Eating Disorders Victoria Pre-budget Submission

2023 - 2024

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Thank you for reading Eating Disorders Victoria's 2023-24 pre-budget submission.

Executive summary

The following budget submission provides an in-depth discussion of eating disorders in Victoria and the cost to the economy, along with the vital role of Eating Disorders Victoria (EDV) in supporting the eating disorder system of care. This submission provides key proposals to enable EDV to operate effectively in our mental health ecosystem.

This submission is based on the needs of the community and a vision of the reformed mental health system. EDV is well placed, as the only community-based organisation for consumers and carers affected by eating disorders, to operate as a lynch-pin that connects and supports all facets of the current and future eating disorder system of care in Victoria. However, in order for EDV to operate as an effective organisation, investment must adequately reflect the needs of the community.

Funding the following proposals in this submission will not only save money and lives, but will support the real-time implementation of the recommendations from the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System and the Victorian Eating Disorder Strategy (VEDS).

Proposals include;

1. **Consolidate and increase funding to uplift and expand reach of EDV**

2. **Fund the implementation of the Victorian Eating Disorder Strategy (VEDS)**

Issue Statement

Eating disorders are treatable, but when left untreated are costly [1]. Research shows that early intervention is essential to minimise the economic burden and maximise physical wellbeing, mental health, and quality of life of people with eating disorders and their support people and the wider community [2]. Increased investment in EDV is a prudent step in scaffolding Victoria's reformed mental health system.

Background

Eating Disorders Victoria (EDV) is the only state-wide, community organisation helping Victorians impacted by eating disorders get the help they need.

EDV exists to:

- Guide Victorians to the services needed for timely, evidence-based care
- Share with Victorians the skills developed by those with lived-experience of recovery from eating disorders
- Offer Victorians innovative, community-based programs that are not offered anywhere else
- Be a voice that guides Victorian stakeholders (health professionals, community leaders, decision makers) to the knowledge required to strengthen the broader system of care

Understanding eating disorders

Eating disorders are prevalent and complex neuropsychiatric conditions that are characterised by disturbances in thinking and behaviours around food and eating. In some cases, this extends to preoccupation with body weight and shape.

- The most widely referenced prevalence data conservatively estimates that 334, 050+ Victorians currently have an eating disorder [1]. More recent Australian data [9] indicates that up to 1 in 10 Victorians may have an eating disorder at any point in time, and this was before COVID-19 accelerated eating disorder cases.

- The Australian Institute of Health & Welfare (AIHW) identify eating disorders among the leading causes of disease burden in children (5-14 years) [3,7].

- Eating disorders are prevalent in both males and females, with 63% of people with eating disorders in Australia female, and 37% male [4].

- Further to this, 28% of Indigenous high school students have an eating disorder compared to 22% of other Australian teens [5].

- Eating disorders have a high morbidity rate that is estimated to cost more (in Disability Adjusted Life Years) than that of depression and anxiety combined [3].

- The mortality rate for the population with an eating disorder is twice as high as the general population and amongst the highest of any psychiatric condition [3].

The role of EDV

EDV acts as a **trusted guide**, helping consumers, carers and professionals get the support they need across public, private and community settings. EDV's range of services cover 4 key domains outlined below. **Lived experience** design and delivery is a foundational principle of EDV's operations.

1. HELP-SEEKING AND PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT

- ***EDV Hub*** – state-wide Helpline that provides Victorians with information, support and service system navigation relating to eating disorders.

- ***Telehealth Nurse*** - state-wide telehealth nurse service providing system navigation and care coordination to Victorian consumers and carers affected by eating disorders.

- ***Telehealth Counselling*** - state-wide telehealth counselling service providing psychological support to Victorian consumers and carers affected by eating disorders, delivered by mental health professionals with lived experience.

- ***Peer Mentoring Program*** - state-wide, 1:1 peer support program for adults in eating disorder recovery delivered by recovered mentors. Program has been proven to reduce hospitalisations for participants.

- ***Peer Support Groups*** - suite of online groups facilitated by those with lived experience. Groups foster the principles of mutual support self-help and cater to different needs of consumers and carers, e.g., LGBTIQA+ support group.

- ***Severe and Enduring Eating Disorders (SE-ED) Program*** - state-wide, online, psycho-social program for adults with SE-EDs and delivered by those who have recovered from SE-EDs. Designed to improve quality of life, self-care, increase hopes for recovery, strengthen linkages with services and address wellbeing for carers.

2. WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND SYSTEM LINKAGES

- *Accredited professional training programs* - education for community and health professionals delivered by EDV staff and at times, in partnership with sector stakeholders (e.g. CEED, NEDC, ANZAED, Butterfly)

- *Recovered speakers (Stories of Recovery) for health professionals* – trained EDV recovered Ambassadors share their story to educate and inspire hope across public and private health settings. Ambassadors also inform project co-design and consultations.

