



A proposed  
**National Strategy  
on Body Image**

BY THE NATIONAL ADVISORY GROUP

ISBN 978-0-642-77896-3 (PDF)  
ISBN 978-0-642-77897-0 (RTF)  
ISBN 978-0-642-77898-7 (PRINT)

Cover image designed by Christine Le, 34 Kensington st, Punchbowl, NSW 2196

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# CHAIR'S FOREWORD

It is with great pleasure that, on behalf of the National Advisory Group, I present the Hon Kate Ellis MP, Minister for Early Childhood Education, Child Care and Youth, with this proposal for a National Strategy on Body Image. I commend this report to the Government and look forward to the response.

I'd like to pay tribute to the wonderful group of people in the Advisory Group and the expertise that they have brought to this work. I have learnt an enormous amount from them.

I'd also like to thank everyone who contributed to the online consultation. It is clear that there is a huge amount of public support for the Government to address body image and there are some amazing things already being done within the community.

I have always felt strongly about body image. It troubles me that so many people, particularly young people, feel unhappy with their bodies. Whether it's girls comparing themselves with the unrealistic images they see in the media and thinking they're not tall or skinny enough or boys feeling they need to bulk up or slim down. All too often this translates to feelings of inadequacy and, in some cases, mental illness.

How did we as a society let young people get the message that so much of their self-worth is tied to their physical appearance? We have a duty to support young people and to encourage them to achieve their full potential.

That is what this Strategy is about. It is about getting people who are in positions of influence to look out for the needs of young people. This includes young people themselves as one of the biggest influencers of their peers.

The Strategy recommends that the Government work with, guide and build on the different efforts already taking place in schools, community groups, online, families, workplaces and industry.

With regard to the fashion, media and advertising industries, it is clear that people in these industries have a tremendous amount of influence in determining what our society looks like. And it's time that all of us involved in these industries started to be more responsible with this influence.

The introduction of an Industry Code of Conduct on Body Image provides an opportunity for organisations to get on board and take action based on what they believe. Let me also throw in a word of warning to business here – the excuses for maintaining the status quo are becoming increasingly less acceptable. There is only so much people will accept before they say 'enough'.

As I have previously written, many people make a living from pushing the boundaries, but they need to realise that the boundaries can push back – and this is happening with body image. The community is saying that they want a more diverse and realistic depiction of women and men within the media. I hope the introduction of the Code pushes this along.

So, let me encourage you to stop and think about where you want to be, and how you want to be perceived, in relation to your contribution to the issue of body image. If you're on the same path as us, look for opportunities to put it into practice. You might be surprised by the response.

**Mia Freedman**



# MINISTER'S FOREWORD

There's no doubt that body image pressures affect the wellbeing and quality of life of many Australians.

Negative body image is not a passing teenage fad. It's a mainstream problem that affects both genders and concerns people of all ages, but it most acutely threatens the health, confidence and self esteem of our young people. The scientific evidence shows this and young people themselves are telling us this - loud and clear.

The importance of addressing this issue is clear. Submissions to the Australian Government's online consultation on body image revealed a consensus that something must be done to tackle the unrealistic images of beauty portrayed in our culture. Images that are largely unattainable through healthy behaviour.

The number of young Australians who feel bad about how they look is reaching epidemic proportions. Some young girls are starving themselves to emulate the ideal they see – an ideal that's often digitally manipulated by the media. Shockingly, these young girls can be as young as six.

Governments have a role to play in addressing body image problems, particularly when the wellbeing of our community is at stake. By working together, Governments - in partnership with industry and the community - can make a difference to the lives of young Australians.

My goal is to help young people build the confidence and resilience they need to beat this insidious phenomena. I want young Australians to be comfortable and confident and have the tools to combat negative body image pressures so that they are able to lead happy, healthy and fulfilling lives.

I believe that working together on a national approach is the best way to tackle the problem of negative body image. I know that this is complex and partnerships with the media, the health sector, the fashion industry and parents are the only way we'll achieve success.

In March this year, I established the National Advisory Group on Body Image to provide advice to Government. Members were drawn from the health sector, the fashion and media industries and the community.

I'd like to thank each of the members of the Advisory Group for volunteering their time and expertise. I particularly thank the Chair, Mia Freedman, for her leadership in the development of this report.

I'm pleased to accept the Advisory Group's report and commit to working with my colleagues and others on how we can best take these ideas forward.

I look forward to building on this important work and the effective community and Government initiatives that are already in place, to develop a national approach to help Australia's young people.

The Hon Kate Ellis MP  
Minister for Youth



# SUMMARY OF RECOMMEN DATIONS



# SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS


## A NATIONAL AND STRATEGIC APPROACH (PAGE 11)

1. The National Advisory Group on Body Image recommends that, in progressing the development of a National Strategy on Body Image, the Australian Government engage with and support existing expertise, resources and organisations.
2. The National Advisory Group on Body Image recommends that the Australian Government:
  - formalise information sharing among the federal and state and territory governments to ensure research, best practice initiatives and resources are shared and that national moves to address body image are supported by all levels of government.
  - maintain and expand the Register of Interested Parties as a means of creating a network of concerned people from the public, industry, community organisations, and academics and health practitioners.
  - use the Register of Interested Parties to encourage, support and inform these stakeholders so that they are better able to promote positive body image messages within their spheres of influence, including relevant industries.
3. The National Advisory Group on Body Image recommends that the Australian Government:
  - ensure activities undertaken under the Strategy are evaluated and that resources are allocated for this.
  - take a considered approach to evaluation with the aim of informing the development of future initiatives designed to support and maintain positive body image.
  - incorporate a process of continual feedback as part of the implementation of each initiative.



# VOLUNTARY INDUSTRY CODE OF CONDUCT ON BODY IMAGE (PAGE 15)

4. The National Advisory Group on Body Image recommends that:
  - the Australian Government commit to implementing, promoting and supporting the proposed voluntary Industry Code of Conduct on Body Image and the associated good practice principles.
  - the Australian Government maintain the Code as a working document that is revised in response to industry and public feedback, technological developments and emerging issues.
  - the Australian Government monitor the support for the Code across relevant industries to determine the effectiveness of the Code.
  - If, after a sustained period of continued development, government support and promotion, there is a broad failure among industry to adopt good body image practices, the Australian Government should look to review the voluntary nature of the Code.
  
5. The National Advisory Group on Body Image recommends that:
  - organisations who show support for the Code be publicly recognised. This could be done, for example, through the use of logos and a public listing of the supporting organisations.
  - in keeping with the voluntary nature of the Code, individual organisations who indicate support for the Code be the primary point of responsibility for maintaining the integrity of the Code within their business practices.
  - organisations who wish to support the Code be asked to make their support public, including if they intend to support certain principles of the Code, or all relevant aspects of the Code.
  
