

# Voluntary Media Code of Conduct on **Body Image**



## Report from the Media Code of Conduct on Body Image Working Group

Melbourne, 2007

**REPORT OF THE MEDIA CODE OF CONDUCT ON  
BODY IMAGE WORKING GROUP**

**Melbourne, July 2007**

# Contents

<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<i>Chair of the Media Code of Conduct on Body Image Working Group</i> .....	
<b>2. Media Code of Conduct on Body Image Working Group</b> .....	<b>5</b>
2.1. <i>Terms of Reference</i> .....	5
2.2. <i>Membership</i> .....	5
<b>3. Summary of findings and recommendations</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>4. The case for action</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>5. Research outcomes</b> .....	<b>10</b>
5.1 <i>Methodology</i> .....	10
5.2 <i>Relevant media codes</i> .....	11
5.3 <i>Relevant advertising codes</i> .....	12
5.4 <i>Relevant fashion codes</i> .....	13
<b>6. Findings about developing a code</b> .....	<b>15</b>
<b>7. Options for progression of a code</b> .....	<b>17</b>
7.1 <i>Option 1: One new code</i> .....	17
7.2 <i>Option 2: Three new codes</i> .....	18
7.3 <i>Option 3: Insertion of clauses within existing codes</i> .....	18
<b>8. Development of the code</b> .....	<b>19</b>
8.1 <i>Digital alteration</i> .....	19
8.2 <i>Diversity of body image in editorial content and advertisements</i> .....	20
8.3 <i>Body Mass Index (BMI) as one measure of weight and health</i> .....	20
8.4 <i>Additional considerations for inclusion in the code</i> .....	21
8.5 <i>Code content</i> .....	21
<b>9. Current programs and initiatives</b> .....	<b>22</b>
<b>10. Next steps</b> .....	<b>24</b>
10.1 <i>Milestone activities leading up to the release of a code</i> .....	24
10.2 <i>A stakeholder-centric engagement and education campaign</i> .....	24
10.3 <i>A youth-focused education campaign</i> .....	25
10.4 <i>A public campaign to raise awareness of the development and launch of the Media Code of Conduct on Body Image and supporting initiatives</i> .....	26
10.5 <i>Establishment of strategic alliances and partnerships</i> .....	27

## **1. Introduction**

It is with great pleasure that I deliver this report of the work of the Media Code of Conduct on Body Image Working Group to the Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs, the Hon James Merlino, MP.

We live in an age where we are surrounded by an image of an ideal body shape, communicated by a constantly evolving media. The process of developing that image is often a theatrical and artistic one, designed to convey a particular message or mood.

However the representation of fashionable beauty is limited. There is a relentless pursuit of a narrow idealised body shape portrayed as the only perfect and worthy shape by the presenting 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.

After considering the available material, the Working Group has formed the view that most media consumers are unaware of this, and instead compare their own body shape to the frequently altered body shape they view in the media, regarding the altered body shape as the desirable standard to which they should aspire.

One of the consequences of this is for people, particularly young people, to desire body shapes that are simply unrealistic and unobtainable. This in turn can lead to poor self-esteem. For some young people, this can have dire consequences, including psychological damage and the development of eating disorders.

The Working Group believes that one of the ways to address this is to both educate the public to recognise that the body shapes presented to them may have been altered (in some cases dramatically) and should not be thought of as obtainable, and to encourage those responsible for presenting the images to disclose that the images have been altered.

It is not intended that this will inhibit or curtail the creative process: rather it is hoped that disclosure will lead the media consumer to view and appreciate these images for their artistic value rather than a standard to be taken as the norm.

Another issue considered by the Working Group was the use of unhealthy models by the fashion industry. There is no doubt this is an issue, and the Working Group is strongly of the view that the use and promotion of unhealthy models is of grave concern. There is still work to be done regarding the appropriate standard(s) to be employed in determining which models are healthy and which are not.

