Butterfly Foundation calls for equal access to eating disorder treatment at today’s Senate Committee Public Hearing on rural and remote mental health

The Butterfly Foundation will present today at a public hearing, alongside other mental health organisations and service providers, on the accessibility and quality of mental health services in rural and remote Australia.

Eating disorders are serious psychology illnesses affecting approximately 9% of the Australian population. At the core, they can affect anyone, regardless of culture, age, gender identity, socio-economic background geographic location.

Access to eating disorder services within rural and remote Australia is inadequate. Butterfly has heard from many Australians living in these communities who have been unable to access treatment, have had to travel extensive distances or relocate their family in order to access treatment for their eating disorder or a loved one’s. This is not only costly, but places additional stress on families and individuals.

This year, the National Eating Disorders Collaboration consulted with their members living in rural and remote Australian communities about their experiences in accessing mental health services.

The three most significant impacts on people accessing mental health services in rural and remote Australia were;

1. Many local mental health services do not treat eating disorders
2. Even if there are available services outside their community, people are not aware of them
3. Current inclusion or exclusion criteria for available eating disorder services are a barrier to getting treatment.

CEO Christine Morgan, acknowledges the importance of today’s hearing in discussing accessibility issues for those living in rural and remote communities and encourages collaboration with other mental health organisations to advocate for change.

“Australians living in rural and remote communities should have equal access to eating disorders services. Location should not be a barrier to delivering mental health care. As well as a need for increased access to eating disorder treatment services, there is a significant need for further public awareness, and a focus on prevention and early intervention within these communities, to reduce stigma, encourage help-seeking and reduce the need for intensive tertiary care.”
To watch the public hearing live, visit: https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate

Anyone needing support with eating disorders or body image issues is encouraged to contact Butterfly’s National Helpline 1800 ED HOPE on 1800 33 4673 or support@thebutterflyfoundation.org.au

For urgent support call Lifeline 13 11 14

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Butterfly encourages the media to adhere to the Mindframe Guidelines for reporting of suicide and eating disorders.

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