2. CARER AND FAMILY SUPPORT

- *Carer-Coaching Program* - state-wide, online, 1:1 program designed to upskill parents in caring for their child while awaiting entry into formal treatment in the public system. Coaches are parents who have lived experience of supporting a child to recovery.

- *Carer Support Groups* - online, peer support groups facilitated by those with carer lived experience.

- *Carer Skills-based Online Courses* - skills-based groups designed to build carer knowledge and confidence. Led by EDV's Carer Coaches.

3. WIDER COMMUNITY-BASED RESOURCES

- *Psycho-educational Online Programs for Consumers/Carers* - Resources in the form of online workshops, webinars and e-learning providing information, education, skill building and peer support to people in recovery.

- *Enhancing Eating Disorder Understanding and Advocacy* - Communications led initiatives including comprehensive website, podcast, newsletters and awareness campaigns.

Proposals

Proposal 1

Consolidate and increase funding to uplift and expand the reach of EDV.

Background and rationale

The prevalence of eating disorders has increased significantly over the last 10 years [8,9], while EDV's core funding has remained the same.

It is now estimated that more than 16%, or 1 in 6 Australians aged over 15, are experiencing a sub-clinical or clinical eating disorder [4]. Since 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic has compounded and accelerated incidence rates of eating disorders [10, 11]. Graphs below from the Victorian Agency for Health Information highlight the sustained pressure on the public health system due to eating disorder presentations [11].

Graph description: The number of Victorians with eating disorders presenting to Victoria's emergency departments per week has more than doubled from 2019 to 2022, increasing by 103% (*11.5 per week in 2019 to 23.3 per week by 2022). Outpatients receiving care from CAMHS/CYMHS eating disorder programs increased by 55.8% from 2019 to 2022 (548 per week: 2019 to 854 per week: 2022)

Eating disorders are not self-limiting illnesses. Help-seeking rates are low and time-delayed. While we are well underway in Victoria's post-pandemic recovery, many people experiencing eating disorders continue to fall further into illness.

EDV currently receives $600k per year in recurrent core funding (due to expire June 2024) and $1.75m in 12-month contract funding (due to expire June 2023). EDV reaches approximately 4% of the current eating disorder affected population in Victoria with this funding, signalling under investment in EDV services for the scale of the problem.

EDV requires **consolidated** and **increased funding** in order strengthen effectiveness and diversify reach, provide certainty within the workforce and to adequately meet the needs of our evolving mental health care system.

Investment

$4 million per year over 3 years

Proposed outcomes

HELP-SEEKING AND PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT

PROGRAM	ACTIVITIES WITH CURRENT INVESTMENT	WITH INCREASED INVESTMENT OF $4M PER YEAR
EDV Hub	Inbound/Outbound communications via phone, web form and email	**Extend Hub operating hours beyond 9.30 – 4.30, increasing our reach to youth in particular who are more likely to reach out in the evening** **Implement LiveChat functionality (more youth friendly)** **Double the contacts per month (240 to 500)**
Telehealth Nurse	Initial telehealth consult including assessment (1hr) Follow up telehealth consults (30 mins; up to 5) Development of Comprehensive Individual Care Plans	**Increased EFT** **50% increase in current clients supported** **Hospital referral pathways proactively established** **Promote service to GPs to assist them in referring to appropriate services**

PROGRAM	ACTIVITIES WITH CURRENT INVESTMENT	WITH INCREASED INVESTMENT OF $4M PER YEAR
Telehealth Counselling	Telehealth Counselling (up to 5, 30min sessions via phone/online) Single session brief intervention (phone/online)	**Increased EFT** **50% increase in number of sessions provided** **Brief Intervention CBT offered (10 x sessions) - evidence based** **Undertake evaluation of program**
Peer Mentoring Program	1:1 peer mentoring x 13 sessions (up to 3 hours, fortnightly over 6 month period)	**Increased EFT and casual mentors** **Increase to 100 x participants and peer mentor matches p/a, with 30 participants p/a directly linked at point of discharge from intensive services e.g., Women Mental Health Unit, current inpatient, day programs and new residential services.** **Adolescent focused peer mentoring program (1:1) with carer/parent engagement via Carer Coaching team** **Development and promotion of Eating Disorders specific peer mentoring training for peer workers**
SE-ED (Severe and Enduring Eating Disorders)	Weekly clinical 1:1 session with participants Weekly group work sessions Weekly peer mentoring sessions Fortnightly carer group sessions Monthly social activity/outing	**Increased EFT and casual mentors** **60 participants to complete 12-week program p/a (up from 30, current waitlist has 60 people on it without any active promotion)** **60 carers to complete 12-week program p/a (up from 30)**
Online Peer Support Groups	5x peer-led online Support Groups, including: - REACH for restrictive behaviours - BEYOND for binge eating and compensatory behaviours - BLOOM for LGBTIQA+ individuals - COSMO for those with co-occuring conditions - VIVA for those in larger bodies	**Increase number of support groups and diversify times of day groups offered, e.g. more evening groups** **Add a youth focussed (16-25) support group**

