

# Media Release

**The Hon Jaala Pulford MLC**

Minister for Employment

Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and the Digital Economy

Minister for Small Business

Minister for Resources



Monday, 6 June 2022

## NEW RESEARCH PROGRAM TO ADDRESS YOUTH EATING DISORDERS

A new research program to improve the treatment and support for young Victorians experiencing eating disorders is now underway, thanks to support from the Andrews Labor Government.

Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and the Digital Economy Jaala Pulford today announced \$500,000 for a dedicated youth eating disorder research program at the Orygen Youth Health research institute in Parkville.

Research shows that adolescents are at greatest risk of disordered eating with the average age of onset between 12 and 25 years. Eating disorders also disproportionately affect women, with up to 63 per cent of Australian cases identifying as female.

Molli Johns, 19, a dancer from Brunswick was one of those women. Ms Johns was 17 when she was formally diagnosed with the eating disorder known as Otherwise Specified Feeding or Eating Disorder (OSFED) yet battled disordered eating from her early teen years.

Feeling the pressure to look and be a certain size, disordered eating controlled Ms Johns life for years until a teacher, who had also experienced disordered eating, helped her into therapy.

Ms Johns has since overcome her fears around food and is now involved with patient advocacy at Orygen and eager to be involved in research moving ahead.

The Labor Government funding will support Orygen to work with Australian eating disorder experts on developing more evidence-based treatments from prevention, diagnosis through to early intervention and preventing relapse.

Support for the new research program follows the commitment of \$20 million delivered in the *Victorian Budget 2022/23* for eating disorder support. The Budget funding will help almost 3,200 Victorians, a 1,100 person increase on the number of Victorians treated for eating disorders last year.

As part of Victoria's response to the Royal Commission into Mental Health, the Budget also included funding to develop a new state-wide eating disorders strategy. The new approach will ensure Victoria has a more systemic and coordinated response to support people living with eating disorders and their loved ones.

### Quotes attributable to Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and the Digital Economy Jaala Pulford

*"This new research program is about looking into the best ways to prevent, detect and treat what we know to be a debilitating mental health disorder."*

*"We're helping young people with eating disorders by investing in research that can improve treatments and give them the best chance of a full recovery."*

### Quote attributable to Orygen Chief of Research Professor Eóin Killackey

*"Orygen welcomes this funding from the Victorian Government which will enable our researchers to work with partners nationally and internationally to better understand eating disorders and develop new and more effective approaches to early intervention care and treatment."*

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