6. The National Advisory Group on Body Image recommends that the Australian Government:
  - approach and select body image spokespeople who are credible and expert on body image issues, either from a health and wellbeing or relevant industry perspective.
  - provide spokespeople with training and other ongoing support as is appropriate for the role.
  - distribute the list of spokespeople to relevant stakeholders.

- 
7. The National Advisory Group on Body Image recommends that the Australian Government develop an evidence base demonstrating the commercial benefits associated with business adopting positive body image practices, and promote these findings throughout relevant industries.
  8. The National Advisory Group on Body Image recommends that the Australian Government provide industry awards that recognise best practice with regard to body image. In doing this, Government could give preference to incorporating awards into existing industry processes and using public voting systems to determine award recipients.

## STANDARDISED SIZING (PAGE 19)


9. The National Advisory Group on Body Image recommends that, as part of the introduction of standardised sizing, the Australian Government consider consulting body image experts and the Textile Clothing and Footwear Industry representatives who are concerned with body image issues to:
  - ensure sizing labels do not encourage competitive weight loss.
  - develop positive body image messages that can be distributed with Government communications on the introduction of standardised sizing to industry and consumers.

## PUBLIC ADVOCACY (PAGE 20)

10. The National Advisory Group on Body Image recommends that the Australian Government:
  - inform members of the public of mechanisms they can use to raise concerns regarding body image messages.
  - liaise with the administrators of existing commercial, regulatory and self regulatory mechanisms to determine the basis on which body image related decisions are considered.
  - where appropriate, provide evidence to inform the basis on which decisions in relation to body image issues are made.

## SCHOOLS (PAGE 22)

11. The National Advisory Group on Body Image recommends that the Australian Government:
  - makes the positive body image checklist available as a resource for schools to adopt.
  - considers the issue of body image in the development of the national curriculum, within the health and physical education curriculum.

- 
- collaborates with state and territory government and non-government education authorities to encourage schools to address body image, through:
    - the use of short-term school curricula.
    - funding for reputable organisations to deliver body image initiatives within schools.
    - informing teachers of appropriate and best practice opportunities to incorporate body image issues within teaching and learning.

## TERTIARY EDUCATION (PAGE 24)

12. The National Advisory Group on Body Image recommends that the Australian Government consider encouraging Universities and Registered Training Providers such as TAFES to incorporate positive body image messages and practices within institutional cultures and curriculum where appropriate.

## FAMILIES (PAGE 25)

13. The National Advisory Group on Body Image recommends that the Australian Government:
  - provide appropriate information to parents and carers to assist them in fostering positive body image messages in the home.
  - note the impact of maternity on body image and explore the adequacy of current efforts in this area.

## ONLINE (PAGE 27)

14. The National Advisory Group on Body Image recommends that the Australian Government:
  - commission the development of a digital strategy to provide a holistic approach to the use of the internet as a means of promoting positive body image messages and resources.
  - develop digital partnerships with influential online stakeholders to facilitate the distribution of positive body image messages.
  - investigate and engage viral messaging to encourage positive body image.



## WORKPLACES (PAGE 28)

15. The National Advisory Group on Body Image recommends that the Australian Government:

- identify key organisations and industries where body image is likely to be a significant issue.
- engage with these organisations and industries to determine how positive body image policies and training could most effectively be incorporated into their workplaces.
- support organisations to introduce positive body image practices.
- consider including body image as an employment issue within the Young Workers Code of Conduct, Toolkit or other supporting information as appropriate.

## COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS (PAGE 29)

16. The National Advisory Group on Body Image recommends that the Australian Government:

- work with the Australian Sports Commission and peak sporting bodies to respond to the body image issues raised in the report on the participation of women in sport.
- work with relevant sports and artistic agencies and bodies to support strategies to encourage positive body image.
- work with community groups to provide them with appropriate body image information and messages.



# INTRO<sup>o</sup> DUCTION



# INTRODUCTION

The Advisory Group was established by the Minister for Youth, the Hon Kate Ellis MP, to provide advice to Government on an approach to address the growing problem of body image dissatisfaction in the general community, particularly among young people.

The Members of the National Advisory Group on Body Image<sup>1</sup> are:

Ms Mia Freedman (Chair)	Journalist and former Editor of Cosmopolitan magazine
Ms Sarah Cornish	Editor Girlfriend and TV Hits magazines
Prof David Forbes	School of Paediatrics and Child Health, University of Western Australia
Ms Helen Gazal	Fashion industry businesswoman
Ms Kerry Graham	CEO Inspire Foundation
Ms Raina Hunter	YWCA
Mrs Sarah Murdoch	Model/television producer
Prof Susan Paxton	Head of School of Psychological Science La Trobe University
Ms Ruth Pollard	President The Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance
Ms Amanda Scott	Youth representative, currently the Chair of the NSW Youth Advisory Council.
Ms Claire Vickery	Founder and CEO Butterfly Foundation

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<sup>1</sup> The Advisory Group is also thankful for the contributions of Ms Belinda Seper, Mr Chris Warren, Ms Julie Parker and Dr Philippa Collin.



## THE TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE NATIONAL ADVISORY GROUP ON BODY IMAGE

The National Advisory Group on Body Image will provide advice to the Minister for Youth on:

- Strategic opportunities to advance a national, co-ordinated approach to help tackle body image in Australia in partnership with states and territories and stakeholders.
- Successful local and overseas initiatives addressing body image, and explore how they can be best applied to Australia at a national level.
- Opportunities for Government to engage with industry on an ongoing basis, to ensure initiatives build and gather momentum and effectiveness over time.
- The development of a voluntary Industry Code of Conduct on Body Image that provides guidance on the responsible portrayal of body image by the media, advertising and fashion industries.
- Strategies and partnerships with the media, advertising and fashion industries that aim to promote the Code and identify further opportunities to minimise the prevalence of potentially harmful images and to promote positive and healthy body images and self esteem, particularly to young Australians.
- Emerging themes and issues associated with body image and how Government can move towards early identification and response to new issues and new technologies.

## CONSULTATIONS

To support the development of the Strategy, an online consultation process was held between 6 May and 5 June 2009. Through this consultation, 150 submissions were received - the majority of respondents were individuals and community organisations, including young people, teachers, youth workers, social workers and psychologists.

A summary of responses is published at [www.youth.gov.au/bodyimage.html](http://www.youth.gov.au/bodyimage.html).


