

Media Release

NO DIET DAY

On this international 'No-Diet Day', Dr Rob Moodie, CEO of VicHealth urges all Australians to celebrate the beauty and diversity of our natural sizes.

"It is discouraging that still today people face discrimination on the basis of their size and appearance. Research findings published in latest edition of the *Health Promotion Journal of Australia* show support for the link between body image and mental health."

"Discrimination and bullying creates mental distress by diminishing self-confidence and making people feel they don't conform to what is accepted by society. There is a clear link between discrimination and lower self-esteem, social isolation, depression and anxiety, drug and alcohol misuse and suicidal tendencies."

"Likewise dissatisfaction with ones appearance and weight related discrimination can lead to eating disorders, depression, anxiety and self-esteem problems."

Research shows that people need to feel included and feel pressure to fit in with others. Discrimination and bullying creates mental distress by diminishing self-confidence and making people feel they don't fit in.

In 1999, VicHealth committed \$4.6 million to implement its *Mental Health Promotion Plan* to help address discrimination. Evidence confirms that mental health is linked to social and community connections, participating in supportive relationships, freedom from discrimination and having a valued social position.

Dr Moodie states that one of the *Plan's* key themes is the value of diversity and the importance of challenging discrimination.

"I think the evidence clearly reinforces the impacts discrimination has on our society. People who are victimised are three times more likely to be at risk of having depressive symptoms. I also think it should be clear that discrimination has no place in our communities."

"Why should we all look the same? Should we not be celebrating our diversity? Why should people be made to feel bad for their size? The important message for this day is that happy and healthy individuals come in all shapes and sizes. The ugly face of discrimination does not have a place in our society and I urge all Australians to challenge social attitudes and discrimination on the basis of size and appearance."

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