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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **WORLD FIRST INFANT SLEEP STUDY REDUCES POST NATAL DEPRESSION**

Treating sleep problems in babies can drastically reduce post-natal depression in mothers, estimated to affect 15% of Australians, according to the findings of a world first study undertaken by the Centre for Community Child Health at Melbourne's Royal Children's Hospital, and the Murdoch Childrens Research Institute.

As a result of these findings Minister for Children The Hon Sherryl Garbutt announced plans to train 200 Victorian maternal and child health nurses to help families manage infant sleep problems.

The Infant Sleep Study involved maternal and child health nurses offering advice to parents on how to deal with infant sleep problems. Almost half of the mothers reported experiencing less infant sleep problems (42% less likely) and less symptoms of depression (41% less likely) when their babies turned 10 months, than mothers in the non-intervention arm of the study.

When babies turned two years of age, mothers in the intervention arm were still less likely to experience depression (59% less likely) than mothers in the non-intervention arm of the study.

"Around 45% of Australian mothers report that their 6-12 month-old has a sleep problem," explains the Centre for Community Child Health's Dr Harriet Hiscock.

"Post-natal depression can seriously affect maternal wellbeing and a mother's ability to bond with, and care for, her newborn baby," Dr Hiscock added.

"Postnatal depression affects one in seven women giving birth in Australia and Maternal and Child Health nurses play an essential role in providing professional, quality care to support mothers and children through this important developmental phase," Ms Garbutt said.

"The new Sleep Intervention program has the potential to lead to health gains for both infants and mothers and to provide resource savings for the healthcare system as a whole."

For further information on effective sleep techniques for babies and toddlers, visit the Raising Children Network parenting website at [www.raisingchildren.net.au](http://www.raisingchildren.net.au)

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