## INFORMATION PAPER

The consultation process was supported by a paper prepared by the Australian Government Office for Youth. The paper outlines the issue of negative body image in the community, including factors that contribute to its development, and existing measures to address it. The paper is also available at [www.youth.gov.au/bodyimage.html](http://www.youth.gov.au/bodyimage.html).



## EXISTING INITIATIVES

In developing a proposed Strategy, the Advisory Group considered existing efforts in relation to body image dissatisfaction. The Group acknowledges that many individuals and organisations are taking action. For example, there is a large body of scientific evidence about body image, a range of body image related interventions, blogs on industry practices, and areas of industry seeking to promote more positive body image messages. The Victorian Government has also led initiatives in this area. The proposed Strategy aims to build on this valuable work and support a national approach.



A  
**NATIONAL**  
AND  
STRATEGIC  
APPROACH



# A NATIONAL AND STRATEGIC APPROACH

## GOAL

The goal of the Strategy is: “to increase the positive thoughts and feelings that individuals have towards their own body as a means of improving their wellbeing.”

The Strategy proposes to achieve this goal by focusing on three broad influencers of body image dissatisfaction:

1. **Cultural messages**—Changing the cultural background from which a person takes cues about how to think and feel about their body.

*Aim: That the messages within popular culture become increasingly more healthy and positive in regards to body image.*

2. **The immediate social environment**—Increasing the positive support offered to individuals about their body image, within their immediate social environment.

*Aim: That people experience healthy and positive messages about their bodies from their family, friends, teachers colleagues and significant others.*

3. **Individual characteristics**—Increasing people’s resilience towards the impact of negative body image messages.

*Aim: That people recognise, understand and are equipped to respond to negative body image messages in a way that supports their emotional development and wellbeing.*

The Strategy addresses these influencers under two main headings:

- Industry and Popular Culture.
- Individuals and their immediate social environment.

## PRINCIPLES

Development of the Strategy was guided by three principles:

- ‘**Promote the positive**’. The Advisory Group did not seek to lay blame. Instead, there was a desire to support people and organisations to take steps to help people to feel more positively about their bodies.

- 
- ‘Work with—not against’. The Advisory Group sought to build on existing platforms established within community, business and government.
  - ‘Realistic responses’. The Advisory Group sought to recognise the government, business and community contexts in which the Strategy was developed and to propose ideas likely to work within those contexts.

## THE PRIMARY ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

It is the view of the Advisory Group that the most effective role the Government can play is to develop processes that facilitate the sharing of resources among stakeholders, and recognise and encourage stakeholders who are taking positive steps. This approach will minimise duplication of efforts, make appropriate linkages and support a consistent national approach.

**1** The National Advisory Group on Body Image recommends that, in progressing the development of a National Strategy on Body Image, the Australian Government engage with and support existing expertise, resources and organisations.


## ENGAGING STAKEHOLDERS

The Advisory Group recognises that effective stakeholder engagement is crucial for progressing the Strategy’s recommendations. Given the prevalence of negative body image and the diverse range of causes, stakeholder identification is an important first step. Stakeholders include:

1. government—at the federal and the state and territory levels.
2. community and education organisations.
3. academics and health practitioners.
4. relevant industries—including businesses and peak bodies.
5. members of the public, particularly young people.

The development of the proposed Strategy has seen work commence in engaging these stakeholders, including:

- the establishment of a Register of Interested Parties.
- engagement of academics to assist with the evidence base.
- contacts made with industry.
- building links across government and jurisdictions.



## 2 The National Advisory Group on Body Image recommends that the Australian Government:

- formalise information sharing among the federal and state and territory governments to ensure research, best practice initiatives and resources are shared and that national moves to address body image are supported by all levels of government.
- maintain and expand the Register of Interested Parties as a means of creating a network of concerned people from the public, industry, community organisations, academics and health practitioners.
- use the Register of Interested Parties to encourage, support and inform these stakeholders so that they are better able to promote positive body image messages within their spheres of influence, including relevant industries.

## EVALUATION

The Advisory Group recommends that activities under the Strategy are evaluated and that resources are allocated for this. An evaluation should seek to identify where the major improvements have been gained and where future efforts would be of most value. This information would allow for further refinement of approaches to addressing body image dissatisfaction.

The Advisory Group acknowledges the complexity of the body image issue and that an approach attempting to measure causal links between initiatives and a decrease in individuals' body image dissatisfaction is not feasible.

The Advisory Group recognises that a higher priority may be given to some initiatives than others. This type of approach could establish a platform upon which a more comprehensive evaluation could be built. Regardless of the approach to evaluation taken, the implementation of initiatives should include the opportunity for feedback.

## 3 The National Advisory Group on Body Image recommends that the Australian Government:

- ensure activities undertaken under the Strategy are evaluated and that resources are allocated for this.
- take a considered approach to evaluation with the aim of informing the development of future initiatives designed to support and maintain positive body image.
- incorporate a process of continual feedback as part of the implementation of each initiative.



# PROPOSED INITIATIVES.



# INDUSTRY AND POPULAR CULTURE

## VOLUNTARY INDUSTRY CODE OF CONDUCT ON BODY IMAGE

The Advisory Group recognises moves already taking place within industry to send positive body image messages. A Code of Conduct provides a focal point that supports and encourages these moves. It is a tool to support long-term cultural change that requires ongoing promotion and support to build its take-up.

The aims of the Code are to provide:

- greater awareness of the health implications of body dissatisfaction and the importance of promoting positive body image messages.
- encouragement and authority to organisations that desire to take actions to promote positive body image messages.
- recognition and support to organisations that take actions that promote positive body image messages.
- provide good practice advice that organisations can use as guidelines for implementing positive body image actions.

The Code is considered appropriate within the current environment and does not preclude later moves that may encourage industry toward further goals and behaviours that provide greater support for community wellbeing.

This Code seeks to complement any existing industry codes by providing additional guidance for organisations wishing to demonstrate good practice in promoting positive body image.

The Code of Conduct, and accompanying guidance for implementing these good practice principles, is at Attachment A.

Initiatives to support the introduction of the Code are covered in the following section.

## 4 The National Advisory Group on Body Image recommends that:

- the Australian Government commit to implementing, promoting and supporting the proposed voluntary Industry Code of Conduct on Body Image and the associated good practice principles.
- the Australian Government maintain the Code as a working document that is revised in response to industry and public feedback, technological developments and emerging issues.
- the Australian Government monitor the support for the Code across relevant industries to determine the effectiveness of the Code.
- If, after a sustained period of continued development, government support and promotion, there is a broad failure among industry to adopt good body image practices, the Australian Government should look to review the voluntary nature of the Code.

## MEASURES TO SUPPORT INDUSTRY AND THE CODE OF CONDUCT

### Recognising organisations that support the Code of Conduct

Commercial organisations that choose to implement good practice in this area and adopt the Code are deserving of support and recognition.

