

# Eating Disorder Organisations Say ‘The Time Is Now’ to Take Action for the Millions of Australians Impacted



**This Body Image and Eating Disorder Awareness Week (BIEDAW), 4 - 10 September, Australia’s major eating disorder organisations share actions everyone can take to improve the lives of those affected.**

- **Over one million Australians living with an eating disorder but only a quarter of those get the help they need**
- **Body image concerns, depression, anxiety and eating disorder symptoms increasing by more than 50% during the pandemic**
- **Eating disorders have one of the highest mortality rates of all mental illnesses in Australia**

With more than one million Australians living with an eating disorder in any given year and Covid-19 resulting in a dramatic increase in demand for services, the Eating Disorder Alliance of Australia (EDAA) organisations say there has never been a more important time to act and raise awareness for these serious, complex and potentially life-threatening mental illnesses.

From personal actions, like taking the next step in your recovery or educating yourself about how to best support a loved ones, to collective action, like promoting positive body image in schools or putting pressure on government to implement eating disorder strategies, there are a multitude of ways to take action and raise awareness for eating disorders and body image concerns this September.

As individuals who receive early intervention for an eating disorder are twice as likely to achieve recovery, **Butterfly’s CEO, Dr Jim Hungerford** highlights the importance of

taking action early, *“The first step everyone can take this BIEDAW is to educate themselves about eating disorders to help alleviate stigma and learn the signs and symptoms to ensure people get the support they need, sooner.”*

*“The earliest kind of intervention we can make is educating young people about body image so that these issues don’t develop in the first place. As well as BIEDAW, it is also Butterfly’s [Body Kind September](#) which is the perfect time for teachers, families, sports clubs and communities to take action to help create positive environments for young people.”*

While the statistics are concerning, it’s important to remember that recovery from an eating disorder is possible. **Eating Disorders Queensland’s (EDQ) CEO, Belinda Chelius**, is actively encouraging people experiencing an eating disorder to use BIEDAW as an opportunity to amplify their voice and enhance their care. *“Eating disorders are complex and often require a multidisciplinary team to be involved in treatment, which can mean explaining your story multiple times to different people. Utilising EDQ’s resource titled the [Eating Disorder Passport](#), is an empowering action that individuals and their carers can take to advocate for themselves. It encourages their treating team to hear their voice, connecting them to who they are as a person, beyond the eating disorder.”*

With nearly 90% of eating disorder carers saying their own physical and psychological well-being has declined as a result of their caring duties and only 20% seeking professional help, **Eating Disorder Families Australia (EDFA) Executive Director, Jane Rowan**, highlights the importance of looking out for families and carers this BIEDAW, *“It is time to recognise the pivotal role that families and carers play in the treatment team for eating disorders and ensure they get support to maintain their own physical and psychological health, financial security, and relationships while helping their loved ones. Whether it’s education resources or support groups, we want to spread the word that there is support out there for carers too.”*

EDFA’s new [Fill The Gap program](#), launching in October, will provide free, one-on-one online education, skills, and support to families and carers to further empower them as the frontline of care when it comes to eating disorder recovery.

While individual actions can make a big difference, **Eating Disorders Victoria’s (EDV) CEO, Belinda Caldwell**, highlights the importance of systemic changes, *“With the [National Eating Disorder Strategy 2023-2033](#) released on 30 August, and the Victorian Eating Disorder Strategy due later this year, this week is a vital time to apply pressure on politicians and key decision makers to ensure eating disorder care is embedded*

*across our health systems. Australians deserve an effective, equitable and coordinated system of care that is accessible for everyone, and these strategies present an incredible opportunity to make meaningful inroads into achieving these aims.”*

**Jade Gooding, CEO of Australia and New Zealand Academy of Eating Disorders (ANZAED)**, also explains the important role that professionals play in responding to eating disorders, *“Finding the right care at the right time is critical for effective treatment and recovery in eating disorders. Professionals involved in eating disorder research, prevention and treatment are committed to understanding the complexities of these conditions. Those seeking treatment, including loved ones supporting or caring for those with living experience, should always look for practitioners with experience in the treatment of eating disorders, including those with the ANZAED Eating Disorder Credential.”*

EDAA members – [Butterfly Foundation](#), [Eating Disorders Victoria](#), [Eating Disorders Queensland](#), [Eating Disorders Families Australia](#) and [Australia and New Zealand Academy of Eating Disorders](#) – will be sharing key actions and resources across their respective social channels during the week to encourage everyone to make a difference, big or small.

For more information visit: <https://butterfly.org.au/get-involved/campaigns/biedaw/>

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### **Editor and producers**

Please include the following support line details in all media coverage of this story and refer to the Mindframe Media guidelines for safe reporting on eating disorders. Please include the following helpline message.

## Help and Support

Anyone needing support with eating disorders or body image issues is encouraged to contact:

- Butterfly National Helpline on 1800 33 4673 (1800 ED HOPE) or [support@butterfly.org.au](mailto:support@butterfly.org.au)
- Eating Disorders Victoria Helpline on 1300 550 236
- For urgent support call Lifeline 13 11 14