The Working Group has been comprised of dedicated people from the media, fashion and advertising industries. Their views and insights have ensured that the Working Group has provided you with some practical responses to the matters raised by the Terms of Reference. I am very grateful for the contributions made by all members of the Working Group and take this opportunity to thank them for their hard work.

We have been supported in our task by research undertaken by The Reputation Group. Their thorough investigation, analysis and presentation enabled the Working Group to quickly gather the information and make informed and considered findings and recommendations.

It is with great pride that I commend this report to you and trust it will assist in your endeavours to promote a healthy body image for all Victorians.

**Liberty Sanger**  
**Chairperson**  
**Media Code of Conduct on Body Image Working Group**  
**July 2007**

## **2. Media Code of Conduct on Body Image Working Group**

In response to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Issues Relating to the Development of Body Image Among Young People and Associated Effects on their Health and Wellbeing, the Minister for Youth Affairs was tasked with establishing a Media Code of Conduct on Body Image Working Group.

The 2005 Parliamentary Inquiry recommended that a code of conduct for the media industry be developed, recognising the media's social responsibility to display images that are representative of the community. The Inquiry further recommended that this be developed in consultation with advertisers, media owners and government; such consultation should involve discussions and negotiations between federal, state and territory governments and between the federal government and industry. The Working Group first met in October 2006.

### **2.1 Terms of Reference**

The Working Group was asked to:

- Provide advice to the Minister for Employment and Youth Affairs on the role the media can play in the responsible portrayal to young people of body image.
- Build on the findings of the Parliamentary Inquiry, which has gathered research, interviews and written submissions from experts and the community, including young people, opinion leaders, the media and fashion industries.
- Identify opportunities for extending or initiating effective partnerships with the media and fashion industries that promote positive body image messages for young people.

Specifically the Working Group was to provide advice to the Minister on:

- How current media and advertising codes may be enhanced, with reference to the inclusion of a variety of body shapes and sizes, encouraging less focus on stories based around body shape and size, and the use of a warning system for digitally altered images.
- Effective and practical strategies to promote positive messages in the media about body image and self esteem in young people.

### **2.2 Membership**

Members on the Working Group come from a diverse range of experiences and disciplines, including representation from young people, the media, fashion, advertising, writers and journalists.

#### **Ms Liberty Sanger, Chair**

Partner, Maurice Blackburn Cashman Solicitors

#### **Ms Oz Ozturk**

Presenter, *SYNFM* - Student Youth Network

**Ms Janice Breen Burns**

Fashion Editor, *The Age*

**Mr David Tredinnick**

Actor, journalist and writer

**Ms Karen Webster**

Director, *L'Oréal Melbourne Fashion Festival*

**Mr Collin Segelov**

Executive Director, Australian Association of National Advertisers

**Ms Louise Connor**

Victoria Branch Secretary, Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance

**Ms Kerry Wells**

Former fashion editor and model; commentator and writer

**Ms Erica Cervini**

Lecturer Journalism, RMIT

**Ms Claire Vickery**

CEO, The Butterfly Foundation

**Ms Zoë Edquist**

General Manager, Australian Fashion Council

### **3. Summary of findings and recommendations**

#### **The Media Code of Conduct on Body Image Working Group found that:**

- There is widespread recognition for greater media literacy education for young people and there is general acceptance in the community that Government can take the lead on this.
- There is a reasonable level of acceptance in the media industry that there is a social imperative to do something about the promotion of positive body images and that there is more to be done, although the “case for action” still requires development. Put simply, we can not simply put it on the media industry to solve, without changing the hearts and minds of consumers.
- The case for action can be articulated as a business case explaining a commercial imperative involved in having a successful code that is seen as “neutral” so that as many vested interests as possible can be enlisted rather than a code that is seen as vague and appear to be “all things to all people”. Again, more work is required to convince stakeholders and for this a wider engagement is essential.
- There is a significant level of consensus that there are a number of tasks to be undertaken prior to the drafting and introducing a media code of conduct.