A recognition scheme that helps consumers to identify organisations that support the Code will also play an important role in increasing the commercial appeal of the Code and further achieve the aims of the Strategy.

The recognition provided should create opportunities for the organisation to promote its support for the Code as part of its public image and for commercial benefit. The Code's administrator could:

- make available a 'logo' for participating organisations to use on company products as a means of promoting their organisation as supporting positive body image (for example, something along the lines of the Heart Foundation 'tick').
- issue the organisation with a certificate acknowledging their support for positive body image.
- maintain an accessible list of supporting organisations, possibly online, with links to organisations' public statements of support for the Code.

## 5 The National Advisory Group on Body Image recommends that:

- organisations who show support for the Code be publicly recognised. This could be done, for example, through the use of logos and a public listing of supporting organisations.
- in keeping with the voluntary nature of the Code, individual organisations who indicate support for the Code be the primary point of responsibility for maintaining the integrity of the Code within their business practices.
- organisations who wish to support the Code be asked to make their support public, including if they intend to support certain principles of the Code, or all relevant aspects of the Code

### Body image spokespeople

Body image is an issue that attracts a significant amount of public and media attention.


Encouraging and supporting credible, expert spokespeople would help influence the direction and nature of body image debates. Body image spokespeople could:

- lobby for the adoption of the voluntary Industry Code of Conduct and best practice principles.
- be a source of information and expert opinion for the media.
- speak out in favour of positive body image messages and against negative body image messages that occur within popular culture.

The appointment of reputable spokespeople who have a strong understanding and expertise in developing positive body image, either as a health issue or from a relevant industry perspective, is recommended.

The Advisory Group is aware that people who have an expert understanding of body image issues may not have experience in delivering public messages. The appointment of spokespeople should, where required, be accompanied by the provision of media training and ongoing support.

A small pamphlet or online list providing contact details of spokespeople could be distributed to stakeholders, such as journalists, industry groups and community organisations who require expert commentary on body image issues.



## 6 The National Advisory Group on Body Image recommends that the Australian Government:

- approach and select body image spokespeople who are credible and expert on body image issues, either from a health and wellbeing or relevant industry perspective.
- provide spokespeople with training and other ongoing support as is appropriate for the role.
- distribute the list of spokespeople to relevant stakeholders.

### Developing an evidence base

While an organisation's belief in corporate social responsibility will play some part in their decision to support the Code, it is also important to emphasise the business case for organisations to adopt the Code. In any business, it makes sense to meet the needs and reflect the views of customers—and body image is a significant community concern. It makes commercial sense to produce products that:


- make people feel better, rather than worse, about themselves.
- parents are happy for their children to purchase or view.
- are generally a positive investment for the consumer.

As community concern continues to grow, the commercial imperative will also grow.

In developing the Code, the Advisory Group was aware of the barriers that can inhibit an organisation's efforts to adopt positive body image practices. For example:

- sample dress sizes are sometimes provided in very small sizes and this can currently dictate the size of models.
- advertising agencies are asked to work within a brief given to them by their clients.
- media, fashion and advertising industries operate in an international environment and desire to compete on a level playing field.

It is recognised that it is not easy for organisations to change business practices that have proved profitable over an extended period of time.



Within most industries and organisations there are likely to be people who are willing to advocate for introducing positive body image practices and others who will be resistant to these moves. An evidence base that demonstrates commercial successes will support people who advocate for the adoption of positive body image practices within an organisation. This evidence base could be constructed through:

- publishing a series of business case studies across different industries which demonstrate how the adoption of positive body image practices has contributed to an organisation's business goals (for example, increased readership, sales etc.).
- Government commissioned research that highlights the consumer demand for positive body image practices.

**7** The National Advisory Group on Body Image recommends that the Australian Government develop an evidence base demonstrating the commercial benefits associated with business adopting positive body image practices, and promote these findings throughout relevant industries.

## Industry awards


Rewarding businesses that demonstrate leadership and better practice in response to body image issues would further support cultural change.

Publicly linking awards to the Code of Conduct would also serve to promote the stature of the Code and support other aspects of the Strategy. For example, winners of awards could be asked:

- to act as a spokesperson for positive body image within their industry.
- if their organisation could be used as a case study to demonstrate the commercial benefits of positive body image practices.

The Advisory Group advocates the incorporation of body image awards into existing events and encourages the Government to consider sponsoring awards run from within industry. Public voting systems are seen as a particularly effective means of selecting winners as they provide clear opportunities for organisations to incorporate the award into promotional measures.

If no industry forum exists, there is opportunity for Government to allocate awards in its own right. Consistent with the use of public voting systems, Government could consider using the Australian Youth Forum as a vehicle for determining award recipients. The focus should remain on providing an award which the organisation can use as part of its own promotional campaigns.



**8** The National Advisory Group on Body Image recommends that the Australian Government provide industry awards that recognise best practice with regard to body image. In doing this, Government could give preference to incorporating awards into existing industry processes and using public voting systems to determine award recipients.

## STANDARDISED SIZING

A lack of consistency in clothing sizes, particularly among women's clothing, can contribute to the body dissatisfaction of some people.

The links between sizing and body image were raised a number of times within the online consultation on body image. To quote one submission: "*Many young girls feel fat because they do not fit a [brand name] size 8, even though they [make] unrealistic sizes.*"

The Advisory Group notes that the issue of standardised sizing is being considered by the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research in response to Professor Roy Green's review of the Textile Clothing and Footwear (TCF) Industry.

The Advisory Group supports both Recommendation 10<sup>2</sup> of Professor Green's report, *Building Innovative Capability*, which is to introduce standardised sizing within the TCF industry and the Government's in principle agreement to this recommendation, announced as part of the 2009-10 budget.

The introduction of standardised sizing may prompt some consumers to focus on their own size and body image. The Government is encouraged to select sizing labels that do not encourage competitive weight loss, particularly when considering how to label garments intended for both adolescents and younger adults.


The introduction of standardised sizing provides an opportunity for positive body image messages to be incorporated into its implementation. Different messages could be developed for retailers and consumers.

Messages to retailers could encourage them to implement good practice in the area of body image through promoting the Code of Conduct and other initiatives, such as:

- stocking a broader range of sizing that reflects the diversity of Australian body sizes.
- reflecting these sizes with a more diverse and realistic range of mannequins.

