

Update to the ACT Eating Disorders Position Statement:

Response to Dr Marisa Paterson's e-petition 'Starving for Services- Lack of Eating Disorder Services in the ACT'

February 2022

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Introduction

On 30 November 2021, Dr Marisa Paterson tabled the petition 'Starving for Services – Lack of Eating Disorder Services in the ACT' in the Legislative Assembly.

The petition called for the following actions to be undertaken:

1. Update the Assembly about progress on the ACT Government's 'Eating Disorder Position Statement';
2. Refresh the 'Position Statement' considering the 'Project Agreement for the Community Health and Hospitals Program Australian Capital Territory Initiatives' with the Commonwealth Government which commits to establishing a community-based residential eating disorder treatment centre;
3. Detail actions that have been taken to improve access for more patients to the Eating Disorders Program; and
4. Commit to reviewing demand and backlog to ensure appropriate resourcing and support for the Eating Disorders Program.

Legislative Assembly Standing Order 100 requires the responsible Minister to lodge a response with the Clerk for presentation to the Assembly within three months of the tabling of the petition. In response to this petition, this update to the 2018 Position Statement for Eating Disorders has been prepared.

The ACT Government is committed to improving eating disorder services in the ACT across the full spectrum of care, so that we can provide the best treatment and care for people with eating disorders when they need it, where they need it.

Background

In 2018, the ACT Government developed the ACT Eating Disorders Position Statement, which was presented to the Legislative Assembly by Minister Rattenbury on 25 October 2018. The Position Statement details the ACT Government's commitment to develop services for the effective treatment and management of eating disorders and describes the guiding principles and options for developing eating disorders services in the ACT. This includes the prioritisation of early intervention and the establishment of an effective "Stepped Care" model, which would move the ACT to a system-wide service for eating disorders.

The Position Statement provided the guiding intentions for the 2019/2020 ACT Government budget, which committed \$2.2M over four years in the to expand eating disorder services in the Territory. This budget specifically included funding to establish an Eating Disorders Specialist Clinical Hub (Clinical Hub) via staggered recruitment activities over three years for a total of 4.6FTE; establish a non-government organisation (NGO) operated early intervention service from the 2022/23 financial year; and develop a Territory-wide model of care for eating disorders in alignment with the stepped care model.

In addition to the ACT Government investment, in 2020 the Commonwealth committed \$13.5 million over three years for a Residential Treatment Centre for eating disorders to be established in the ACT. The first funding instalment was provided to the ACT in the 2021-2022 financial year.

The Expanding Public Health Services for Eating Disorders (EPHSED) in the Territory Project was established in July 2019 and is responsible for progressing work on both the ACT Government and Commonwealth Government commitments in this space.

The EPHSED Project is governed by a Steering Committee which includes senior representatives from ACT Health (ACTHD), Canberra Health Services (CHS) and Calvary Public Hospital Bruce (CPHB). The Steering Committee are responsible for providing strategic direction and advice on the EPSHED Project, in addition to being responsible for overseeing the project progress and responding to escalated matters.

The ACT Government recognises the importance of engaging with relevant stakeholders, the community, and people with lived experience. These valuable contributions have been captured through the EPHSED Project Reference Group which includes stakeholders from peak NGOs, Capital Health Network, the Australian National University, clinical staff from CHS and CPHB, ACTHD and two members of the community with lived experience of eating disorders. The Reference Group is responsible for providing advice and progressing work on the EPHSED Project, in addition to actioning recommendations provided by the Steering Committee. The Reference Group has contributed to a wide variety of EPHSED Project outcomes, inclusive of the Residential Treatment Centre model of care, the Eating Disorders Clinical Hub model of care, planning for the Residential Treatment Centre, the design of the Early Intervention Service and the stepped model for use in the Territory-wide Model of Care for Eating Disorders.

In addition to the Reference Group and the Steering Committee, the EPHSED Project regularly consults with the Eating Disorders Program (EDP) staff on project matters. This has included input on the Residential Treatment Centre model of care, the Eating Disorders Clinical Hub model of care, the design of the Early Intervention Service and the stepped model for use in the Territory-wide Model of Care for Eating Disorders.

