

# **DR MARISA PATERSON MLA SPEECH**

**23 March 2022 – Adjournment speech**

## **Government’s response on e-petition eating disorder support services; and updated Position Statement**

Thank you, Madame Speaker.

I want to start my speech today by acknowledging all of the 741 plus people that signed the petition to see an improvement in eating disorder services in the ACT. I want to particularly acknowledge Kate Steen who was the original petitioner, for her bravery in approaching me with her experiences and for her will to see change.

I have met with so many people as a result of the petition who I have developed relationships with who have a very strong vested interest in seeing change. I acknowledge their commitment and bravery in sharing their stories.

And I would like to acknowledge the Lee’s, who are here today – particularly Bernadette for her steadfast commitment to seeing change. I would also like to thank my staff in my office for sharing this commitment with me to improvements in services and for all the work that has gone on around the petition.

I welcome the Government’s response on the e-petition calling for improved support services for people experiencing an eating disorder in the ACT. And I thank Minister Davidson for taking this opportunity to incorporate an update to the 2019 Position Statement on Eating Disorders.

Among those updates are activities related to the Government’s commitment to a range of initiatives to be completed by 30 June 2024.

Underpinning those activities is the Territory Wide Model of Care. The Model outlines a stepped approach to eating disorder support services, providing flexibility across the continuum of support from early engagement to ongoing treatment. It recognises the complexity of eating disorders and that they are both a medical and mental illness.

The Position Statement identifies that all future services are to be considered within this context.

The Eating Disorders Clinical Hub, launched by the ACT Government in January this year, is the central referral point and pathway for the range of services across each of these 'steps'.

I'm very pleased to see a key focus through the updated Position Statement on early intervention services.

An eating disorder *is* a treatable condition. Evidence shows that the sooner treatment commences, the shorter the recovery process. Early intervention and prompt action is the best remedy and must remain a priority for this Government.

I look forward to the development of an eating disorder residential care facility in the ACT – a really important initiative within the Position Statement. The facility will provide specialised support for recovery processes including nutritional and psychological care to enable people to develop healthy relationships with food and exercise.

The contract for the design of the facility was awarded in February this year. The exact location is yet to be confirmed; however, I welcome this facility being built in my electorate of Murrumbidgee, in the Molonglo Valley.

I understand that – following a period of consultation on the facility's design, incorporating input from those with lived experience – construction will commence later this year, for completion in 2023.

I welcome other updates provided in the Position Statement, including those related to the ACT's Eating Disorder Program – providing evidence-based therapy, recovery and participation; and additional ACT Government investment in eating disorder support programs.

As I've said in this Assembly before, we have too many people in our community suffering from the effects of an eating disorder: those who are experiencing it firsthand, as well as loved ones – family and friends – who are devastated by its impacts.

I intend to keep pressure on this issue, to ensure that people in our community have appropriate and timely access to support services. I know how devastating eating disorders are for everyone involved, including family and friends.

Madame Speaker and colleagues, I look forward to being part of the solution, to supporting those in my community on this matter, and to keep advocating on this issue for long-term, positive impacts across our entire community.