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<sup>2</sup> Note Recommendation 10 is available online at [www.innovation.gov.au/General/Corporate/Documents/TCF\\_budgetfactsheet0910.pdf](http://www.innovation.gov.au/General/Corporate/Documents/TCF_budgetfactsheet0910.pdf)



**9** The National Advisory Group on Body Image recommends that, as part of the introduction of standardised sizing, the Australian Government consider consulting body image experts and Textile Clothing and Footwear representatives who are concerned with body image issues to:


- ensure sizing labels do not encourage competitive weight loss.
- develop positive body image messages that can be distributed with Government communications on the introduction of standardised sizing to industry and consumers.

## PUBLIC ADVOCACY

Many members of the public have personally felt or seen the impact of body image dissatisfaction and are keen to take action in this area. There is an opportunity for Government to use this groundswell of public opinion to take further steps toward cultural change.

The Government could inform people of actions they can take in response to body image messages and products that they believe fall outside of existing standards. Consumers who are concerned with the portrayal of unhealthy body images or the marketing of practices harmful to body image could document their concerns to the following organisations. These organisations govern and regulate standards within broadcasting, advertising and the weight loss industry

- Advertising Standards Board which maintains the Association of Australian Advertisers' (AANA):
  - Code of Ethics
  - Code for Advertising and Marketing Communications to Children
- Australia Communications and Media Authority's (ACMA) registered codes of practice for all broadcasting sectors:
  - The Children's Television Standards 2005
  - Australian content
  - Commercial television
  - Community broadcasting
  - National television
  - Subscription television
  - Datacasting

- 
- Weight Management Council Australia Ltd's Weight Management Industry Code of Practice.
  - Australian Consumer and Competition Commission (ACCC) compliance and enforcement initiatives.

The Government could liaise with the administrators of codes and standards regarding body image concerns and, where appropriate, seek to influence the basis on which decisions related to body image are determined. For example, community standards are one principle upon which determinations are made and Government could seek to provide additional evidence on where community standards lie in relation to body image issues.

## **10** The National Advisory Group on Body Image recommends that the Australian Government:

- inform members of the public of mechanisms they can use to raise concerns regarding body image messages.
- liaise with the administrators of existing commercial, regulatory and self regulatory mechanisms to determine the basis on which body image related decisions are considered.
- where appropriate, provide evidence to inform the basis on which decisions in relation to body image issues are made.



# INDIVIDUALS AND THEIR IMMEDIATE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

## SCHOOLS

Adolescents are particularly susceptible to body image concerns because of the developmental changes their bodies are undergoing. Younger children are also developing ideas and standards about how they will view their bodies. As both of these age groups spend the majority of their time at school, the school setting provides a key opportunity to foster positive body image.

Schools are a place of social interaction among children and young people, where peers can play a significant role in the development of a person's body image.

As state and territory government and non-government education authorities operate schools, the Australian Government could lead a national, co-ordinated approach to addressing body image within schools. The Australian Government could, in the first instance, promote the use of the Advisory Group's *Body Image Friendly Schools Checklist*. This Checklist offers practical guidance for schools to become body image friendly environments, by:

- ensuring the cultural and social norms of the school advocate and provide a supportive, safe and body image friendly environment.
- teaching students about body image, with a focus on building resilience towards negative body image messages, in a way that is appropriate for their age and sex.

The Checklist is at Attachment B.

## Teaching about body image

The Advisory Group supports a strong role for schools in teaching students about body image so that they are better equipped to recognise and respond to negative body image messages.

The Advisory Group suggests that body image teachings can be appropriately included in schools by:

- introducing short term, body image specific school curricula.
- funding reputable and expert organisations to deliver seminars and discussions on body image within schools.
- incorporating teachings on body image into lesson plans for existing curricula.



These delivery models could be stand alone or complementary initiatives.

While mindful of the increasing pressure being placed on the school curriculum, the Advisory Group proposes that the Australian Government consider how body image could most appropriately fit in the development of the national curriculum. For example, it may be appropriate within a health and physical education context.

### ***Developing and implementing short-term school curricula***

The Advisory Group supports the introduction of evidence based body image curricula through a series of workshops within schools. These workshops should be developmentally appropriate and aim to:

- increase protective factors (e.g. media literacy).
- reduce risk factors for the development of body dissatisfaction (e.g. appearance oriented peer environments).
- address body dissatisfaction and promote healthy eating.


### ***Supporting the use of expert providers***

Many schools access independent organisations to deliver one-off body image workshops or to facilitate body image discussions among students. A number of these types of interventions have been demonstrated as effectively reducing the body dissatisfaction of students. The Advisory Group encourages government to increase the opportunities schools have to access these activities.

The Advisory Group encourages governments of all jurisdictions to make additional funds available to support the delivery of reputable, existing body image programs in schools, through a process that leaves the choice of program with the school.

### ***Incorporating body image into lesson plans***

Teachers often use relevant social issues to support key learning outcomes, such as critical analysis, research and writing skills. The issue of body image would suit such a purpose. For example, critical thinking essays could focus on how the media shapes societal norms around body image, and media studies could include analysis of digital enhancement to alter images.



The Government could work with education authorities to support teachers to do this by developing appropriate materials on body image issues. Internet-based resources would facilitate the distribution of these materials and the Government could consider partnering with organisations that already have websites that support teachers with materials.

## 11 The National Advisory Group on Body Image recommends that the Australian Government:

- makes the positive body image checklist available as a resource for schools to adopt.
- considers the issue of body image in the development of the national curriculum, within the health and physical education curriculum.
- collaborates with state and territory government and non-government education authorities to encourage schools to address body image, through:
  - the use of short-term school curricula.
  - funding for reputable organisations to deliver body image initiatives within schools.
  - informing teachers of appropriate and best practice opportunities to incorporate body image issues within teaching and learning.

## TERTIARY EDUCATION

Similar to schools, positive body image messages in Universities and Registered Training Providers such as TAFES could be designed to:

- support the wellbeing of students.
- influence the next generation of industry workers and leaders.

Universities and Registered Training Providers such as TAFES are generally run more independently than schools and this provides different opportunities and challenges for addressing body image. It may be most effective for Government to liaise directly with the heads of individual institutions, or the heads of the relevant student associations.



## Promotional materials/resources

Tertiary education provides forums, educational and social, in which students may participate in discussion on all kinds of topics of intellectual and societal relevance. The Australian Government could provide positive body image materials for the use of student organisations on campus which:

- contain links to online resources.
- encourage the celebration of all body shapes and sizes.
- teach people how to recognise body image issues, and where to seek help if they are dealing with these issues.
- are based around the implementation of themed events such as *International No Diet Day*, *Celebrate You Week*, *Body image and Eating Disorders Awareness Week* and *O' Week*.

Information could also be made available to student organisations to assist in holding body image forums on campus.

Promotional materials and resources could also be given to general practitioners and counsellors at tertiary institutions.

