



## Fast Track to Health Study – a combined response from key players in the eating disorder sector

There has been significant media attention and subsequent concerns within our community in relation to the Fast Track research trial being undertaken by the Sydney Children's Hospital Network (The Children's Hospital at Westmead) and Monash Children's Hospital in Melbourne. We would like to express that we share these concerns and have been working to determine the best course of action.

The Australia & New Zealand Academy for Eating Disorders (ANZAED), Eating Disorders Victoria (EDV), Eating Disorders Queensland (EDQ), and the Butterfly Foundation have taken the time to deliberate carefully, hear the concerns of our community, obtain further information and provide a considered combined response.

We agree that there are strong concerns about the safety of the young people involved in the trial. Eating disorders have the highest mortality rate of any mental illness, with onset common during adolescence.

Research investigators within this trial have indicated that there is evidence that modified alternate day fasting has achieved weight loss in adults; however we believe that there is a lack of evidence that this is sustained long term. We are concerned that an approach that has not yet shown long-term sustainability in adults is being trialled in a vulnerable adolescent population at greatest risk of developing an eating disorder.

A complaint was made to the Sydney Children's Hospital Network Human Research Ethics Committee last year by a group of 29 eating disorder professionals, expressing concern and asking for an urgent review of the study. An independent ethics review was undertaken at this time and the ethical review requested additional safeguards.

We understand that the researchers have updated the participant and parent information sheet to indicate that there may be a minimal risk of increased eating disorders from engagement in restrictive dieting.

Eating disorders are complex neuropsychiatric illnesses with severe mental and physical implications. Given such, we still have concerns and believe further action is required.

In discussion with the principal researchers involved in the trial, we have requested the following:

- The risks of developing an eating disorder are clearly stated in the participant and parent information sheets, and on the trial website;
- Additional psychological support for participants throughout the trial;
- Additional screening for anxiety and distress at key points during the trial;
- Specific training in Eating Disorders for all clinicians involved with participants.

As representatives of the eating disorder sector, we would like to thank our community and members for raising these concerns. We have expressed our concerns to the trial's investigators and will continue to update you on responses and actions taken.

**ANZAED, Butterfly Foundation, EDV, EDQ**