

World-first, free eClinic opening the door for West Australians to access life-saving eating disorder treatment

In a landmark move set to transform eating disorder treatment in Australia, MPs, clinicians, celebrities, patients and carers will gather at Parliament House, Canberra today, to launch the world's-first, free, national eClinic dedicated to these complex illnesses.

Developed by Australia's leading authority on eating disorder research, the InsideOut Institute, the new eClinic – eclinic.insideoutinstitute.org.au – offers evidence-based, self-paced programs for Australians living with eating disorders, their carers', and healthcare professionals.

According to Clinical Psychologist and InsideOut Institute Director, Professor Sarah Maguire OAM, Sydney, eating disorders are complex, serious illnesses with devastating psychological, physical and social impacts, and are on the rise.^{1,2} Despite being treatable,^{4,5} they remain a growing public health concern.³⁻⁵

Yet stigma, shame, limited access to specialised services, and long wait times continue to prevent many people from seeking timely support.^{6,7}

"Early detection and treatment is critical to improving outcomes for people living with eating disorders."⁸

"Yet many Australians face major barriers stigma, limited access, long wait times and a highly fragmented and costly system, with no obvious, or effective entry point," said Prof Maguire.

"Many people, and their carers' don't know where, when, or how to access help."⁹

"The Inside Out eClinic was designed by clinicians, researchers and people with lived experience to break down barriers to accessing high-quality, flexible care," Prof Maguire said.

"The eClinic acts as a front door to the health system, delivering free, evidence-based treatment at scale.

"It makes expert support accessible to everyone, especially those living in rural and under-served communities," said Prof Maguire.

Former AFL star and mental health advocate, Brock McLean, Brisbane, mounted a private battle with bulimia nervosa for more than four years. Now in recovery, Brock is using his platform to challenge stigma, particularly around men's mental health and eating disorders. His disordered eating, which began during his elite sporting career, and continued beyond retirement, was closely linked with co-occurring mental health challenges, including depression and anxiety.

His experience mirrors the struggle many Australians living with an eating disorder face: delayed diagnosis, limited access to care, and a lack of services reflecting the diversity of those affected.

"The biggest challenge was admitting I needed help. But once I did, everything changed," Brock said.

"The eClinic will break down huge barriers – especially cost and access. It will save lives."

Brock is now a proud ambassador for the IOI eClinic and a passionate advocate for inclusive, early intervention approaches to treatment. Living with his wife Stephanie and young daughters Bonnie and Camille in Brisbane, he describes this new chapter of his life as his "happiest and healthiest".

Currently, only about one in five of people living with an eating disorder receive treatment. Delays in accessing care can stretch to up to 10 years, depending on the type of disorder,^{6,10-12} Clinical Psychologist, Lived Experience Advocate, and InsideOut Institute e-Clinic Lived Experience Advisory Group Member, Pheobe Ho, Perth, explained.

Those living with lesser-known conditions, such as binge eating disorder, are often under-recognised by healthcare professionals, while concerningly, those with bulimia nervosa rarely receive treatment for their eating disorders at all.⁶

"Delays are fuelled, in part, by outdated assumptions about who develops an eating disorder or who they affect, often reinforced by bias that eating disorders only occur in young, underweight females," said Ms Ho.

"Digital, on-demand tools like the eClinic have the power to break down barriers and deliver timely, inclusive care to those in need.

"According to the InsideOut Institute's eClinic programs, 10 online therapy sessions can be equally as effective as attending therapy in person, highlighting the promise of digital solutions to deliver evidence-based care more widely," Ms Ho said.

Ms Ho maintains many people with eating difficulties continue to have difficulty with accessing quality, evidence-based treatment, often due to long waitlists or fear of seeking help.

"When I was on the waitlist for a specialist outpatient clinic as a young person living with an eating disorder, my school nurse stumbled across an organisation that offered an online eating disorder module. It was really helpful, especially given the long waitlist at the time.

"The idea that you could engage in something self-paced whilst on a waitlist, made me feel less alone, and helped me understand what I was experiencing. It was an important first step toward my recovery," said Ms Ho.

"It's been incredible working with the Advisory Group and InsideOut team on the eClinic – from refining content, to shaping language, design, and user experience.

"The eClinic offers timely, accessible support, especially for those waiting for face-to-face care," Ms Ho said.

"While it's not a replacement for in-person treatment, the eClinic can help individuals take the first step toward recovery by providing early education and support."