- To ensure its success, the code needs to be supported from the outset by a social awareness campaign underpinned by media - specific initiatives.
- There is a need to work up to the bigger aspects of this issue, such as high-end fashion, given international pressures on designers and fashion shows.
- There are some outstanding issues that require further discussion, such as:
  - What mechanisms will be put in place to support the code;
  - How self regulation will work;
  - How the code will be monitored; and
  - What the benefits and consequences are for those who participate/sign up.

**The Media Code of Conduct on Body Image Working Group recommends that:**

1. One new code is developed rather than inserting a reference into existing codes across different areas of the media (fashion, media, and advertising).
2. The code needs to:
  - Encourage healthy portrayals of body image rather than lay blame.
  - Be embraced by a wide range of stakeholders.
  - Be promoted from within industry.
  - Be realistic in intent with achievable aims.
3. The code should be a voluntary one, with an emphasis on "signing up" to the code.
4. The code should provide practical examples and guidelines for the promotion of positive body images for magazine and newspaper journalists."
5. There needs to be a dedicated group, that is, an alliance or coalition of industry stakeholders (this may be the same as the Working Group but not necessarily) formed to draft, present, support and speak publicly about the code at the time of its publication.
6. The preference for self regulatory and voluntary means that there must be well-defined benefits for committing to the code and then the removal of these benefits will be seen as a negative on commercial and social responsibility levels.
7. The benefits of being a participant signatory would be emphasised and the consequences of not complying as a signatory needs to be identified and explained.
8. Work needs to be undertaken to identify "champions" who can support the code.

## 4. The case for action

The case for action for a media code of conduct was made in the report of the Parliamentary Inquiry into Body Image. The specific media code of conduct recommendation was based on a significant level of evidence that demonstrates that images promoted by the media, advertising and the fashion industry can affect the way young people feel about themselves.

This evidence states:

- In the 2006 National Youth survey by Mission Australia, body image was ranked as one of the top five concerns for Victorian girls aged 15 to 19, alongside suicide, physical/sexual abuse, depression and bullying.
- The 2003 Young Media Australia fact sheet provides the following statistics on the effect of advertising on children's (including adolescents) body image:
  - If a child watches the average of two and a half hours per day (the average for an Australian child) and if this is mainly commercial TV he or she will see around 75 advertisements in a day, or around 22,000 per year.
- Advertising often works by making us feel unhappy with our lives, anxious and dissatisfied. The messages are that you are not OK unless you buy this, wear that brand, wash your hair with, and look like that very slim model. It attacks our self esteem.
- Current *Marie Claire* magazine Editor Jackie Frank sees the modelling industry's desire to use very young models (from 12 years old) and the constant travel as; (It can be)' a frightening and isolating experience for teenagers at a time when they are coming to terms with self-image.'
- 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.
- Recent research indicates that there is a causal link between TV watching, and negative body and eating disorders.
- Two studies at South Australia's Flinders University have shown that television advertising featuring idealized 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. (Hargreaves, D. in Flinders Journal, 2002).
- A reporter for youthcentral in September 2006 discusses a body image survey conducted by *Girlfriend* magazine in June 2005 which found that one in two Australian teenage girls have dieted and more than half are unhappy with their bodies.
- The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) report on the health of young people aged 12-24 years shows that eating disorders and mental health problems are some of the leading causes of burden of disease in young women. Of all women, teenagers and young women are most likely to develop disordered eating patterns, although as already stated, estimates of the prevalence of eating disorders (2.2 percent) are far below the prevalence of body dissatisfaction.