The EPHSED Project has also consulted with interstate colleagues, and other existing early intervention services in South Australia and researchers in the development and design of all new services. This ensures alignment with current best practise, benchmarking with similar services and sharing of knowledge across state borders. This has been conducted as appropriate to the project's outcomes and service focus.

The EPHSED Project includes the following to be completed by 30 June 2024:

- Development of a Territory-wide Model of Care for Eating Disorder Services;
- Establishment of local and interstate networks and relationships;
- Clinical processes and training;
- Community engagement, education, and health;
- Establishment of a Clinical Hub;
- Establishment of an Early Intervention Service; and
- Establishment of the ACT Residential Eating Disorders Treatment Centre.

In 2020, an Update on the Position Statement on Eating Disorders was presented to the Legislative Assembly by Minister Rattenbury on 27 August 2020 as a response to Recommendation 48 of the Inquiry into Youth Mental Health in the ACT. This document provides a further update on work undertaken in this space.

Update on EPHSED Project Progress

Territory-Wide Model of Care

The Territory-wide Model of Care for Eating Disorders (TwMoC-ED) outlines the guiding principles for the ACT Government's commitment to strengthening the eating disorders services system and provides an overview of the integrated, stepped model of care for all public eating disorder services in the ACT.

The TwMoC-ED is currently under development, with each clinical service's model of care (MoC) being individually reviewed, re-developed, consulted on and endorsed prior to forming part of the TwMoC-ED. At the time of writing, the Residential Treatment Centre MoC was endorsed in March 2021 and the Eating Disorders Clinical Hub MoC was endorsed in October 2021, with the other service MoCs currently under development.

Eating disorders are complex and multi-causal disorders that necessitate flexible, individualised care solutions that can be provided across a range of settings and in a coordinated way that reflects best

available evidence. However, due to funding, resource, and time constraints the eating disorders sector has been a fragmented, albeit committed, sector.

To address this, a number of policy documents have been developed to guide action on eating disorders, including service plans and strategies from New South Wales and Victoria and a National Framework for eating disorders developed by the National Eating Disorders Collaboration. Each of these documents describes the key principles and domains which are required to appropriately manage eating disorders and have informed the development of this plan for the ACT.

These plans outline the need for eating disorder services that are developmentally appropriate and flexible across the entire continuum of care from early engagement to ongoing treatment and addressing fluctuations in risk and condition.

The “Stepped Care” model, which has been successfully established in other jurisdictions¹, is composed of four key pillars that work together to allow patients to flexibly step-up and step-down into services according to their needs. These four pillars include:

- a) generalist mental health services, including primary care and community programs;
- b) specialist eating disorders interventions, including outpatient clinics and day programs;
- c) local hospital management, including general medicine and paediatric wards; and
- d) intensive tertiary supports, including multidisciplinary teams and models of care to support evidence-based treatment in emergency departments and hospital wards.

Establishing this model requires interventions to be available across the service spectrum of “Stepped Care” and it is crucial that the development of new services is considered in this context.

Please see *Figure 1* below for further information. *Figure 1* has been adapted from the NSW Service Plan² and the HSE Model of Care for Ireland³ for use in the ACT.

As shown in *Figure 2*, all future ACT eating disorder services will be placed within the stepped TwMoC-ED, with the Clinical Hub to act as a coordination point for these services. The Clinical Hub plays a key role in ensuring the TwMoC-ED stepped model operates as intended. Situating all eating disorder services within this stepped model allows clients to access the right care at the right time in the right place, appropriate to their clinical need.