According to Executive Director, Eating Disorders Families Australia, Jane Rowan, Brisbane, an eating disorder is not a choice. It is a serious and complex mental illness¹⁴ that can affect anyone,¹⁵ and potentially lead to permanent physical complications.¹⁵

"An eating disorder can pervade nearly every aspect of a person's life,¹⁶ and cause significant distress for their family, carers, partners, and friends.¹⁷

"Eating disorders are on the rise in Australia, with disordered eating increasing by 21 per cent over the past 11 years.¹ Yet despite this rise, few people seek treatment, highlighting an urgent, unmet need for early intervention and improved access to care," said Ms Rowan.

"The eating disorders community wholeheartedly supports the official launch of the IOI eClinic. We welcome the enhanced access to care, and the transformative treatment outcomes this platform promises to deliver."

About the eClinic launch

Those officiating at the IOI eClinic launch at Parliament House, Canberra, this morning include:

- Clinical Psychologist and Director of the IOI, Prof Sarah Maguire OAM, Sydney;
- Assistant Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention, The Hon. Emma McBride MP, Central Coast NSW;
- Former AFL player, mental health advocate and coach, and IOI eClinic Ambassador, Brock Mclean, Brisbane;
- Author, comedian, broadcaster and internet personality who overcame binge eating disorder through the IOI's eClinic, Lucinda Price, Sydney;
- Executive Director, Eating Disorders Families Australia, Jane Rowan, Brisbane.

Additional attendees include Independent Senator for the ACT, and former professional rugby union player, David Pocock, Canberra; clinicians, other stakeholders patients and carers.

About the eClinic

The InsideOut Institute's eClinic is Australia's first free, fully online, national treatment hub for eating disorders. It offers flexible, self-paced programs, including BEeT for binge eating and bulimia nervosa, Skilled for a wider range of eating disorder symptoms, Supported for carers, and a Healthcare Professionals (HCP) Hub. By removing traditional barriers to care, the eClinic ensures people living with eating disorders can access vital support when they need it most, regardless of their postcode, socio-economic status, or cultural background.

To access the IOI eClinic, and learn more, head to eclinic.insideoutinstitute.org.au.

If you suspect you, or a loved one, may be living with an eating disorder, speak to your local healthcare practitioner without delay, or head to insideoutinstitute.org.au to complete an online screener and assessment, and to access more information and professional support.

Australian professional patient support services offering 24/7 helpline services include:

- Butterfly National Helpline: 1800 334 673
- Beyond Blue: 1300 22 4636
- LifeLine: 13 11 14
- Men's Line Australia: 1300 78 99 78
- Kids Help Line: 1800 55 1800

DOWNLOADABLE ASSETS	
DIGITAL MEDIA KIT	A full digital media kit will be available for download Thursday, July 24 – eclinicmediakit.org
VIDEO NEWS RELEASE	Available for download Thursday, July 24
AUDIO NEWS GRABS	Available for download Thursday, July 24
MEDIA CONTACTS + INTERVIEWS	Kirsten Bruce or Sam Jacobs, VIVA! Communications M 0401 717 566 0422 654 404 T 02 9968 3741 0434 799 839 E kirstenbruce@vivacommunications.com.au sam@vivacommunications.com.au

ends#

EXPERTS	
Pheobe Ho	Clinical Psychologist, Lived Experience Advocate, & InsideOut Institute e-Clinic Lived Experience Advisory Group Member, PERTH
Professor Sarah Maguire OAM	Clinical Psychologist & Director, InsideOut Institute, SYDNEY [VISITING CANBERRA]
Dr Sarah Barakat	Clinical Psychologist & Postdoctoral Research Associate, InsideOut Institute, SYDNEY [VISITING CANBERRA]
HIGH-PROFILE AUSTRALIAN AMBASSADORS	
Lucinda Price aka 'Froomes'	Author, comedian, broadcaster & InsideOut eClinic ambassador who overcame binge eating disorder using the InsideOut eClinic, SYDNEY [VISITING CANBERRA]
Brock McLean	Former AFL player, mental health advocate & coach, & InsideOut eClinic ambassador who wrestled with bulimia nervosa for 4+ years, BRISBANE [VISITING CANBERRA]
NATIONAL PATIENT ADVOCACY GROUP REPRESENTATIVE	
Jane Rowan	Executive Director, Eating Disorders Families Australia & lived experience eating disorder carer, BRISBANE [VISITING CANBERRA]

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