- Academic Susan Burns writes on 'Young Girls and Body Image', in particular she examines how impressionable the youth are and the role that parents play, asserting that: "It is interesting to note that these reasons are often cited by adults as a basis for dieting suggesting that children internalise the actions of adults and reflect it in their own behaviours. When a group of 12-year olds was asked where they first heard about the concept of dieting, 77% heard about dieting from a family member, usually a parent (*Disorders* 27 (2000):80). Parents and family members have the highest impact on children, particularly girls; "a daughter's eating behaviour may command greater attention than that of a son due to the importance placed on women being thin in...society" (Influence in Young Children, *British Journal of Health Psychology* 8 (2003): 135).
- In terms of parental modelling, a mother's own level of body dissatisfaction and associated weight loss behaviours has been found to be directly related to daughters' self image.
- Research conducted by Professor Susan Paxton from the School of Psychological Science at LaTrobe University a leading expert in the areas of body image and eating disorders especially as related to young people, examined the role media plays in adolescent girls' body dissatisfaction, and consequently explored the relationship between body satisfaction and self-esteem. The study raises the vital question of how children at such a young age learn about the 'thin ideal' and found:
  - Perception of peer's desire for thinness was temporally antecedent to girls' desire for thinness, appearance satisfaction, and self-esteem.
  - The watching of appearance-focused television programs was temporally antecedent to appearance satisfaction.
  - Girls' desire for thinness was found to temporally precede low self-esteem. Professor Paxton's 1991 study of boys found that  $\frac{1}{3}$  wished to be thinner while over  $\frac{1}{3}$  desired to be larger and that gyms are high risk environments for adolescent boys.
- Research conducted by Professor Marita McCabe and Dr Lina Ricciardelli, from Deakin University looked at body image related to boys and health risk behaviours including the use of steroids. They found that between  $\frac{1}{5}$  and  $\frac{1}{3}$  of adolescent boys:
  - Would like to be slim and muscular.
  - Are using exercise to bulk up.
  - Would like access to/like to use body enhancing drugs – but they are not readily available (as much as in the USA).
  - Are using food supplements.
- Teenage boys and girls as well as young men and women are affected by images and stories on body image in the media.
- Generally however, girls seem to be more affected by body image than boys. "Focus on Women" (Commonwealth Office of the Status of Women, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, Issue 6 2003) looked at the issue of body image and risk taking behaviours. Girls are more likely than boys to compare themselves to others and to rate themselves more

negatively in comparison to boys. This observation is supported by the statistics cited above from the Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health that reported levels of body image dissatisfaction between 40 percent and 82 percent of women aged 18-23 years.

## 5. Research outcomes

### 5.1 Methodology

The Reputation Group was contracted to provide strategic advice to the Victorian Government through a comprehensive analysis of existing codes of practice/conduct that relate directly or indirectly to the representation of body images in the media (print, TV, radio, electronic, digital, mobile).

The research considered relevant state, national and international media, advertising and fashion industries' codes of practice in order to provide a basis for the development of a media code of conduct on body image for young people.

Opportunities are identified to engage the media, advertising and fashion industries in the promotion of more diverse body images. This will enable greater awareness of "all shapes and sizes" so that young people can have healthier responses to images portrayed in the media.

The outcome of this research was to provide strategic advice to assist the Media Code of Conduct on Body Image Working Group to review what currently exists and consider opportunities for how these existing codes can work more effectively to promote positive body images for young people.

The Reputation Group research:

- Reviewed and analysed existing codes of practice/conduct that relate directly or indirectly to the representation of body images in the media. For example Australian Journalists Association and the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance), professional health bodies (such as the Australian Medical Association and the Royal Australasian College of Physicians), sporting associations, youth organisations, community services and agencies (for example the Eating Disorders Foundation of Victoria and Youth Media Australia), and the private sector (for example the Weight Management Code of Practice).
- Identified options for a media code of conduct that would be voluntary, not regulatory.
- Considered and discussed opportunities for partnerships in the media industries (media, advertising, fashion) to promote positive body image messages to young people. Related initiatives such as:
  - The Victorian Government's *Fad Diets Won't Work* social awareness campaign, whose report of outcomes identifies young people's response to the messages of this campaign that includes an analysis of responses from young women and young men to the campaign's messages about fad dieting.
  - The Victorian Government's Office for Youth online survey about body image and the media conducted during 2006.

