

**Senate Standing Committee on Education Employment and Workplace  
Relations**

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE  
Additional Estimates 2010-2011**

**Outcome 2 - Schools**

**DEEWR Question No.EW0817\_11**

**Senator Cash provided in writing.**

**Question**

**PUBLIC ADVOCACY (RECOMMENDATION 10)**

1. How has the Government informed members of the public of the mechanisms they can use to raise concerns re body image message? 2. Does the Government accept that its obesity prevention messages may be contributing to problems of disordered eating? Which organizations have adopted approaches that expose the harms of discrimination due to body size? What has been done to encourage organisations to focus on health and wellbeing (shown to have positive benefits) instead of dieting and weight loss (shown to have negative outcomes)? Which organisations have agreed to promote health and wellbeing and to discourage dieting and weight loss?

**Answer**

1. The National Advisory Group on Body Image's report provided a range of recommendations on what is a very complex issue. The Government decided to prioritise action in both of the key areas identified in the Advisory Group's report ('individuals and their immediate social environment' and 'industry and popular culture'). Initiatives also focus on young people as a priority group who are significantly affected by this issue.
2. No. The Government's strategy for addressing overweight and obesity is to focus on the importance of healthy lifestyles, including healthy eating and physical activity. The programs and initiatives funded by the Government aim to encourage healthy eating, physical activity and a healthy body weight.

The Government's current *Measure Up* social marketing campaign addresses overweight and obesity, physical activity and healthy eating. The campaign disseminates health information on the importance of healthy lifestyle choices — specifically relating to nutrition and physical activity — as a means of reducing the prevalence and impact of chronic disease. It does not promote unhealthy weight loss behaviours.

Throughout its development, the creative components and messages of the campaign have been tested with younger target audiences to ensure that the materials do not create any negative perceptions related to body image.

The Australian Government is aware of the ongoing concerns within the community about eating disorders and the effect the conditions have on individuals, families and the broader community.

The Government has committed \$3 million for the National Eating Disorders Collaboration (NEDC) project under the Preventative Health National Partnership Agreement. The project will develop a comprehensive, coordinated national approach to these very complex and challenging conditions.

The NEDC brings together eating disorder experts in mental health, public health, health promotion, education and research, as well as the media, to help develop a national approach to the promotion, prevention and management of eating disorders in Australia.

The NEDC will contribute to providing information which will help to ensure that people with eating disorders, including young Australians, are able to access evidence based, consistent information through schools, the media, health services and other appropriate avenues.

3. The intention of the Voluntary Industry Code of Conduct is to provide national guidance on the issue of body image. It is 'a call to action' for the media, fashion and advertising industries to take positive steps in response to this issue. As the Code is voluntary, no mechanisms have been developed to enable reporting on discrimination due to body size.
4. The Government has funded the Industry Partnership through the National Partnership Agreement on Preventive Health. The Industry Partnership enables the Government, in consultation with the states and territories to partner with various sectors of the food, fitness and weight management industries to support the implementation of programs to encourage changes in policies and practices consistent with the Government's healthy living agenda. The Industry Partnership is initially focusing on the food industry, building on the work of the Food and Health Dialogue. Engagement with the fitness and weight management sectors is expected to follow and apply lessons learnt from the working with the food sector.
5. At this early stage of the Industry Partnership, the fitness and weight management industries have not been approached to engage in promoting healthy living messages.