



## DATA AND GENERAL INFORMATION ON YOUNG PEOPLE AND BODY IMAGE

"We live in an age where we are surrounded by an image of an ideal body shape, communicated by a constantly evolving media.....Much of what we see is a fusion of reality and fantasy, with many of the images presented to us having been altered or enhanced in some way." (Ms Liberty Sanger, Chair of the Ministerial Media Code of Conduct on Body Image Working Group, Final Report July 2007.)

### Statistics for Females

- Between 70 – 76% of Australian high school girls consistently choose an ideal figure that they wish to have that is thinner than their own.
- Over 50% Australian high school girls have tried to lose weight. Only 16% of young women are happy with their body weight.
- Of healthy weight Australian women, 47% believe they are overweight.
- At least 20% of women who are underweight think that they are overweight and are dieting.
- Less than 25% of Australian women are satisfied with their weight.
- Based on 2001 Australian research, 62% of adolescent girls who are classified as extreme dieters are depressed.
- This same research identified that young adult women who diet frequently are 50% more likely to be depressed than those who do not diet.
- In adolescent girls, extreme dieters are 18 times more likely to develop symptoms of eating disorders than non-dieters.
- At any one time, 8% of 15 year old females are on a diet, and of these 8% are severely dieting.
- Eating disorders affect about 5% of the female population in Australia.
- Anorexia nervosa is the third most common chronic illness for teenage girls in Australia. The average time that someone suffers from anorexia is five years.

### Statistics for Males

- Increasingly body image concerns males as well as females, particularly boys. Based on research undertaken in Australia in 2000 body dissatisfaction in males, results in body dysmorphic disorder.
- In one study of adolescent boys, a third wished to be thinner while over a third wanted to be larger.
- 24% of healthy weight men believe they are overweight.
- At any one time 17% of men are on some sort of diet.
- One in ten anorexic sufferers is now male and recent research indicates that this figure is an underestimation.

## General Information

- "We are numb as an industry - we are so used to looking at models on the catwalks as clothes hangers that we fail to see whether they are healthy or not. One of the major worries is that the fashion industry sees thin and emaciated as "edgy" or cool. In an ideal world, models would be size 12." (Caryn Franklin, UK Fashion Writer and Broadcaster).
- "Instead of banning size zero from the catwalks why don't we ban size zero from the front row?" (Kathyn Carter-Allen, UK Model Agent).
- "Fashion colleges are becoming focused on the issue of model health, and education can play a major role in developing designers' awareness of a healthy aesthetic. We have an opportunity for change that we should grasp." (Professor Wendy Dagworthy, UK Model Health Inquiry panel member).
- Anxiety, depression; obsessive behaviour; social isolation; irritability; suicidal tendencies; eating disorders including anorexia nervosa, bulimia, excessive dieting; lack of assertiveness; guilt; self-dislike; and impairment at school are all symptoms of the affects of negative body image in young people.
- Eating disorders are most commonly experienced by adolescent females and young women, but also occur in males, people of all ages and across all socio-economic and cultural backgrounds, as evidenced by research undertaken by the University of Queensland in 2000.
- This same research found that eating disorders have been diagnosed in children as young as 8 with an average age of onset at 17 years.
- Onset of anorexia is generally in adolescence, with bulimia and binge eating more likely to first occur in late adolescence or early adulthood.
- The long-term nature of these disorders means that many people carry these conditions well into adulthood.
- In the National Youth survey by Mission Australia, body image was ranked as the top concern for Victorian girls aged 15 to 19.
- If a child watches the average for an Australian child viewer, of two and a half hours per day of TV and if this is mainly commercial TV he or she will see around 75 advertisements in a day, or around 22,000 per year.
- Girls in early adolescence are particularly vulnerable to messages about being OK as they are sensitive about their body image and whether they measure up to the peer group.
- There is a marked link between TV watching and negative body and eating disorders.
- Television advertising featuring idealised thinness negatively affected both the mood and the body image of adolescent girls, with those in the 13–15 year age group being more affected.
- "I was left wondering how models feel being cropped, coloured and trimmed down for pictures. Do they feel depressed thinking that they are not beautiful enough to be pictured in magazines looking natural and real?" (Barbie and Ken VS Me, Positive Body Image 2007 project)

**For further background information, please refer to the Report of the Media Code of Conduct on Body Image Working Group, Melbourne 2007.**