- National initiatives such as the recent advertising code released in Canberra in October 2006, which is the first in the world to meet criteria set down by the International Chamber of Commerce in its responsible advertising framework.
- International developments including the recent international media coverage from Italy (Milan) and Spain (Madrid) about a mandated approach to the size of fashion models to be used in fashion shows.
- Related media responses, for example to reporting mental health and suicide such as described at [www.mindframe-media.info](http://www.mindframe-media.info); as well as other proposals canvassed by the community through the 2005 Parliamentary Inquiry.

## **5.2 Relevant media codes**

A code is often effective or successful due to its length of time in practice. Codes that have been around longer than others are often more credible and more closely followed simply because they have had more time to be understood and adhered to. It is important to note that a code being compulsory or voluntary also plays a part in its effectiveness.

The Australian Journalists Association (AJA) is part of the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance (MEAA) and both have the same Code of Ethics. In terms of relevance to the proposed Code, the clauses are fairly broad and somewhat vague in parts. Most refer to conflicting interests and objective reporting, but the following clauses have pertinence:

- Report and interpret honestly, striving for accuracy, fairness and disclosure of all essential facts. Do not suppress relevant available facts, or give distorting emphasis. Do your utmost to give a fair opportunity for reply.
- Do not place unnecessary emphasis on personal characteristics, including race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, age, sexual orientation, family relationships, religious belief, or physical or intellectual disability.
- Do not allow advertising or other commercial considerations to undermine accuracy, fairness or independence.
- Present pictures and sound which are true and accurate. Any manipulation likely to mislead should be disclosed.

These particular clauses are relevant to digitally-altered or airbrushed images which are not an accurate representation of truth, and are, in some instances, grossly distorted to make the model even thinner than they are in reality. It is impossible for the average person to distinguish what is real from what is a heavily synthesized image, far beyond the reach of mere mortals.

For young people, not properly educated about or cognisant of the extent to which magazine and electronic media images are manipulated, these false images may lead to unrealistic expectations about their own bodies. Indeed, it is impossible for anyone to ascertain what is real and, as such, the images may be classified as dishonest and manipulative. Disclosing the use of such altering techniques would be one way to improve transparency, although the best option would be not to alter images in the first place.

The Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) is responsible for the regulation of broadcasting, radio communications, telecommunications and online content. The ACMA is relevant to our investigations in so far as it provides a self-regulatory content assessment regime, which may be useful in modelling a voluntary code of conduct.

The Commercial Television Industry Code of Practice states in clause 1.1.2 that viewers should be 'assisted in making informed choices about their own and their children's television viewing.' This may have relevance to the proposed Code by recommending the provision of 'tools', such as warnings or disclosure clauses, to help people make a balanced appraisal of portrayal of models/celebrities on television.

This code also covers in detail the idea of handling complaints. It raises the idea that people should be allowed to make complaints related to areas in which they feel ill – informed or deceived. We might therefore consider enlisting the public to 'report' negative body images shown on television programs or advertisements as well as series or documentaries that aim to illicit body dissatisfaction amongst viewers.

### **5.3 Relevant advertising codes**

The Australian Association of National Advertisers (AANA) Code of Ethics (clause 1.2) states that advertisements shall not be misleading or deceptive or be likely to mislead or deceive. More specifically, the AANA's Code for Advertising to Children states that advertisements to children (defined as those less than 14 years old) must not mislead or deceive children. The words 'mislead' and 'deceive' could be linked to the common practice by fashion magazines of airbrushing and/or digitally altering models. This 'unattainable beauty', as it is referred to in much of the research, is misleading for youth and in some instances may be partly responsible for undue body fixation and eating disorders.

Marketing to children is recognised by the World Federation of Advertisers (WFA) (of which the AANA is an active member) and by the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) as deserving special care and attention. While argument continues around the world about the age at which children can reasonably be expected to separate advertising from media entertainment, there is increasing support for erring on the side of caution.

Similarly, the WFA, the ICC and the AANA are generally supportive of a conservative approach to advertising directed at older children, i.e. adolescents. It is a viewpoint that was further considered at this year's annual conference of the World Federation of Advertisers, held in Paris in May.