## Curricula

Encouraging tertiary institutions to incorporate body image content into its curricula will help students to develop an awareness of body image issues in the field of study they are undertaking. This initiative is likely to have far reaching benefits as some of these students will become future industry leaders and workers.

Government might focus its efforts on influencing the curricula of subjects that are strongly related to body image issues, such as advertising, fashion, journalism, beauty courses, media, and teaching. This could include a focus on the Code of Conduct and corporate social responsibility.

As a first step, a register of interested educators could be developed and used to facilitate the sharing of research, resources and best practice information.

**12** The National Advisory Group on Body Image recommends that the Australian Government consider encouraging Universities and Registered Training Providers such as TAFES to incorporate positive body image messages and practices within institutional cultures and curriculum where appropriate.



## FAMILIES

Family environments, and parents and carers in particular, play a significant role in determining how young people come to think and feel about their body.

The Advisory Group believes there is opportunity for Government to make body image information more readily available to parents and carers. Materials should focus on:

- educating and informing parents and carers about body image development and ways parents might be unwittingly communicating negative body image messages to their children.
- providing discussion starters that will help parents and carers raise body image issues with their children.

### Educational material

Educational materials could inform parents and carers of how body image dissatisfaction develops and what they can do to encourage their children to develop a positive body image.

Adults of all ages, including parents and carers, may be dissatisfied with their bodies. It may therefore also be beneficial to target body image information directly to parents and carers. For example, children may watch parents' and carers' dieting behaviour. It is important that parents and carers be made aware of the potential impact of this type of behaviour.

### Discussion starters

Brochures, or other material, providing prompts for parents and carers for how they might raise body image issues with children in positive and appropriate ways could be developed.


A less traditional but effective means of starting discussions with older age groups is through shared television shows. It is suggested that Government explore the possibility of liaising with the producers of television soaps to incorporate body image issues within scripts. Parents and carers could also be made aware of the upcoming issue so they could set aside time to watch the show with their child(ren).

### Distribution channels

Many parents and carers welcome information on raising children and are likely to be receptive to information that assists them to promote positive body image messages within their homes. A large part of the challenge is making parents aware of the availability of the information.

Possible outlets for distributing material to parents and carers include:

- parenting websites.
- schools (information nights with reputable speakers, parents and citizens associations).

- 
- play groups and other mother's groups.
  - GP surgeries.
  - relevant government service centres, such as Centrelink and Medicare.
  - parent and guardian based community groups, father's groups and retirees/grandparent groups.

## Maternity based body image concerns

In discussing the need to target materials to address negative body image within families, the Advisory Group is also mindful that pregnancy and giving birth can have a significant impact on a woman's body and her body image. It is suggested that Government explore current efforts that respond to this issue and seek to support or supplement these as appropriate.

Opportunities for promoting positive body image messages to pregnant women and new mothers could include:

- engaging and supporting health professionals (including GPs, obstetricians, nurses in maternal and child health centres) to raise the issue.
- placing positive body image messages and information on baby website

### **13** The National Advisory Group on Body Image recommends that the Australian Government:


- provide appropriate information to parents and carers to assist them in fostering positive body image messages in the home.
- note the impact of maternity on body image and explore the adequacy of current efforts in this area.

## ONLINE

Modern technology gives young people instant contact with their peers. It helps them socialise and becomes part of their persona. It is imperative that technology and online communication are part of the Strategy.

The internet is a challenging environment in which to work effectively. In the first instance, the Government could commission the development of a digital strategy. The aims would include

- reaching young people within the online environment to communicate positive body image messages.
- supporting young people and tackling the issue of cyber bullying as it relates to body image.

- 
- engaging online communities, webpage owners and so on, to encourage appropriate images in the online environment, in line with the Code of Conduct. This could also cover online advertising and 'virtual characters'.

## Digital partnerships

There is a wide range of organisations and individuals that would support the distribution of positive body image messages and resources, for example supportive community groups, blog writers and most magazines have a strong web presence. The Government could partner with these to promote positive body image messages across a wide range of sites.

## Viral messaging

Viral (peer to peer) messages could be a successful way of influencing cultural change in relation to body image, particularly among younger audiences. The success of a viral message campaign is heavily reliant on the quality of the message and its ability to engage the target audience. The Government could facilitate campaigns, for example through existing initiatives such as National Youth Week.

Another opportunity for Government to engage in viral messaging of positive body image content would be to distribute existing messages. One of the best known examples of a viral message that promotes a positive body image is the Dove Evolution video, released as part of its Campaign for Real Beauty (the video can be seen at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iYhCn0jf46U>).

## 14 The National Advisory Group on Body Image recommends that the Australian Government:

- commission the development of a digital strategy to provide a holistic approach to the use of the internet as a means of promoting positive body image messages and resources.
- develop digital partnerships with influential online stakeholders to facilitate the distribution of positive body image messages.
- investigate and engage viral messaging to encourage positive body image.



## WORKPLACES

Employment forms a significant part of most people's lives. Engaging organisations to promote supportive body image workplaces could significantly assist individuals in developing positive body image.

The Advisory Group suggests that Government target workplaces where body image is likely to be a significant issue. For example, organisations:

- that employ a large number of young people.
- where body image is closely related to the industry, for example fashion designers, media organisations, clothing retailers, advertisers and modelling agencies.

Government should seek to ensure that it is simple and cost-effective for employers to consider body image issues in their workplace. This could be done by incorporating body image issues into training and human resource management materials. In particular, body image could be addressed as part of:

- occupational health and safety, bullying, and personal or professional conduct policies.
- induction training where employees could be advised that the work environment supports positive body image.
- manager and supervisor training, including how to support staff who raise body image concerns and where they can refer them for additional assistance.
- customer service training programs for sales staff (particularly in clothing retail outlets), including how to conduct positive body image conversations with customers and respond appropriately to negative body image comments.

The Advisory Group is also aware that Government is developing a Young Workers Toolkit and Code of Conduct with the intention of providing information, protections and otherwise addressing employment issues that are relevant to young workers. The development of these initiatives provides further opportunity for widespread distribution of positive body image messages and anti-bullying and anti-harassment messages, particularly appearance and weight-related teasing.

## 15 The National Advisory Group on Body Image recommends that the Australian Government:

- identify key organisations and industries where body image is likely to be a significant issue.
- engage with these organisations and industries to determine how positive body image policies and training could most effectively be incorporated into their workplaces.
- support organisations to introduce positive body image practices
- consider including body image as an employment issue within the Young Workers Code of Conduct, Toolkit or other supporting information as appropriate.

## COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

The Advisory Group recognises that there are opportunities to support the communication of body image messages through community organisations.