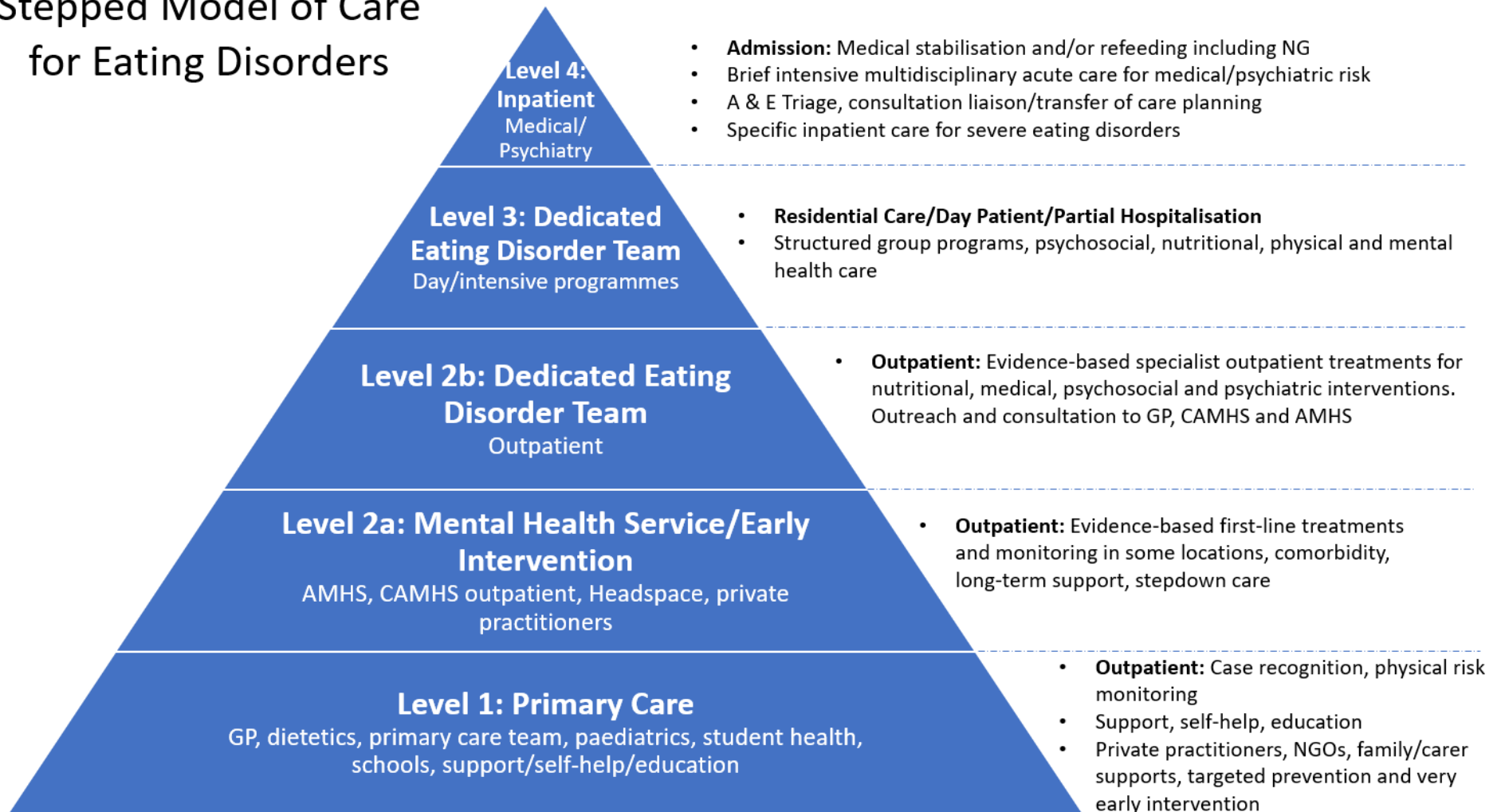
¹ NSW Ministry of Health, (2013). NSW Service Plan for People with Eating Disorders 2013-2018

² NSW Ministry of Health, (2013). NSW Service Plan for People with Eating Disorders 2013-2018. Available at: <http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/mentalhealth/publications/Publications/service-plan-eating-disorders-2013-2018.pdf>

³ National Clinical Strategy and Programmes Division and National Mental Health Division Ireland, (2018). Eating Disorder Services: HSE Model of Care for Ireland. Available at: [hse-eating-disorder-services-model-of-care.pdf](https://www.hse.ie/eng/health/mental_health/eating_disorder_services_model_of_care.pdf)

