## Don't Suffer in Silence
*Birth Trauma Awareness Week Starts this Sunday*

*Did you know studies have shown that 1 in 4 first-time mothers sustain significant injuries from childbirth? That's as many as 15,000-30,000 women every year.*

This **July 7th - 14th is Australian Birth Trauma Awareness Week**, a week dedicated to shining light on the potential risks of childbirth, empowering women to open up about their own personal trauma experience, helping guide others who might feel alone or isolated.

Supporting the awareness week is the Australasian Birth Trauma Association (ABTA), an organisation founded in 2017 that focuses on the recognition and understanding of birth-related complications. Mother of two, Amy Dawes, founded the not-for-profit after the traumatic birth of her first child in 2013. Like many women, Amy did not identify that she was suffering from birth trauma until she was 16 months postpartum and was later diagnosed with a bilateral levator ani avulsion (pelvic floor muscle torn off the bone) that eventually resulted in prolapse.

"After experiencing a traumatic birth experience first hand, I became passionate about raising awareness about this important issue and speaking out about the life altering injuries women can sustain through childbirth. Some women feel ashamed, embarrassed or isolated through this experience and I want to let them know that they're not alone. The ABTA is a supportive place for women to turn to in these difficult times," said Amy Dawes.

On a mission to break the stigma associated with psychological and/or physical injuries after birth trauma, Amy established the ABTA to bring women, clinicians and researchers together to prevent, diagnose, treat and support women and their families that have gone through a traumatic birth.

1 in 3 Australian women identify their births as traumatic, and psychological trauma effects many thousands of women a year as a result of a particularly traumatic birth. This can include the likes of severe tearing, hemorrhage after birth or an emergency caesarean when the baby is in distress.

Former Miss Australia, Jessica Fitzpatrick, was 22 when she had her first daughter, and had a traumatic forceps delivery that resulted in a significant physical trauma. Jessica feels that she could have been better prepared for birth and wasn't told of the risk involved with forceps. Jessica is one of the many women supported at the Australasian Birth Trauma Association.

To find out more about Australian Birth Trauma Awareness Week or to support the ABTA and make a donation, visit: www.birthtrauma.org.au. Help raise awareness by sharing your story with the hashtag #yourstorymatters and #breakthesilence #BirthTraumaAwarenessWeek2019. For further support of the ATBA, take part in the online study which hopes to improve antenatal care services.

**-ENDS-**

**Notes – additional Case Studies:**

- Sydney resident Sarah, was 29 when she had her daughter. She had a traumatic forceps delivery that resulted in significant physical trauma and postpartum PTSD
- Perth-based Alex, who was told she was 'built to birth', fit and healthy and her birth would be easy, is in her 20s and lives with physical and psychological injuries
- Melbourne resident Amanda, experienced an undiagnosed placenta accrete, excessive blood loss and eventually required a hysterectomy
- TJ was 30 when she had her first child in a Brisbane hospital. She sustained third and fourth degree tears that resulted in infections that the doctor didn't pick up on. TJ went on to develop PTSD and anxiety
- Wollongong based Steph, was 35 when she had her first child delivered by vacuum and forceps. Her child sustained injury and Steph is no longer able to work due to the extent of her injuries