



**THE HON NICOLA ROXON MP**  
**Minister for Health and Ageing**

**MEDIA RELEASE**

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**Assisting People with Eating Disorders**

The Rudd Government will invest \$500,000 to help develop a comprehensive, coordinated national approach to eating disorders.

While childhood obesity rightly receives lots of public attention, we can't afford to ignore the significant number of young Australians struggling with eating disorders.

One in 100 adolescent girls develop anorexia, and five in 100 develop bulimia. Anorexia nervosa has the highest mortality rate of any psychiatric illness, with approximately 15-20 per cent dying within 20 years.

Currently, services for people with anorexia and bulimia are fragmented and disjointed. Research is scarce, and the information available to people and their families is often inconsistent.

This means that these vulnerable members of our community often struggle to get the care and advice they need.

The new National Eating Disorders Collaboration will bring together eating disorder experts in research, education, health promotion, public health and mental health, as well as the media – to help develop a consistent approach to the prevention and treatment of eating disorders.

Kate Ellis, the Minister for Youth, has also announced that the newly formed Office for Youth will prioritise Body Image and that the Australian Government will work with stakeholders, including young people, to develop a national approach to this urgent issue.

A possible voluntary code of conduct for the media and fashion industries will be included in discussions with stakeholders.

The Collaboration will complement this work by focusing on developing strategies to inform young people about how to prevent and manage eating disorders.

It is important to deliver information through avenues that will reach young people – including schools, the media and health service providers.

The onset of anorexia nervosa typically occurs during adolescence, while bulimia nervosa usually occurs in late adolescence or early adulthood.

Eating disorders can involve intense anxiety and preoccupation with body weight and shape, eating and weight control.

There is no single cause of an eating disorder – which makes this a particularly complex challenge. Contributing factors can include social/cultural, psychological, biological, family and other factors including stress and dieting.

The Government will select a suitable organisation in the next few months to take the lead in the Collaborative project.

While there is much work ahead, this is an important first step in developing an effective national strategy to combat eating disorders and their insidious effect on young people, especially young women.

**Media contact only: Sean Kelly - 0417 108 362**

**For all other enquiries, contact Ms Roxon's office (02) 6277 7220**