To date, the front-running actions and reactions of Australian marketers in response to the global obesity issue have gained congratulatory comment from several other countries where anti-advertising and marketing interests have received wider attention. The new AANA Food and Beverages Marketing Communications Code has gained positive comment from the World Health Organisation for attempting to reach beyond the principles drafted by the International Chamber of Commerce.

Such protective measures may be similarly applied to the portrayal of body image in the media with respect to its effect upon children and adolescents. It

is increasingly common for young children (as well as adolescents) to read/buy fashion magazines, and it also at this age that they are especially impressionable. However, the proposed Code should also be concerned for the effect of negative body images used in advertising on a wider consumer audience, especially vulnerable groups who fall outside the strict definition of 'child' or 'adolescent'. Perhaps the emphasis should be on protecting those audiences who are particularly vulnerable or impressionable, whether it is due to age, peer group, risk profiles, or psychological states.

There is also a clause in the AANA Code for Advertising to Children (2.10.1) that states that advertisements to children should not encourage or promote an inactive lifestyle combined with unhealthy eating or drinking habits. This clause would have been devised in response to the obesity epidemic in children, yet the idea could equally be adapted to address issues of undue body fixation and associated negative behaviours.

#### **5.4 Relevant fashion codes**

Following the deaths due to starvation of Uruguayan and Brazilian models (sisters, Luisel and Eliana Ramos, and Ana Carolina Reston) fashion show organisers in Madrid banned models with a BMI less than 18. Italy followed suit with The Chamber of Fashion in Milan requiring that models hold a license issued by a committee of city officials and a panel of doctors, nutritionists, psychologists and other experts.

Other countries were less prescriptive, issuing 'guidelines' aimed at promoting healthier behaviours. For example, the Council of Fashion Designers of America introduced the following guidelines in time for New York Fashion Week held in February:

- Keep models under 16 off the runway and don't allow models under 18 to work at fittings or photo shoots past midnight.
- Educate those in the industry to identify the early warning signs of eating disorders.
- Require models identified as having an eating disorder to receive professional help and only allow those models to continue with approval from that professional.
- Develop workshops on the causes and effects of eating disorders, and raise awareness of the effects of smoking and tobacco-related disease.
- During fashion shows, provide healthy meals and snacks, while prohibiting smoking and alcohol.

In January 2007, The British Fashion Council (BFC) launched an inquiry into model health. Guidelines will be drawn up by September 2007 in time for London Fashion Week (LFW). The inquiry will examine steps to ensure the good health of LFW models and will make recommendations that will not be binding but are likely to prove influential. In the lead-up to London Fashion Week in February 2007, the British Fashion Council wrote to designers asking them to use only healthy looking models over 16 years old. It stated that it would not impose a ban on underweight models. Instead, the BFC asked designers, model agencies and image-makers to 'respect their responsibility' and promote healthy body images but stated that 'regulation is neither desirable nor enforceable'.

In Australia, no official guidelines have been developed to govern the use of 'skinny' models.

In the United States, the Academy of Eating Disorders Board recently asked their Prevention Special Interest Group to develop guidelines to assist the fashion industry with taking appropriate measures to protect the health and wellbeing of models. These proposed guidelines were presented to the media, the Council of Fashion Designers of America (CFDA), fashion magazines and designers across several countries in five languages. The guidelines are listed below:

1. Adoption of an age threshold requiring that models be at least 16 years of age so as to reduce the pressure that adolescent girls feel to conform to the ultra-thin standard of female beauty.
2. For women and men over the age of 18, adoption of a minimum body mass index threshold of 18.5 kg/m<sup>2</sup>, (e.g., a female model who is 5' 9" [1.75m] must weigh more than 126 pounds [56.6 kg]) which recognizes that weight below this is considered underweight by the World Health Organisation.
3. For female and male models between the ages of 16 and 18, adoption of a minimum body mass index for age and sex equivalent to the 10th BMI percentile for age and sex (weight below this is considered underweight by the Centers for Disease Control). For example, applying this criterion to a 16 year old female model, the minimum required body mass index would be 17.4 kg/m<sup>2</sup>, for a male model 17.7 kg/m<sup>2</sup>. A 16 year old female model who is 5' 9"[1.75 m] must weigh more than 118 pounds [53.3 kg].
4. Adoption of an independent medical certification affirming that students who are aspiring models do not suffer from an eating disorder and/or related medical complications.
5. Development of action steps to identify models in need of intervention and appropriate and sensitive procedures for detection and referral.
6. Discouragement of all non-healthy weight control behaviours throughout the industry (e.g., self-induced vomiting, use of laxatives, diuretics and diet pills).
7. Increased educational initiatives aimed at student models and professional models, their agents and employers to reduce the multiple health risks of various unhealthy weight control behaviours.
8. Provision of educational initiatives aimed at aspiring and working student models, professional models, their agents and employers to raise awareness of the multiple health risks of low weight and restricted nutritional intake. These health risks include irregularity or cessation of menses, bradycardia (low heart rate)/irregular heart beat, electrolyte imbalances, dizziness/fainting spells, sudden cardiac death and long-term health complications including osteoporosis, depression, and reproductive complications.
9. Increased communication with advertising agencies to encourage the use of age - appropriate, realistic models in ad campaigns and reduction of unrealistic computer enhancement in pre-teen and adolescent advertising campaigns.

10. An overall ban of the use of photographic manipulation techniques that artificially slim images of fashion models throughout the entire fashion industry.
11. Inclusion of models of varying weights and body types on both the catwalk and in fashion magazines so that these images - and the message that women and men of differing body types can look good in a variety of fashions - become part of our collective view of what constitutes beauty.
12. Promotion of awareness in students, models, and the general public about advertising industry tactics, such as computer enhancement, used to falsify the appearance and actual size of models used in advertising.
13. Collaboration with politicians, stakeholders, and eating disorder organisations to develop ethical self-regulatory codes for the fashion industry.
14. Collaboration with politicians, stakeholders, and eating disorder organisations in widening the availability and affordability of effective eating disorders treatment, which must be made readily available to people in the fashion industry.

There is significant debate continuing in relation to the BMI approach to regulating the use of overly thin models on catwalks. The fashion and modelling industries are generally against BMI cut-offs, arguing that some models are just naturally thin and even thought they are healthy. The opposing view, expounded by governments and health officials is that the BMI scale (as devised by the World Health Organisation) is a good measure for models aged 18 and above. There is recognition however that BMI as a stand alone measure of weight and health risk is not perfect.

There seems to be two distinct issues emerging. Firstly, concern for models' health in the wake of recent deaths due to starvation. Secondly, there is the much wider issue of body image, as concerns the Office for Youth, and how the use of 'skinny' models or even just very slim models is impacting on the self-esteem of young people.

## **6. Findings about developing a code**

Key issues identified in the research and discussed by the Working Group:

- How to make a voluntary code effective, respected and sought after as a 'badge of honour' for industry groups and commercial companies.
- The need for a commercial imperative for industry to sign up as there is much resistance, from the media especially, to regulation or coercion.
- Not only should the code be based on a thorough, considered and learned understanding of the issues, but it should also be universal enough to apply to different stakeholders and their different, often conflicting, points of interest. At the same time, the code must not be vague or too broad and must keep foremost the needs of the end audience whose lives it aims to improve.

- Acknowledgement that the status quo is strong and fairly entrenched. Although our analysis of media coverage shows there is a glimmer of hope with magazines such as *Girlfriend* displaying a disclosure 'sticker' on the cover, alerting readers to the fact that their models have been 'photo-shopped', there is general resistance to more dramatic change. Diversity is the latest buzz word but it is highly unlikely, from our assessment of attitudes by prominent designers and the higher end of the fashion industry, that models will ever be less than thin compared to the average person.