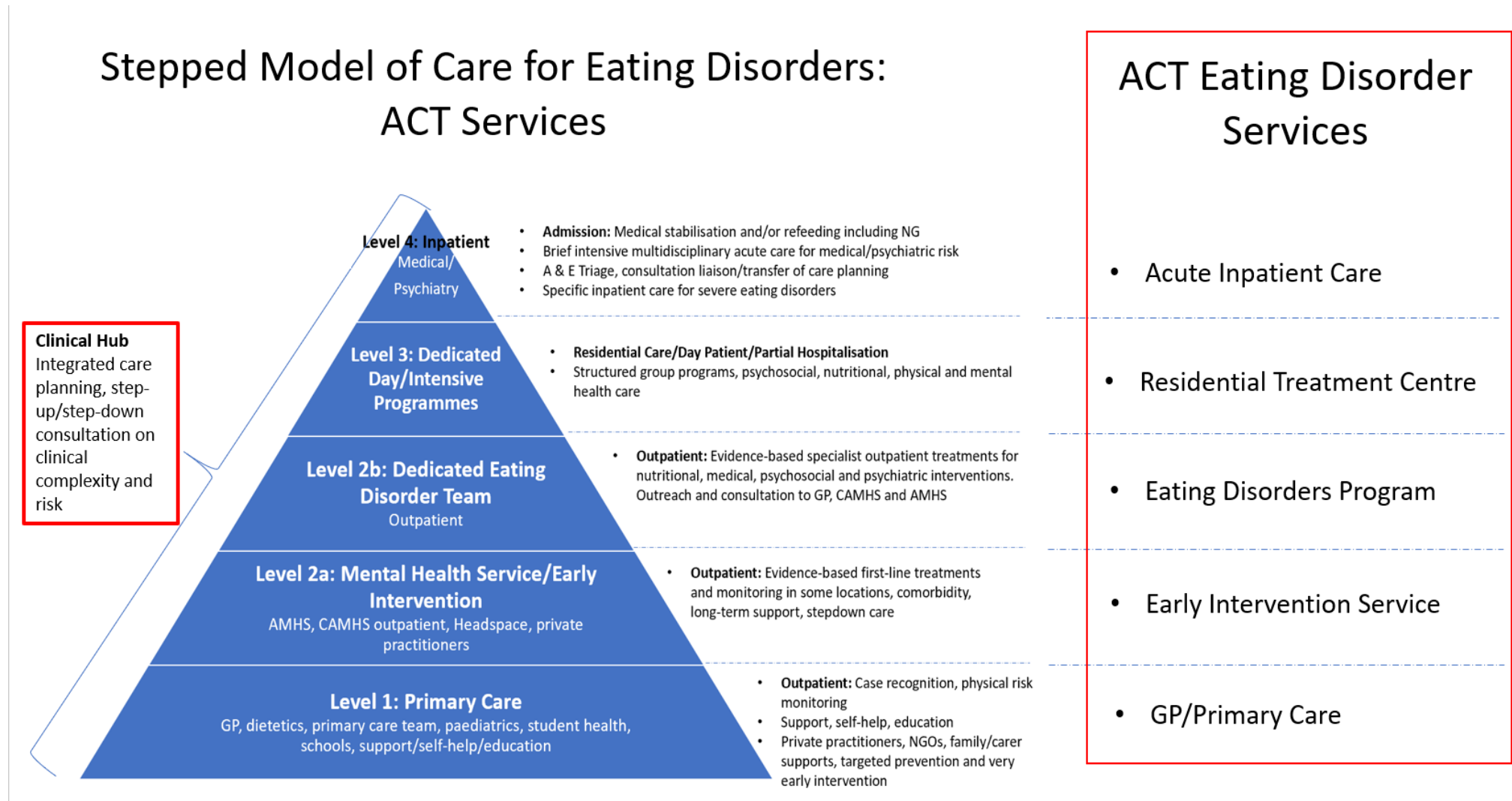
Figure 1:

Stepped Model of Care for Eating Disorders



It is expected that all future ACT eating disorder services will be positioned in the stepped care model as stipulated below in *Figure 2*.

Figure 2:



Eating Disorders Clinical Hub

The Clinical Hub (the Hub) is a specialist community based centralised service for children, adolescents and adults who are experiencing an eating disorder as their primary presenting issue. The Hub's core business includes assessment, treatment, consultation, liaison, education and training, and system integration to strengthen eating disorders services across the Territory. The Hub will act as the central referral point/pathway for eating disorder services in the ACT and provide and support a range of coordinated eating disorder services within the ACT that shift the focus of eating disorders management away from acute inpatient treatment towards a more flexible, appropriate, and efficient "Stepped Care" treatment model. By bringing together the resources and expertise on pathways and treatment options for eating disorders, the Hub will be able to provide a more holistic, integrated, central point of care that will coordinate timely treatment for people on the spectrum of eating disorders.

