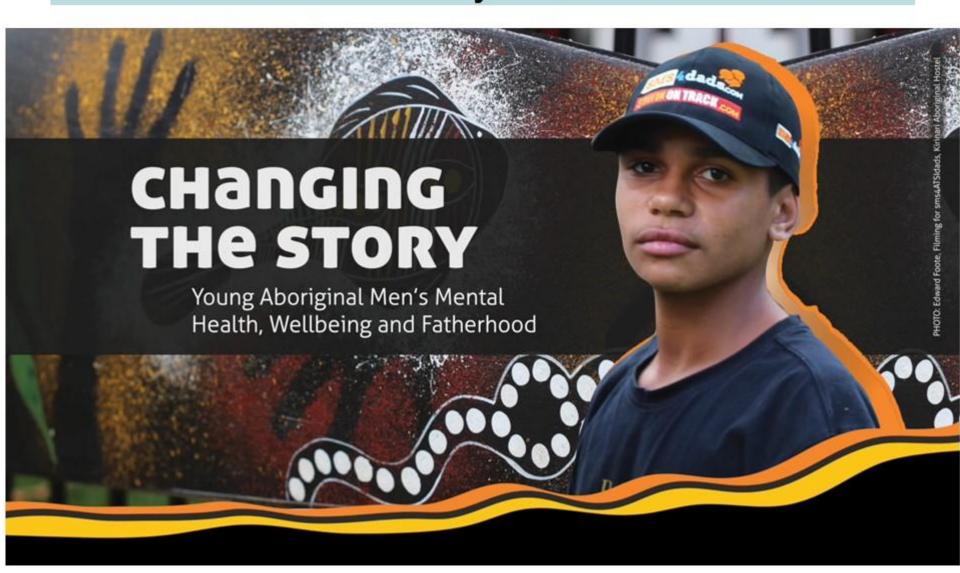
- Local leaders
- Support via national network
- Normalisation
- Prompts via social media
- Agenda is to 'hang out'

Your involvement facilitating support

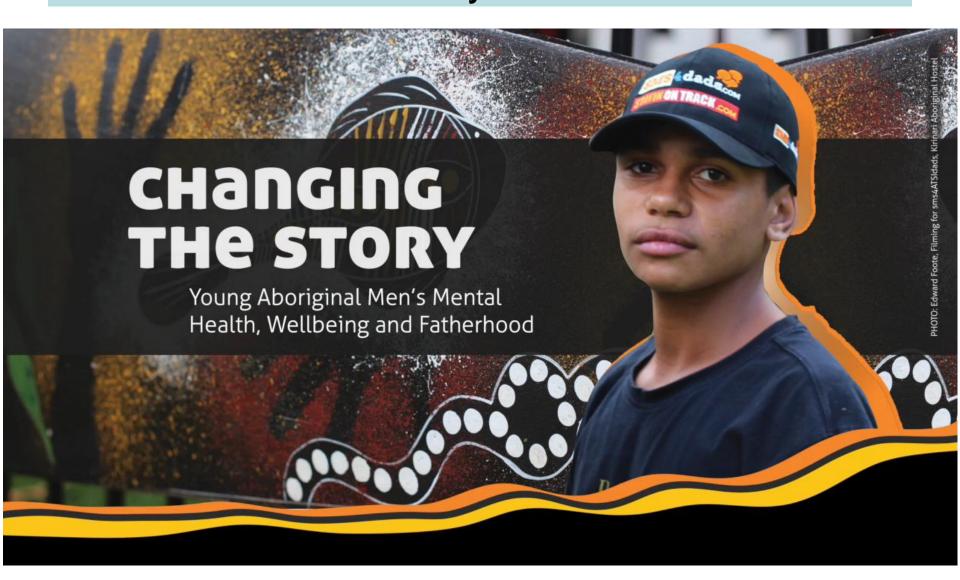
# Steps for you to take

- Join the SMS4dads reference group and tell your clients
- Find the local Dads Group contact and tell your clients
- Subscribe to the free Fatherhood Research Bulletin
- Join the Australian Fatherhood Research Consortium
- Come along or send someone to the Aboriginal Fathers Symposium in Newcastle November 8th

### November 8<sup>th</sup> 2019 The University of Newcastle



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### **Details**

- Supporting men in early parenting is a key national strategy in promoting infant mental health Richard Fletcher, Jacqui Macdonald Louise Newman Contact richard.fletcher@Newcastle.edu.au
- Read: Men get postnatal depression too <a href="https://bit.ly/2zMxPx9">https://bit.ly/2zMxPx9</a>
- Dads Group Inc Contact Thomas Docking tom@dadsgroup.org
- Subscribe to free Fatherhood Research Bulletin email family@Newcastle.edu.au
- Join Australian fatherhood Research Consortium <a href="http://mappresearch.org/fatherhood-consortium">http://mappresearch.org/fatherhood-consortium</a>
- To join the SMS4dads reference group email richard.fletcher@Newcastle.edu.au
- To attend Change the Story Young Aboriginal Men Wellbeing and Fatherhood email <u>family@Newcastle.edu.au</u>