

3 JUNE 2021



Media Pack

EDANZ support of Rebecca Toms Petition

Rebecca Toms, a Christchurch mother of a young person in recovery from an eating disorder, will be presenting her petition to Parliament on Thursday 3 June urging the Government to provide 'Urgent expert care and subsidy assistance for young people with eating disorders'.

EDANZ is proud to support the work Rebecca is doing to highlight the critical need for early and expert treatment being available to all New Zealanders at a time when the demand for eating disorder services is unprecedented.

Over the past year there has been a doubling of New Zealanders requiring help for eating disorders, and in some instances a tripling of clients requiring specialist services.

These people come from all socio-economic groups, cultural backgrounds, and include both genders across childhood to the elderly.

Eating disorders are a treatable disease. Yet the mortality rate is the highest of all psychiatric illnesses.

EDANZ believe there are things that can be done relatively easily, including greater GP training to speed up diagnosis, that can help relieve pressure in communities right now.



Current Situation of Eating Disorder Services

Services under huge pressure:

Demand for eating disorder services was already stretched but in 2020 there has been a doubling of clients and in some instances a tripling of people requiring help. EDANZ support services have seen demand increase four-fold this year.

Feedback from the sector includes:

- Healthcare workers reporting an increase in cases of 2-3 times more than a year ago, saying "We are at breaking point"
- Waiting times for specialist services averaging 4-6 months, and as long as 9 months around the country
- People being admitted to hospital for medical stabilisation because community mental health services are not coping

Services are fragmented:

DHB's all differ in the services they offer and wait-times with no data collection or centralised co-ordination to ensure timely care. In addition to this the care provided in each DHB spans across mental health and addiction teams, primary care through PHOs (primary health organisations) and hospital-level care for inpatient treatment.

Detailed data not collected:

There is a lack of co-ordination or awareness of the growing issue at a national level. This is partly due to the lack of data consistently collected and reported.

Lack of trained workforce to diagnose and treat:

The challenges include a limited workforce with specialist eating disorder training. The availability of clinicians skilled and experienced to provide evidence-based eating disorder treatment is drastically below what is needed to meet the demand.

Improving recovery services

Operational funding

Right now EDANZ is the only service bridging the gap between diagnosis and treatment. The Ministry and medical professionals rely on us to act as a holding pen for people on waitlists, and people unable to get on waitlists. However we are a small team of six volunteers. We can't continue self funding this 24/7 support service.

Expert panel supported by Government

We would like to see a sector-led specialist panel established by the Government to review eating disorder services.

Support GP's and frontline workers

They deserve education and support to diagnose and refer patients, and if necessary to treat the early stages of illness. Right now EDANZ is the only service providing training in eating disorder diagnosis to doctors and medical students.

Adequate resourcing

Specialist eating disorder services require adequate resourcing to see patients early in their illness, provide evidence based treatment and discharge from service only upon full recovery.

Consider international models of care

We believe New Zealand should consider international learnings. The United Kingdom has recently introduced a new system to the NHS (National Health Service), focusing on early intervention to stop the escalation of an eating disorder.

Teens or young adults are contacted within 48 hours and treatment begins as soon as two weeks later. The approach is based on a successful model developed and trialed at King's College London and the South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust, with support from the Health Foundation. It lessens wait times and improves patients' outcomes.



EDANZ Purpose

EDANZ provides support, information, and resources for carers of people with eating disorders and education for health professionals and schools.

We are a registered charity run by six volunteers, who all have personal experience in the process of recovery from an eating disorder – either as parents, caregivers or having experienced it themselves. EDANZ is the only organisation of its kind in New Zealand and relies solely on donations and grants.

EDANZ focuses on improving the outcomes for people with eating disorders and their families by:

- Providing support through a 24/7 0800 helpline, and emails from people and families affected by an eating disorder.
- Travelling nationwide at DHB request to educate healthcare professionals including GPs, nurses and other medical professionals who work with eating disorder patients.
- Travelling nationwide to educate medical students, teachers and counsellors.
- Advocating for improved services for people with eating disorders including working with health sector professionals.

Spokesperson Contact List



Nicki Wilson
Chief Executive of EDANZ

Works as a fulltime as a volunteer providing support to carers, educating and advocating for improved eating disorder treatment for patients and their families. She is seeking a co-designed system that betters the environment of eating disordered services in New Zealand

M: 027 201 8684



Victoria Schonwald
The Eat Clinic (Dietician)

Is a registered nutritionist who works empower people to take control of their eating habits. As someone who has experienced disordered eating in the past she is passionate about improving the current support systems in New Zealand.

M: 027 226 1058



Rebecca Toms
Mother of and eating disorder survivor

Is advocating for nationwide change in the treatment of eating disorders whilst supporting her own daughter's recovery.

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