



**The Hon Mark Butler MP**  
**Minister for Health and Aged Care**

Ref No: MC23-011156

Ms Susan Templeman MP  
Chair  
Standing Committee on Petitions  
[petitions.committee.reps@aph.gov.au](mailto:petitions.committee.reps@aph.gov.au)

Dear Chair 

Thank you for your correspondence of 31 May 2023 regarding petition number EN4972 – increase resources and funding for eating disorders.

I acknowledge the substantial impact eating disorders can take on a person's mental, physical, and psychological wellbeing, as well as for their family and carers. The Australian Government is aware of the gaps within the eating disorder system of care and is committed to improving eating disorder services and treatment options to improve patient outcomes and relieve the strain on hospitals.

I recognise the national significance of investing in ensuring all Australians can access affordable and appropriate supports and services for eating disorders. The Government has committed \$271 million to eating disorder initiatives between 2018-19 and 2025-26 to address the gaps within the system of care and to improve eating disorder treatment and services nationally. The Government has committed to the following eating disorder initiatives:

- Increasing the accessibility and affordability of eating disorder treatments in the community setting through specific Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) items for eating disorders, enabling up to 40 psychology and 20 dietetic treatment sessions per year for those eligible for an Eating Disorder Treatment and Management Plan (\$110.7 million).
- A national coordination role for the National Eating Disorder Collaboration (NEDC) to build an effective, equitable and accessible system of care for all Australians (\$6.9 million).
- Operation of Butterfly Foundation's National Helpline, ED Hope. The Helpline provides supports for those concerned about eating disorders or body image issues and their loved ones (\$9.5 million).
- Supporting the Butterfly Foundation's Body Bright Program, which provides curriculum resources and education to primary school teachers and parents to promote healthy attitudes and behaviours towards the body, food, and physical exercise (\$0.65 million).
- Developing the Eating Disorder Credential, which allows consumers to identify appropriately trained and experienced clinicians to seek eating disorders treatment from (connect-ed - ANZAED Eating Disorder Credential) (\$3.26 million).

- Upskilling staff at Head to Health and headspace Centres, to enhance their capacity to identify and treat eating disorders (\$1.9 million).
- Establishing the Australian Eating Disorder Research & Translation Centre to progress key eating disorder research priorities relating to prevention, early identification and intervention (\$13 million).
- Translation of eating disorder evidence into clinical practice by the Inside Out Institute (\$4 million).
- Supporting Eating Disorders Families Australia's Strive program, to provide education, learning and peer support to parents, carers, and families of people with eating disorders (\$0.45 million).
- Launching a series of coordinated initiatives under the Embrace Kids Australia brand aimed at improving the body image of young people across Australia and preventing the prevalence of eating disorders (\$6.2 million).

The Government has also provided \$63 million to establish seven community-based residential eating disorder treatment centres through the Community Health and Hospitals Program. Wandí Nerida is a private facility on the Sunshine Coast operated by the Butterfly Foundation and this centre is operational. The Government is providing \$8.5 million to Wandí Nerida for capital works, service establishment and delivery. The other six centres are being delivered in partnership with state and territory governments. The majority of the centres will be operational from mid to late 2024.

The NEDC is currently undertaking an activity to map eating disorders content in tertiary curricula for health professionals. This project will identify potential pathways for change in curricula to better equip a range of health professionals to respond to eating disorders. This will enable future health professionals to detect eating disorders early and support patients to access evidence-based treatment options.

On 29 May 2023, I announced the outcomes of the \$20 million Community-Based Eating Disorder Supports grant opportunity, which addresses existing gaps in the system of care and identifies specialised treatment services to be delivered in the community setting, on a national scale. This grant opportunity will fund seven initiatives, including:

- The University of Sydney – eClinic  
The *eClinic* will provide national access to digital evidence-based e-therapies either by self- or clinician-referral.
- The NEDC – Right Care Right Place  
The NEDC will work with four Primary Health Networks to commission Eating Disorder Care Coordinators in their regions.
- Eating Disorders Queensland – Brief Intervention Therapy for Eating Disorders (bITE)  
*bITE* will provide evidence-based interventions and support elements to provide clients with a guided journey towards recovery.
- The University of Sydney – Digital GP Hub  
The *Digital GP Hub* will support GPs to provide evidence-based screening, assessment, treatment, and management to people with eating disorders.
- headspace National Youth Mental Health Foundation – Embedding eating disorder treatment in headspace centres  
This program will deliver training and support activities to ensure headspace clinicians are able to identify and competently treat someone with an eating disorder and also identify those requiring more intensive support.

- Eating Disorders Families Australia – Fill the Gap  
*Fill the Gap* will provide access to specifically designed supports for carers of those with eating disorders.
- Butterfly Foundation – Virtual Intensive Outpatient Program (v-IOP)  
*v-IOP* will provide stepped-down support for people with an eating disorder discharged from hospitals and residential centres. The program will incorporate group therapy, meal support programs, and lived experience focussed groups for participants over 16 years.

The Department of Health and Aged Care has also commissioned the La Trobe University to conduct an evaluation of the Eating Disorder MBS items (\$1.97 million). The evaluation will aim to determine whether the items are operating as intended for patients and their families, clinicians, and the Government. The evaluation will inform the Government and key stakeholders how the Eating Disorder MBS items are working to achieve their aims and objectives.

Please be advised, the Government is also actively working with NEDC to deliver a National Eating Disorders Strategy. The Strategy will contribute to the development and implementation of a nationally consistent, evidence-based system of care for the prevention and treatment of eating disorders throughout Australia. This Strategy is due to be launched in August 2023.

The Government recognises the growing impact of eating disorders and the need to enhance access to appropriate services and supports through a coordinated system of care. We are working in collaboration with state and territory governments and sector stakeholders to fill the gaps within the stepped system of care. The significant investments outlined above represent the Government's commitment to providing access to more affordable and appropriate eating disorder services and treatment. I recognise there is more work to do to ensure all Australians experience positive outcomes in their care journey.

Thank you for writing on this matter.

Yours sincerely ..

Mark Butler

17/07/2023