



ACT GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

RECOMMENDATION 48 OF THE
STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION,
EMPLOYMENT AND YOUTH AFFAIRS' INQUIRY
INTO YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH IN THE ACT
UPDATE ON THE 2018 POSITION STATEMENT
ON EATING DISORDERS

Minister for Mental Health
August 2020

PURPOSE

This Paper has been prepared in response to Recommendation 48 of the Inquiry into Youth Mental Health in the ACT, which recommends that “the ACT Government provide an update on the 2018 Position Statement on Eating Disorders by the last sitting day of the 9th Legislative Assembly.

BACKGROUND

The Inquiry into Youth Mental Health in the ACT

On 13 August 2020, the Standing Committee on Education, Employment and Youth Affairs (the Committee) published the Report from their Inquiry into Youth Mental Health in the ACT (the Report). In this Report, the Committee made 66 Recommendations for the ACT Government¹.

The ACT Government full response to all of these Recommendations will be prepared on behalf of the incoming Government following the ACT election in October 2020. However, Recommendation 48 states:

“The Committee recommends that the ACT Government provide an update on the 2018 Position Statement on Eating Disorders by the last sitting day of the 9th Assembly.”

This paper is being released now to respond to this Recommendation separately, to meet the timeframes requested in it.

The ACT Eating Disorders Position Statement²

In October 2018, the ACT Minister for Mental Health, Shane Rattenbury, launched the ACT Eating Disorders Position Statement.

This Position Statement was developed by the ACT Health Directorate in close collaboration with stakeholders from the Capital Health Network, the Australian National University, the Butterfly Foundation, clinical staff from the Canberra Health Services Eating Disorders Program and a member of the community with lived experience of eating disorders.

This Position Statement outlined the guiding principles for the ACT Government’s commitment to strengthening the eating disorders system in the ACT. These principles revolve around the premise that the most effective eating disorder service system would enable seamless transition and treatment across different health care settings, as needed.

Referred to in the Position Statement as a “Stepped-Care model”, this includes supporting services across the whole spectrum of care progressing from health promotion and early

¹ The full report can be seen here: https://www.parliament.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/1613518/EEYA-Report-9-Youth-Mental-Health-in-the-ACT.pdf

² The Position Statement is available here: <https://www.health.act.gov.au/sites/default/files/2018-10/ACT%20Eating%20Disorders%20Position%20Statement%20%20Oct%202018.pdf>

ACT Government Response to Recommendation 48 of the Standing Committee on Education, Employment and Youth Affairs' Inquiry into Youth Mental Health in the ACT – Update on the 2018 Position Statement on Eating Disorders

intervention, to primary care, to specialist outpatient services and through to inpatient hospital support for the people with the most complex needs.

Out of this, the Position Statement proposed the development of a broader range of system-wide eating disorders services that could focus more on health promotion, early intervention and outpatient services, rather than emphasising a solution focused solely on acute services.

The Position Statement also then outlined some of the work the ACT was undertaking at the time in 2018 and identified a number of short-term and longer-term projects that could also be pursued in the ACT, depending on developing need and future budget processes.

Updates on these items and key government activities are provided below.

UPDATE ON EATING DISORDER SERVICES IN THE ACT

ACT Government Budget Funding

In the 2019-20 ACT Budget, in line with the findings of the Position Statement, the ACT Government provided \$2.2 million over four years to expand eating disorder services in the ACT. This funding was to establish an eating disorders specialist clinical hub and to procure a community based early intervention service for eating disorders, which is envisaged at this stage to be operated by a Non-Government Organisation.

The Clinical Hub will provide leadership and coordination for specialist eating disorders across the Territory. This will include coordinating and facilitating clinical support and the referral or admission of patients between inpatient, residential, outpatient, community-based and general practice services.

To date, a range of recruitment to this Hub has occurred. This has included the following:

- Service Coordination Clinician (HP3) 0.5 FTE commenced 9 July 2020;
- Therapist (HP2) 1 FTE – was to commence on 20 August 2020 however the commencement date has been deferred due to COVID-19 activity;
- Clinical Hub Manager role (HP5) 1 FTE – the recruitment process for this position has been completed and the successful applicant commenced in their role on 20 August 2020; and
- Dietician (HP3) 0.6 FTE – this position is anticipated to be advertised by late August 2020.

