

Dr Marisa Paterson MLA

MEMBER FOR MURRUMBIDGEE

MEDIA RELEASE

Canberrans demand improved supports for people in our community with an eating disorder

More than 700 Canberrans have signed a petition calling for more services to support people in the ACT suffering from eating disorders, which Dr Marisa Paterson MLA is set to table in the Legislative Assembly this week.

“Some 17,000 Canberrans currently have an eating disorder and those individuals, and their families, need timely, local and holistic support when they do reach out for help,” Dr Paterson said.

“Anorexia Nervosa, for example, is a very serious psychological and medical condition that requires multi-disciplinary treatment from a range of specialists including medical doctors, psychiatrists, psychologists, nurses, dieticians, physiotherapists and physiologists to help the sufferer establish a healthy relationship with food and exercise.

“The ACT Government’s recent tender for the design of a residential care facility for eating disorders, which will likely be built in Coombs, is an important step forward in creating opportunities for recovery close to home.

“I’m especially pleased that people with lived experience of eating disorders will be consulted on the facility’s design,” Dr Paterson said.

Canberra resident Kate Steen, who started the petition in August, said “I’m both pleased and saddened that this petition garnered so much support – it speaks to the need for improved eating disorders services for Canberrans.

“While this facility will benefit people living with eating disorders who are stable and need some support, there is still a pressing need for treatment options for people who need acute care.

“There are no specialist inpatient services for people living with eating disorders in the ACT and the community-based services are at capacity. There aren’t many psychiatrists in the ACT who specialise in eating disorders, and many have closed their books to new patients. I look forward to hearing how the Government will support those among us who need more acute care or who seek treatment in the community,” Ms Steen said.

Georgia Houston said “as a dietitian who specialises in eating disorders here in Canberra, my wait times (due to the overwhelming need for patient support and insufficient resources in Canberra) are now into the months.

“A facility here in Canberra would be a very welcome addition, allowing clients that need intensive treatment to be prioritised in a timely manner,” Ms Houston said.

The petition will be referred to the Minister for Mental Health for reply within three months. It will also be referred to the Assembly's Standing Committee on Health and Community Wellbeing for consideration.

Statement ends

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