Body image messages need to be tailored to the type of organisation being targeted. Five types of community organisations that would require a unique approach have been identified:

1. sporting organisations
2. organisations involved in the performing arts
3. organisations that are based around activities and leadership development. For example YWCA, YMCA, Duke of Edinburgh, Girl Guides and Scouts.
4. organisations based around issues, for example health and sexuality
5. organisations and communities that support vulnerable young people in our community who might be susceptible to body image pressures.

### Sporting organisations

Encouraging participation in sport is an important aspect for supporting positive body image. Research shows that people who participate in sports are more likely to have a positive view of their body, regardless of their body shape or size. To encourage sporting participation, the Australian Sports Commission should be engaged on the development and dissemination of body




image messages to sporting organisations. Body image messages that are linked to participation in sports include promoting:

- uniforms that make people feel comfortable and not overly self-conscious<sup>3</sup>
- a more diverse range of body shapes and physical characteristics as being appropriate to any particular sport. This message involves cautioning the use of promotions that place too great an emphasis on elite sport, sporting celebrities and iconic sporting images (and bodies) that can lead many to feel they are not suited to that sport
- a wide range of sports and opportunities for exercise can encourage people to find a sport or activity that is enjoyable and fun for them

## The Arts

There can be a significant focus on body shape and size and other physical characteristics in the selection and development of artistic performers. Performers may also feel a sense of objectification from audiences during performances that could give rise to concerns with body image.

The Advisory Group urges the Government to engage with peak bodies to discuss how to strengthen positive body image messages and safeguards that support participants to maintain a healthy body image.

## Leadership and developmental organisations

Given that the purpose of these groups is often to assist in the holistic development of individuals, it is suggested that these organisations will be particularly receptive to, and in many cases already involved in, promoting positive body image messages among those they work with and the broader community.

Often participants of these organisations are school aged. The resources and approaches developed by community organisations for schools could be adapted for use within these settings or vice versa. In some cases, programs could be directly transferrable. For example, the Dove Body Think Program has been used in both schools and Girl Guides, and the YWCA runs a number of body image programs in both schools and the community with school-aged children.

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<sup>3</sup> In 2006 the Environment, Communications, Information Technology and the Arts References Committee conducted an inquiry into women in sport and recreation in Australia. The report *About Time! Women in Sport and Recreation in Australia* stated that: "For many women, dissatisfaction with body shape and appearance peaks during adolescence. It is at this time that many teenage girls are often required to wear school or club sports uniforms that make them feel particularly self-conscious." <[http://www.aph.gov.au/SENATE/COMMITTEE/ecita\\_ctte/completed\\_inquiries/2004-07/womeninsport/report/report.pdf](http://www.aph.gov.au/SENATE/COMMITTEE/ecita_ctte/completed_inquiries/2004-07/womeninsport/report/report.pdf)>, page 30, cited 3 August 2009.



## Issues based organisations

People who become involved in issue based organisations demonstrate a willingness to take action and respond to social issues. Consideration could be given to developing engaging material for these groups that focuses on the social impacts of negative body image and urges them to take action. These may include encouraging participants of these organisations to identify and respond to body image issues through writing to editors and government representatives, or as otherwise identified in the initiatives put forward within the public activism component of this Strategy.

## Other organisations and community groups that provide support to groups facing additional body image challenges

While the Mission Australia Survey of Young Australians has consistently identified body image as one of the top three concerns among young people generally, body image rated as a particularly high concern for young people who are homeless and young Indigenous people.<sup>4</sup> The Advisory Group is also cognisant of the body image pressures faced by people with disability (particularly those with physical disabilities) and other physical disfigurements, such as scarring and burns.

The Government could work with community organisations to support initiatives that address the body image concerns that exist within these identified groups. Existing initiatives should be supported and built upon wherever possible, for example the positive impact that encouraging sports and physical activity can have on young Indigenous people.

### **16** The National Advisory Group on Body Image recommends that the Australian Government:

- work with the Australian Sports Commission and peak sporting bodies to respond to the body image issues raised in the report on the participation of women in sport.
- work with relevant sports and artistic agencies and bodies to support strategies to encourage positive body image.
- work with community groups to provide them with appropriate body image information and messages.

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<sup>4</sup> While body image was identified as the top issue of concern for respondents nationally in 2008 and 2007, and the third top issue in 2006, Indigenous and homeless groups reported markedly higher levels of concern about body image for each of these years.

# ATTACH MENTS

The image features a teal background with several white dashed arcs of varying radii. The text "ATTACHMENTS" is centered in white, with "ATTACH" on the top line and "MENTS" on the bottom line. A small white icon, resembling a speech bubble or a stylized 'A', is positioned between the two lines of text, overlapping the 'A' in "MENTS".



# ATTACHMENT A— VOLUNTARY INDUSTRY CODE OF CONDUCT

Organisations that sign up to this Code of Conduct will abide by the following principles:

## *Positive content and messaging*

Use positive content and messaging to support the development of a positive body image and realistic and healthy physical goals and aspirations among consumers.

## *Diversity*

Use a diverse range of people that are appropriate to their target audience. When considering diversity, particular focus should be given to including a range of body shapes, sizes and ethnicities.

## *Fair placement*

Use advertising that supports positive and healthy body image behaviour. Advertising that contradicts positive body image messages will not be used.

## *Realistic and natural images of people*

Should not use digital technology in a way that alters images of people so that their body shape and features are unrealistic or unattainable through healthy practices.

Make consumers aware of the extent to which images of people have been manipulated.

## *Healthy weight models*

Use models that are clearly of a healthy weight.

## *Appropriate modelling age*

Only use people aged 16 years or older to model adult clothes or to work or model in fashion shows targeting an adult audience.

## *Fashion retailers supporting positive body image*

Stock a wide variety of sizes that reflects demand from customers.



## Guidance for good practice principles

This section provides advice for organisations wishing to support the Code of Conduct.

### ***Principle: Positive content and messaging***

The use of healthy models and positive body image messages more broadly, can result in people feeling less pressure to attain cultural unrealistic ideals of beauty and instead help individuals to develop positive body image and realistic and healthy physical goals and aspirations.

When seeking to demonstrate good practice in positive content and messaging, organisations are encouraged to:

- show a diverse range of body images that represent a diverse view of beauty.
- communicate the importance of being healthy above body shape.
- communicate the holistic value of people, above physical characteristics.

### ***Principle: Diversity***

Broadening our cultural ideals of beauty by using a more diverse range of people within the fashion, advertising and media industries will allow more people to identify with popular images of beauty and help them view their own bodies more positively.