CARER AND FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES

PROGRAM	ACTIVITIES WITH CURRENT INVESTMENT	WITH INCREASED INVESTMENT OF $4M PER YEAR
Carer Support Programs	Carer Coaching: 8 week, 1:1 program designed to upskill parents in caring for their child while awaiting entry into formal treatment in the public system Upskill: 6-week online course for additional skills building in the FBT/Maudsley approach open to all carers in Vic Renew: 4-week online skill-building course for families/carers not currently doing the FBT/Maudsley approach, but who would still like to learn support skills. Open to all carers in Vic. Monthly support group for Carer Coaching program participants	**Increased EFT** **Double the number of families accessing Carer services** **Expand the services to families undertaking FBT (rather than on a waitlist) in collaboration with CAMHS/CYMHS services, with focus on rural and remote areas** **Develop training for local peer workers on working with families undertaking FBT**

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND SYSTEM LINKAGES

PROGRAM	ACTIVITIES WITH CURRENT INVESTMENT	WITH INCREASED INVESTMENT OF $4M PER YEAR
Lived Experience Ambassadors	Ambassador training and skill development Regular speaking sessions across specialist in-patient services in Melbourne Monthly online 'Stories of Recovery' webinars Consultation and co-design sessions as requested	**500 opportunities per year**

PROGRAM	ACTIVITIES WITH CURRENT INVESTMENT	WITH INCREASED INVESTMENT OF $4M PER YEAR
Professional Training Programs	Delivery of workshops/training as requested in the community	**Capacity to transition from reactive to proactive promotion of education/awareness raising activities to key audiences identified in Victorian Eating Disorder Strategy**
Increase Mental Health system knowledge of eating disorders	*Not currently funded*	**Professional development training for generalist lived experience workforce to help support those impacted by eating disorders more effectively** **Stories of Recovery Ambassador sessions for clinical and lived experience staff** **Train clinical and lived experience staff in running eating disorder specific support groups or psychoeducation** **With additional funding, provide a secondary consultation service for lived experience workers**
Referral pathways to/from EDV services into MH system	*Not currently funded*	**Relationships proactively developed with services (e.g. Locals Mental Health Services) to facilitate information sharing, provision of resources, potential (pending cost) exclusive portal for warm referrals into EDV.**

WIDER COMMUNITY BASED SUPPORT SERVICES

PROGRAM	ACTIVITIES WITH CURRENT INVESTMENT	WITH INCREASED INVESTMENT OF $4M PER YEAR
Online psycho-educational Resources for Carers and Consumers	Self-paced, online psychoeducational content available through EDV's online learning platform 'LearnED' Online psychoeducational programs in the forms of one-off, topic-based webinars 'Discovering the Healthy Self', a 6-week online group-based program for those wanting to build on their skills in recovery and beyond	**Provide 50% more groups** **Develop a package of online learning to support Carer Coaching Program that is also available to all Vic carers** **Scope feasibility of an adolescent-focused psycho-educational school holiday program to provide respite for families, as well as provide peer support, meal support and psychological skills**
Enhancing Eating Disorder Understanding and Advocacy	EDV digital resources, including website, social media, and broader community campaigns The Candid Conversations Podcast Newsletters Comprehensive resource and information-based website	**Increased EFT for Community Engagement Officers required to reach priority groups: CALD backgrounds, LGBTIQA+ individuals and rural/remote** **Carer specific podcast resource**

Proposal 2

Fund the implementation of the Victorian Eating Disorder Strategy (VEDS)

Background and rationale

The Victorian Eating Disorder Strategy (VEDS) was announced as part of the Victorian Government's $20 million eating disorder package in the 2022-23 state budget. The Strategy is being developed by the Mental Health and Wellbeing Division of the Department of Health in partnership with EDV and CEED. The Strategy is due to be released in June 2023.

As identified in the VEDS discussion paper, *"The Victorian Eating Disorders Strategy (2014) provided a platform to catalyse work on prevention and early intervention. However, further work is required to establish a responsive, inclusive and integrated system that supports individuals with, or at risk of, an eating disorder across the continuum of care"* [12].

The previous Victorian Eating Disorders Strategy (2014) commissioned by the Coalition Government resulted in 12 months of project-based funding shared between EDV, CEED and headspace National. The change of government in late 2014 resulted in a loss of momentum and the Strategy has remained latent since.

The Victorian Government's commitment to fully fund the recommendations from the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System sets an excellent precedent for reform. The new VEDS presents an opportunity to enact generation defining improvement in our eating disorder system of care, in alignment with our broader mental health system. EDV is confident that the Strategy will provide a clear and evidence-based roadmap for current and future investment.

We urge the Victorian Government to honour the living and lived experience voices in the VEDS by committing to the implementation of the Strategy in its entirety.

Investment

$ TBA. Strategy to be released in June 2023.

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