



MEDIA RELEASE

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Eating Disorders Foundation of Victoria welcomes introduction of Media Code of Conduct on Body Image

The Eating Disorders Foundation of Victoria (EDFV), Victoria's foremost eating disorder charity, has today welcomed the Victorian Government's introduction of the voluntary Media Code of Conduct on Body Image as a significant step in the right direction in changing the way body shapes and sizes are portrayed in the fashion, advertising and media industries.

"The EDFV is very pleased the Victorian Government has recognised the importance of changing the way the fashion, advertising and media industries portray body shape and sizes, given the damaging effects unrealistic body image portrayal has on many people's mental health and well being," said Kirsty Greenwood, Executive Officer of the EDFV.

"The prevailing view of beauty, particularly in Western culture, is heavily skewed towards an idealised shape and thinness which is unattainable for most men and women. This 'pursuit of the unattainable' has clear negative impacts on the mental health, self-esteem and well-being of many people, especially our younger generation," Ms Greenwood said.

"The fashion, advertising and media industries must change what they depict as the 'ideal' before we can expect to see long-term positive effects on body image," she added.

However, Ms Greenwood cautioned, voluntary codes are effective only if a significant majority of the industries affected will endorse and comply with the codes. The EDFV urges organisations within these industries to show their support for this Victorian Government initiative.

"By endorsing and adopting the Code, organisations will be participating in the process of cultural change which must occur in order to promote positive body image, enhance self-esteem and protect people in our community - especially young people - against eating disorders," Ms Greenwood said.

The Media Code of Conduct on Body Image is consistent with the EDFV's own guidelines and recommendations for the responsible portrayal of body image, which can be downloaded from the EDFV website www.eatingdisorders.org.au .

The EDFV applauds Minister Merlino and the Victorian Government for taking action to support and strengthen positive body image in the community through this and other initiatives, and urges the government to remain strong in its commitment to promote positive body image.

The EDFV recommends that the Government monitors the outcomes of this initiative over a 12 month period; and at the end of that period considers whether further regulation is needed.

In addition, the EDFV has also renewed its call to consumers, particularly parents, to view critically how the media, fashion and advertising industry portray body image and avoid buying products or supporting organisations that promote unrealistic body image and damage self-esteem.

"If consumers change their buying habits and support organisation that portray more realistic body images, marketers would have no choice but to take notice of what consumers really want," Ms Greenwood said.

"They will, after all, be driven ultimately by what they think they can sell."

About the Eating Disorders Foundation of Victoria

The Eating Disorders Foundation of Victoria is Victoria's foremost eating disorder charity and the primary source of support, information, community education and advocacy for people with eating disorders and their families in Victoria.

Services are free and confidential and include a telephone Helpline (1300 550 236 / 03 9885 0318), on-line Chat Room and Message Board and confidential support groups.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: For interviews with the EDFV, please phone (03) 9885 6563 or 0409 948 049 or email edfv@eatingdisorders.org.au or visit www.eatingdisorders.org.au