When seeking to demonstrate good practice in diversity, organisations are encouraged to use a wide range of body shapes, sizes and ethnicities that are appropriate to the audience that a message or product is targeting.

### ***Principle: Fair placement***

People who are most vulnerable to negative body image messages are likely to be drawn to editorial content that discusses body image issues.

Fair placement encourages organisations to ensure the messages given by advertising do not contradict the positive body image messages that may be presented in editorial content. Organisations are encouraged to follow body image editorial content with advertising that uses consistently positive messaging.

More specifically, organisations that support good practice in fair placement are encouraged to refrain from following body image editorial content with advertising products or messages that are concerned with:

- rapid weight loss.
- cosmetic surgery that is not medically necessary.

- 
- excessive exercise.
  - promoting negative body image and or are in direct conflict with positive body image messages.

### ***Principle: Realistic and natural images of people***

The use of digitally enhanced images is widespread across many aspects of the fashion, media and advertising industries and is a vehicle for visual expression.

However, this type of technology can also be used to alter images of people so that their body shape and features are no longer realistic or attainable through healthy practices.

When using technology to digitally alter images of people, organisations that support good practice in the use of realistic and natural images of people are encouraged to:


- refrain from enhancing images in a way that changes a person's body shape, for example lengthen a person's legs, carve into their waist or change his or her body size.
- refrain from removing moles, freckles and other permanent distinguishing marks.
- ensure skin tones remain natural and refrain from smoothing over creases and lines.
- ensure that where alterations are made to an image of a person (for example to enhance hair or eye colours) it results in the image remaining as close to natural as possible and will not result in a significant change to the image (except where the intent is to produce an image that is not realistic).
- disclose images that have been retouched.

Digital enhancement also provides opportunities to make consumers aware of the unrealistic nature of some images of people. Where organisations wish to further demonstrate good practice in this area they are encouraged to develop the media literacy of their consumers by making them aware of the extent to which images have been manipulated within a publication and work that goes into taking professional photographs of models.

### **Principle: Healthy weight models**

Modelling implicitly seeks to set an example towards which others might aspire and in choosing a model, organisations can be seen to put that person, including their body shape, forward as an aspirational ideal. In this way the use of models who are very thin (or male models who are excessively muscular) contributes to a beauty ideal within popular culture that can play a causal role in the development of negative body image for some people.

When seeking to demonstrate good practice in their choice of models, organisations are encouraged to use models that are a healthy weight and shape.



For further guidance on what is a healthy weight, organisations are encouraged to refer to the guidelines put forward by the National Health and Medical Research Council, available at:

- [http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/obesityguidelines-guidelines-adults.htm/\\$FILE/adults\\_part3.pdf](http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/obesityguidelines-guidelines-adults.htm/$FILE/adults_part3.pdf) (for adults)
- [http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/obesityguidelines-guidelines-children.htm/\\$FILE/children\\_part2.pdf](http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/obesityguidelines-guidelines-children.htm/$FILE/children_part2.pdf) (for children and adolescents).

All organisations, regardless of whether they support this aspect of the Code, are encouraged to consider the health and wellbeing of models. Where there is concern about the healthy weight of a model, organisations are encouraged to take steps to satisfy themselves the model is healthy before employing them.

### ***Principle: Appropriate modelling age***

Fashion shows, particularly the backstage of catwalks, are often an adult environment and it is possible that children who are in these environments will be exposed to situations that are inappropriate and for which they are ill-equipped.

The growing tendency to use young models whose bodies conform to thin ideals that are often impossible for adult models to attain through healthy behaviours is concerning. This practice is seen as contributing to unhealthy ideals and can encourage unhealthy weight management practices, including by other models.


Organisations that seek to support good practice in the principle of modelling age are encouraged to only:

- employ people aged 16 years or older to work or model in adult catwalk shows.
- use models aged 16 years or older to model adult clothes.

### ***Principle: Fashion retailers supporting positive body image***

As distributors of fashion products directly to the public, fashion retailers have a unique opportunity to promote positive body image messages in a way that responds to the immediate needs of consumers.

Retail organisations that wish to support positive body image are encouraged to stock clothing in a wide variety of sizes that reflect the demand from customers.



# ATTACHMENT B— CHECKLIST FOR BODY IMAGE FRIENDLY SCHOOLS

To provide a body image friendly policy and environment, the school could:

- include a statement in the school mission about providing a body image friendly environment and celebrating diversity.

*A high level statement helps students to identify the relevance of body image to different aspects of their school lives.*

- prohibit appearance-related teasing, including cyber-bullying in school policy.

*This could be done by including a body image specific statement in anti-bullying policies.*

- make body image friendly school and sports uniforms available.

*Schools could consult with students to determine which uniforms they find comfortable. This could be done by consulting with the Student Representative Council (SRC) or by conducting focus groups with interested students (boys and girls).*

- ensure that there is no weighing, measuring or anthropometric assessment of students in any context.

*This is common practice in physical education (PE) classes and sometimes even used in mathematics classes to illustrate a point. It can cause great embarrassment and humiliation to some students.*

- provide an opportunity for all students to engage in regular physical activity in a non-competitive, non-weight-loss focused, safe and secure environment.

*Many students of all sizes do not participate in physical activity due to self-consciousness and fear of ridicule.*

- provide a balance of food options from all food groups in the canteen.

*Healthy food options make healthy eating possible at school.*

- display public material and posters that include a wide diversity of body shapes and sizes and ethnicity.

*Acceptance of diversity should be modelled by the school.*



To ensure teachers and school staff are body image friendly, the school could:

- train all relevant teaching staff in the early identification and referral of serious body image and eating disorders.

*Key teachers could be trained in Mental Health First Aid, including an eating disorder component.*

- provide all teachers with training and information about the impact of body image issues on the wellbeing of young people and ways that body dissatisfaction is reinforced by social environments.

*When staff are aware of factors that promote positive body image or reinforce body dissatisfaction, they are in a stronger position to convey positive body image messages.*

- train teachers to use body friendly language in their interactions with students.

*Teachers are important models for students and their language about their own body image or comments about others can inadvertently communicate negative body image messages to students.*

To ensure the school curricula appropriately teaches students about body image issues, the school could:

- provide developmentally appropriate body image teachings at every year level.

*Primary—positive body image and self-esteem and healthy eating patterns*

*Early high school—peer interventions and media literacy*

*Mid-high school—cognitive dissonance and peer programs*

*Late high school—early identification of body image and eating problems, mental health literacy*

To ensure body image friendly messages are supported by parents, the school could:

- make available up-to-date printed information about how parents can support their child to develop a positive body image.
- provide parents with links to information about body image and eating disorders on the school website.
- present talks and information nights for parents about body image issues.