The model of care for the Clinical Hub has been completed and was endorsed in October 2021.

The Hub is responsible for delivering the following key services:

- act as the central referral point/pathway for all eating disorder services in the ACT;
- key role in consultation/liaison with service providers across the ACT, with the aim of supporting consistent provision of information about referral pathways, care escalation and treatment options, including hospital-based services and outreach programs;
- provision of advice, consultation, networking, and support for clinicians working with people with eating disorders;
- development and facilitation of training programs for clinicians seeking guidance on evidence-based interventions and psycho-education as treatment and support pathway options;
- ongoing and regular consultation with peak bodies focused on eating disorders;
- undertake research into evidence-based models of care as part of the development of the expansion of eating disorder services in the ACT; and
- provision of Short Term Recovery Intervention for Disordered Eating (STRIDE) Program and Parenting Groups.

The Clinical Hub was launched in January 2022 as the central referral point for public eating disorder services in the ACT. Prior to this service launch, the Hub was partially staffed, with recruitment undertaken via a staggered three year period. In this time, in addition to recruitment activities, the Hub undertook a data analysis project and reviewing the demand for the EDP. In 2021, the Hub undertook considerable work to address the significant waiting list currently experienced by the EDP. This was done via the implementation of two new service initiatives - the STRIDE Program and Parenting Groups. In addition the Clinical Hub dietician also offers nutritional assessments to eligible clients. These new service offerings were initiatives of the Hub and were not previously committed to by the ACT Government in the 2019 business case.

The STRIDE program is staffed by provisional psychologists under the supervision of clinical psychologists and provides short-term therapy to eligible clients. The STRIDE Program also assists in expanding the future workforce of eating disorder clinicians by providing student psychology placement opportunities in the ACT. The STRIDE Program operates out of the City Health Centre.

The Parenting Group provides psychoeducation and support in implementing the first phase of Maudsley family-based therapy approach in the home. This group is for parents and carers who have a loved one under the age of 18 whose treatment recommendation is this treatment option. The Parenting Group operates out of the Phillip Health Centre.

Both the STRIDE Program and the Parenting Group commenced operations in July 2021 and all clients of the current intakes are from the existing EDP waitlist. Later intakes for these therapy options will be open

to other clients as deemed clinically appropriate. The implementation of these initiatives provides clients with access to a more-timely intervention, in addition to enabling EDP to increase their capacity to see clients and provide on-going therapy.

The Hub will continue to review the demand and waitlist for the EDP, STRIDE Program and Parenting Group to ensure that clients are receiving timely access to appropriate therapy.

Early Intervention Service for Eating Disorders

The ACT Early Intervention Service for Eating Disorders (EISED) will focus on promoting help seeking behaviour and early intervention treatment for people in the early stages of developing an eating disorder and those with an eating disorder of low to moderate severity. Improving access to early intervention services is intended to improve patient outcomes and promote recovery, whilst reducing demand on the specialist tertiary and acute inpatient services. The ACT EISED will form part of the TwMoC-ED, with the expectation that this service works in collaboration with all other public ACT eating disorder services and the primary care sector.

The model of care for the ACT EISED is currently in development and is expected to be operational in the 2022/23 financial year, in alignment with the funding start date.

ACT Residential Treatment Centre for Eating Disorders

In 2020 the Commonwealth committed \$13.5 million over three years for a Residential Treatment Centre for eating disorders to be established in the ACT. This funding is provided to the ACT via the 'Project Agreement for the Community Health and Hospitals Program Australian Capital Territory Initiatives' agreement. The first funding instalment for this was provided to the ACT in the 2021-2022 financial year. The ACT Government undertook significant work on the planning and preparation for the Residential Treatment Centre prior to the Commonwealth funding start date, which included completing the Residential Treatment Centre model of care and identifying a preferred location.

The Residential Treatment Centre is expected to fill the critical gap between inpatient hospitalisation and outpatient programs to provide an opportunity for a more intensive psychological recovery and improved integration of services. The Residential Treatment Centre will be incorporated into the TwMoC-ED as shown above in Figure 2.

The model of care for the Residential Treatment Centre has been completed and was endorsed in March 2021.