The early intervention service will be rolled out in 2022-23 and will provide psychosocial support services.

Eating Disorders Residential Treatment Facility

ACT Government Response to Recommendation 48 of the Standing Committee on Education, Employment and Youth Affairs' Inquiry into Youth Mental Health in the ACT – Update on the 2018 Position Statement on Eating Disorders

The ACT Government has also negotiated a project agreement with the Commonwealth Government for the provision of \$13.5 million to establish a residential eating disorder facility in the ACT. The funding for this facility will be provided to the ACT over three years starting in 2021-22.

This will be a welcome community-based facility in the ACT that can provide specialist care for people experiencing eating disorders. This facility will be an important step in the ACT that can sit between inpatient hospital admission and outpatient or day program services. In this way, the facility will have a role similar to a Step-Up, Step-Down facility helping people to access the right level of care at the right time.

In anticipation of this funding, the ACT Government is currently actively engaging in planning activities for the facility, including determining the location, model of care and staffing of this facility.

Medicare Items

The Commonwealth Government invested \$110 million nationally into establishing a range of 64 new Medicare items to provide up to 40 rebatable psychological and 20 dietetic sessions per year for people suffering from an eating disorder.

Commencing on 1 November 2019, these Medicare items can be accessed by people in the ACT through the development of an Eating Disorder Plan by a medical practitioner (including a General Practitioner [GP], Psychiatrist or Paediatrician).

This is a welcome boost to the accessibility of affordable and effective primary care for eating disorders in the ACT, which was highlighted in the Position Statement.

In addition, Canberra Health Services has conducted GP information sessions for GP's in the ACT who are interested in learning more about eating disorders. This is an important step in increasing the knowledge about eating disorders in the ACT's primary care sector.

The Expanding Public Health Care Services for Eating Disorders for the Territory (EPHSED) Program

As there has been investment in a range of activities and initiatives for eating disorders across varied healthcare settings, the ACT Government has a role in overseeing and coordinating the development of these and other programs.

As such, the EPHSED program has been established to support the effective integration of these new services across the full spectrum of care in the ACT, in order to provide the best treatment for people with eating disorders when and where they need it.

While the project group behind this program first met early in 2020, its work was put on pause due to COVID-19 and other clinical priorities during early 2020. However, work has now

ACT Government Response to Recommendation 48 of the Standing Committee on Education, Employment and Youth Affairs' Inquiry into Youth Mental Health in the ACT – Update on the 2018 Position Statement on Eating Disorders

resumed, and the members of the program are meeting regularly to consider a range of eating disorders issues for the ACT.

The EPHSED program will be responsible for the following deliverables, which are aligned with the principles of the Position Statement:

- Developing a Territory-wide Eating Disorders Model of Care for the provision of public health care service delivery for eating disorders across the ACT;
- Review, develop and implement relevant clinical processes and training, including promoting education and training on eating disorders to clinicians across all services;
- Overseeing the implementation of the 2019-20 ACT Budget item for eating disorders, including recruitment for the Clinical Hub and the procurement of the early intervention service;
- Determine service gaps and plan for addressing the gaps;
- Establish local and interstate networks and relationships across primary, secondary, tertiary, public and private health care services to streamline eating disorder services across the ACT and with interstate partners; and
- Deliver community health promotion campaigns, including strategies to increase community access to existing specialist e-Therapy programs and services.

In addition, the EPHSED program is also taking a leading role in the establishment and coordination of the ACT Residential Eating Disorders Treatment Centre.

The work of the EPHSED program is currently expected to continue through to 2024.

CONCLUSION

As outlined in the Position Statement itself, the complexity of eating disorders requires multiple services, settings and agencies to coordinate their efforts and work together. While the Position Statement represented a first step towards this, 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 will continue this important work for all people with eating disorders in the ACT.