

MEDIA RELEASE



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Eating disorder organisations to present a united voice on behalf of lived experience

Eating Disorder Alliance of Australia (EDAA) formed to represent the voice of consumers, carers and health care professionals.

Leading organisations in the eating disorder sector have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to work cooperatively to support the provision of information, initiatives and advocacy as the voice of family members and other carers, as well as those living with eating disorders in Australia; and to support health care professionals in the eating disorders sector.

Members of the Eating Disorder Alliance of Australia (EDAA), are Eating Disorders Queensland (EDQ), Butterfly Foundation (Butterfly), Eating Disorders Families Australia (EDFA), Eating Disorders Victoria (EDV), Bridges Eating Disorders Association of Western Australia (Bridges), and Australia & New Zealand Academy for Eating Disorders (ANZAED). The Alliance will continue to work with the National Eating Disorders Collaboration (NEDC), as well as state-based service providers and research organisations in the sector, to ensure advocacy, resources and communications are evidence-based and best practice.

Collaboration

The Alliance agrees to collaborate on best practice for prevention, intervention and treatment of eating disorders to support those individuals living with eating disorders, their families, friends and supporters; to provide resources to consumers and carers and to share resources; to provide a united voice to advocate on eating disorder and body image issues; and to provide an avenue of communication between agencies supporting and advocating for people with lived experience and health professionals.

Importantly, members also agree to provide a collective voice to the Federal Government on priorities for mental health system reform and to share the intent of state and federal government-funded service agreements to prevent duplication of services, inform activities with local state-based treatment services, drive service excellence and deliver effectively on existing investments.

"In a unique formal partnership within the mental health sector, we are proud to jointly represent the voice of lived experience – people living with an eating disorder and those who care for them – and of the health care professionals who support them," said Butterfly CEO, Kevin Barrow. "Consistent, respectful collaboration gives us the means to provide cost-effective, best practice support to those who most need it. This is a significant achievement and congratulations must go to all involved for the commitment and respect for each other that has been demonstrated in forming EDAA."

"The Alliance provides us with the opportunity to effectively implement change programs at a state, territory and federal level through collaboration and consistent advocacy," said Belinda Caldwell, CEO, EDV. "By sharing our service-related programs and events with clients, carers, and our colleagues in other states, we will be able to better serve our own communities."

Joint initiatives

Members of the Alliance recently wrote to the Federal Government requesting the Medicare item numbers for eating disorders to be accessible via telehealth, in accordance with recent physical distancing requirements due to COVID-19.

"ANZAED is excited to be part of this Alliance, providing a link between agencies working alongside people with lived experience and their carers, and the health professionals who support them," said Kim Hurst, President, ANZAED. "The Alliance provides an opportunity for us to work in unison, particularly amid COVID-19, ensuring that patients and their carers have access to treatment and support."

"With the advent of COVID-19 we are very concerned about access to food and the added stresses for those living with an eating disorder and their carers, and have requested additional support for this particularly vulnerable group at this time," said Belinda Chelius, General Manager, EDQ. "As a group, we will continue to advocate on behalf of our community, to reduce stigma, increase awareness, and promote recovery."

"While clinical work for treating eating disorders is essential, the eating disorder community knows the heavy lifting of treatment for eating disorders is primarily done by carers away from clinical settings," said EDFA Chair, David Garvey. "The formation of EDAA will help to ensure the critical role of carers is given the recognition and respect that is needed to support people with eating disorders through to recovery."

About eating disorders

Eating disorders are complex and long-lasting, and have the highest mortality rate of any mental illness. At any one time, approximately 4% of the Australian population, or more than one million people, is suffering from an eating disorder. These complex mental illnesses have additional physical complications, and are attributed to risk factors such as genetic vulnerability, psychological issues and socio-cultural influences.

-ENDS-

Anyone needing support with eating disorders or body image issues are encouraged to contact:

**Eating Disorders Queensland (EDQ) 07 3844 6055 or
admin@edq.org.au**

Butterfly's National Helpline on 1800 33 4673

For urgent support call Lifeline 13 11 14

EDQ encourages the media to adhere to the Mindframe Guidelines when reporting suicide and eating disorders.

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