On 17 November 2021 a media release was issued by Minister Davidson stating that ACT Health had identified a preferred location in Coombs for the ACT Residential Treatment Centre, and ACT Health is currently going through the early due diligence processes for this site.

The new Centre is proposed for the eastern portion of the site. The location in Coombs has been chosen to be close to nature reserves with an outlook over green space and a pond, but also in a residential setting. This will ensure the centre offers an environment for clients that is as calming and home-like as possible.

In November 2021, Major Projects Canberra released an open tender for the initial architectural concept designs. These concept designs will present a high-level overview of the look and feel and overall design of the building and will be developed in consultation with key stakeholders in the sector.

Update on Existing Eating Disorders Services

Canberra Health Services EDP

The EDP is a free, public, specialist community-based eating disorder service available to residents of the ACT. EDP provides evidence-based therapy inclusive of all ages to people who are medically stable and are motivated to actively engage in treatment. The service is based on the principles of recovery and participation. It focuses on delivering evidence-based therapies that are sensitive to age, gender,

spirituality, and culture. The EDP team works closely and in consultation with the person, family/carers, and the treating General Practitioners.

Within the TwMoC-ED, the EDP will be positioned as the dedicated eating disorder team for outpatient services. With the recent service additions of the STRIDE Program and the Parenting Group, this enables the EDP to focus on clients who require longer-term therapy or present with more complex needs. The EDP MoC is currently under review in alignment with the development of the TwMoC-ED.

Additional ACT Government Investment

On 21 September 2021, the ACT Government announced an additional \$200,000 in funding to provide more services and support for people affected by eating disorders as part of the COVID-19 Mental Health and Community Support Package. This funding was provided for the following:

- \$5,000 to Eating Disorders Families Australia (EDFA) to provide fully subsidised membership for approximately 150 families in the ACT for 12 months; and
- \$195,000 to the Hub to provide additional support to the STRIDE Program and recruitment of an in-reach clinician into hospital to facilitate early discharge and post hospital discharge support.

EDFA supports families and carers of people with an eating disorder and helps families to build the skills and knowledge to support a loved one through their illness. Further information is available via www.edfa.org.au.

Recruitment for the Hub in-reach clinician is underway, called the Transitional Clinician (TC). The TC's role will be to ensure timely discharge from hospital and provide eating disorders intervention where appropriate outpatient supports have not yet been established. The TC will support the transition and coordination of care for people presenting with a moderate to severe eating disorder exiting from Hospital into the community setting and a hospital diversion service.

The investment from the ACT Government for this role provides an additional resource for acute inpatient services, which has been identified as a service gap.

General Practitioner Medicare Benefit Schedule (MBS) Items

From 1 November 2019, the Commonwealth introduced a suite of 64 new MBS items to support a model of best practice, evidence-based care for eating disorders. People living with an eating disorder are now able to get a Medicare rebate for up to 40 psychological sessions and 20 dietetic sessions in a 12-month period. Previously, people with eating disorders (and all other mental health disorders) had access to just 10 rebated psychological sessions. It is expected that there will be a multidisciplinary approach to patient management through these items.

On 13 December 2021, the Commonwealth announced that telehealth would become a permanent feature of primary health care as part of their \$308.6 million investment to strengthen Australia's primary care health system, which includes:

- **\$106 million** for a permanent telehealth for Australian patients
- **\$58.8 million** to support Australian's mental health with Better Access to vital services
- **\$41.2 million** to deliver better health services in regional and rural Australia
- **\$77 million** to improve access to Medicare
- **\$25.6 million** to support our COVID-19 efforts through Primary Care.

Conclusion

The ACT Government recognises the significant amount of work that has been undertaken in the eating disorder service space since the tabling of the *2018 ACT Eating Disorders Position Statement*. Over the past four years, ACT Health has made significant progress on actioning the recommendations made in the Position Statement, as well as committing additional funding and service offerings upon identifying gaps or areas for improvement.

This *Update to the ACT Eating Disorders Position Statement* represents an important milestone in reporting on the numerous initiatives undertaken and the future work planned. It demonstrates that the ACT Government is continuing to take strides in the development and coordination of a high-quality eating disorders service system that provides the right care at the right time.

The ACT Government is committed to provide the best eating disorders services possible and recognise the importance of this work for all people with eating disorders in the ACT.