

MEDIA RELEASE

\$13m for national eating disorder research centre

Leading national vision in eating disorder research

Embargoed Saturday 22 January 2022

The Australian Government Department of Health has awarded the University of Sydney a \$13 million four-year grant, which will fund the establishment of the Australian Eating Disorders Research and Translation Centre.

[InsideOut Institute for Eating Disorders](#), a partnership between the University of Sydney and Sydney Local Health District, will lead a national consortium of partners to develop the Centre and implement the [Australian Eating Disorders Research & Translation Strategy](#).

The Centre will coordinate a national approach to eating disorder research and translate findings into practice, with the goal of reducing the burden on Australians living with an eating disorder and their loved ones.

Eating disorders are serious, complex mental illnesses with significant physical and mental health impacts, high mortality rates and low rates of detection. It is estimated that approximately 1 million Australians are living with an eating disorder, which is 4 percent of the population. Eating disorders also have one of the highest mortality rates of any mental illness.

The Centre will be led by [InsideOut Institute](#), and will be supported by a research ecosystem within the university and a consortium of national partners.

InsideOut Director [Associate Professor Sarah Maguire](#) said until recently, research innovation in the field of eating disorders has been hampered by insufficient resourcing and lack of a coherent vision and plan. She says today's announcement is an important first step in addressing inequities in funding for eating disorder research and translation.

"InsideOut is honoured to lead the national consortium to drive this change," said Associate Professor Maguire.

“This announcement is about the future. It’s about supporting and enabling much-needed scientific breakthroughs that help prevent illness, that get people better and ensure our treatments don’t inadvertently cause harm.”

Major University of Sydney partners in the research ecosystem include the Charles Perkins Centre, Brain and Mind Centre, Lambert Initiative, Sydney Policy Lab, the Faculty of Medicine and Health and the Faculty of Science.

Professor Stephen Simpson, Academic Director of the [Charles Perkins Centre](#), said:

“Having the Australian Eating Disorder Research and Translation Centre based at the Charles Perkins Centre with colleagues at InsideOut Institute and in collaboration with the Brain and Mind Centre and the Faculties of Medicine and Health and Science represents a major step in our rich multidisciplinary strategy at the University of Sydney to address the enormous challenges to health and wellbeing posed by disordered eating.”

Professor Patrick McGorry, executive director of [Orygen](#), which will be a lead partner in the national consortium said:

"The award of this Research Grant to the University of Sydney and partners, including Orygen, to support a long overdue wave of innovation and research in eating disorders could not have come at a more critical time with a new surge in eating disorders during the pandemic.

“Orygen is delighted to have the opportunity to work in a collaborative partnership with Inside Out at the University of Sydney to create a fresh approach to the understanding, prevention and treatment of eating disorders.”

“We are very grateful to the Federal government for devoting vital new research funding to this neglected public health priority.”

Professor Ian Hickie, co-director of the [Brain and Mind Centre](#) said there is an urgent need for really novel and truly innovative research that can save lives that are otherwise lost or ruined by these devastating disorders.

“This Centre will strive for major breakthroughs, with particular emphasis on those interventions that can be delivered early in the course of illness, at scale, and lead to sustained recovery.”

InsideOut Director Professor [Stephen Touyz](#) said the Australian Government should be commended for this investment.

“For the first time, this centre will bring together the country’s leading researchers to develop an integrated research agenda to transform the lives of those with the lived experience of an eating disorder. This initial funding is an important start.”

Professor Ian Caterson, Clinical Director, Sydney Local Health District, welcomes the initiative.

“Eating disorders are complex diseases and produce much distress and illness in those who suffer them - and their families and carers. They produce a range of mental health, social and medical issues and are seen by many in health as difficult to treat.

“This initiative will help Sydney Local Health District and the University of Sydney continue to develop an effective, strong integrated care model which tackles the range of issues those with eating disorders can experience and make equitable, accessible care available to many more.”

All of the Centre’s activities will be informed by people with lived experience of eating disorders and with Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander peoples.

“I feel honoured to have been asked to co-Lead the Lived Experience Program workstream, which InsideOut is proposing. The Lived Experience Program that will work across all aspects of the Centre, including governance committees, all workstreams, and all research areas, is ground-breaking,” said Shannon Calvert, lived experience advisor at InsideOut Institute.

The Centre’s governance structure will include a governing council led by independent Chair Ms Robyn Kruk AO, an executive working party, and a scientific committee which will design a transparent and robust process for the funding of research trials. It will also be informed by an international expert advisory group comprising world-leading eating disorder researchers and innovative thinkers.

National partners include Orygen, Latrobe University, Monash University, Monash Biomedicine Discovery Institute, Australian National University, Deakin University, Black Dog Institute, University of Western Australia, University of Queensland (Institute for Molecular Bioscience) and QIMR Berghofer Medical Research Institute.

To interview Associate Professor Sarah Maguire or Professor Stephen Touyz, contact:

Juanita Nantes M: 0434 890 694 | **E:** comms@insideoutinstitute.org.au

Ivy Shih M: 0439160475 | **E:** ivy.shih@sydney.edu.au

The InsideOut Institute – a collaboration between Sydney Local Health District and the University of Sydney’s Charles Perkins Centre – aims to ensure every Australian living with

an eating disorder has access to the best possible care by rethinking eating disorders from the 'inside out'. Visit insideoutinstitute.org.au

We encourage reporting about lived experience of an eating disorder, but please be mindful in how it is portrayed.

Be careful **not** to:

- Mention specific weights, measurements, weight loss, quantities.
- Detail specific behaviours.
- Post images of people with extreme body weights or before/after pictures.
- Glamorise eating disorders.
- Use the terms sufferer, patient, anorexic or bulimic to describe someone with an eating disorder, instead use “person with an eating disorder”.

More information about reporting and portrayal of eating disorders here:

<https://insideoutinstitute.org.au/assets/nedc-mindframe-reporting-guidelines.pdf>