

# Dr Marisa Paterson MLA

MEMBER FOR MURRUMBIDGEE

## MEDIA RELEASE

8 September 2021

### Starving for services – Call for improved eating disorder service in the ACT

Dr Marisa Paterson MLA is sponsoring a petition led by community member, Mrs Kate Steen, calling for improved eating disorder support services in the ACT.

Following her recent diagnosis with anorexia nervosa, Mrs Steen - a 34-year-old mother and lawyer in the ACT public service - discovered that there are no in-patient services for people living with eating disorders in the ACT and only one public specialist outpatient treatment option. Despite the best efforts of a dedicated team, the Eating Disorders Program in Phillip has a months-long waitlist.

Mrs Steen said: "It takes guts to ask for help, and to be told that it won't be provided for such a long time is more than heartbreaking - it's incomprehensible."

The Eating Disorders Program and the ACT Government's Eating Disorder Position Statement go some way to recognising the need for increased services, and the Commonwealth and ACT Governments have committed \$13.5 million to building a purpose-clinic with funds to be spent this financial year.

However, for many suffering eating disorders in the ACT, the need for care remains urgent.

Dr Paterson stated: "There are many people in our community in a similar situation to Mrs Steen. Across Australia, eating disorders affect approximately 4 in every 100 people. We need to provide appropriate, dedicated support services.

"This petition calls on the ACT Government to provide an update on the actions that have been taken to improve access to the Eating Disorders Program, to review the demand for eating disorder support services to ensure appropriate resourcing, and a refresh of the Position Statement."

Mrs Steen commented further, stating: "An eating disorder is a time critical issue and unfortunately moments of clarity in the journey are too few and far between. The system has to be positioned to take people in as soon as they reach out for help."

ACT residents can view and sign the petition by 23 November by visiting [www.marisapaterson.com.au/news/assembly-business/e-petition-starving-for-services-lack-of-eating-disorder-services-in-the-act/](http://www.marisapaterson.com.au/news/assembly-business/e-petition-starving-for-services-lack-of-eating-disorder-services-in-the-act/)

Statement ends

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*Anyone in need of support for an eating disorder should contact The Butterfly Foundation on 1800 334 673*