The view of the fashion industry is that they deal in 'fantasy' and women buy magazines to indulge in this almost voyeuristic fascination for the unattainable. Perhaps they have a point but the fact remains that a significant body of research shows a direct link (albeit short-term) between body dissatisfaction and the viewing of idealised images of perfection as seen in fashion magazines.

In this way, education must be central to any campaign to remedy the current negative impact on young people's self-esteem. If armed with the 'tools' to make informed, objective opinions about the level of image manipulation at play, then the situation may improve. Although this is true, as evidenced by the success of educational campaigns such as the *BodyThink* community education program and *My Body My Life*, we have observed 'education' as an easy 'out' for stakeholders reluctant to change their practices.

At the same time, there will always be members of the community, such as young women, who are particularly sensitive to constructed images of perfection and it is with these individuals in mind that a code should be developed.

Based on the stakeholder discussions held as part of the consultation process, the following key findings are reported:

1. An acceptance that more action on promotion of positive body image needs to be taken.
2. A need for increased media literacy education for young people.
3. General support for the development of one code across the fashion, media and advertising industries.

A Code needs to:

- Encourage healthy portrayals of body image rather than lay blame.
- Be embraced by a wide range of stakeholders.
- Be promoted from within industry.
- Be realistic in intent with achievable aims.
- State the commercial imperative.

## **7. Options for progression of a code**

As a starting point, it is worth identifying the key determinants of success, regardless of the final content of the code.

These should be:

- Efficacy and industry recognition/respect.
- The establishment of a 'commercial imperative' for signing up to the code, that is, stakeholders should feel that to not conform is bad for business.
- Wording which is never vague or ambiguous.
- Clauses which are succinct, use plain language and pertinent, if possible, to all stakeholders.

Based on feedback from stakeholder consultations, it is strongly recommended that the code is voluntary, with a preference for it to be led by industry, rather than driven exclusively by Government. For the purposes of these suggested options, any proposed Code will be considered voluntary and that potential partners will, in most cases, provide strategic support for the Code via their own existing programs or new initiatives developed jointly with the Office for Youth. Any partnerships for the Code will be most valuable when these partners are already seen as a credible source of knowledge and experience on the topic of body image.

The code should also be applicable across Australia as the stakeholder groups within the media, advertising and fashion industries operate at a national level, rather than just within Victoria.

In essence, the options listed reflect the varying attitudes and interests recorded during the stakeholder consultations. At one end of the spectrum, there is a desire to effect immediate, wide-spread change motivated by a genuine concern for young people and the impact negative body images, such as very thin female models or overly muscle-bound depictions of the male form, are having on the self-esteem levels of young people.

At the same time, the predominant standpoint shared by media and advertising stakeholders is against censorship and the restriction of what they view as their intrinsic rights and freedoms. In light of these differing views, a range of options have been presented:

### **7.1 Option 1: One new code**

Based on research and stakeholder consultations, this is the preferred option for the following reasons:

- The body image issue impacts upon all three stakeholder groups (fashion, media and advertising) and so should be addressed via one code.
- One code will attract more interest and present a united approach to tackling negative body images.
- One code is easier to administer and apply.
- One code allows for all three stakeholder groups to discuss the issue and reach some point of consensus.

However, there are some disadvantages to having only one code:

- It requires 'buy in' from all stakeholder groups and this may be difficult given the range of interests involved.
- It may not be possible to be as specific as desired given the need to make clauses applicable to a number of stakeholder interests.

## **7.2 Option 2: Three new codes**

The other option is for the Office for Youth to lead the development of three separate codes, one for each of the stakeholder groups. This has the following advantages:

- Each code can be customised to address the specific stakeholder. For example, a code purely aimed at the fashion industry could look at the use of skinny models by designers and the recruitment practices of modelling agencies and the manufacture of small sample sizes for catwalk shows.
- Customised Codes may be more effective since they would be more targeted and less universal, and meet the specific needs of each group.

However, there are disadvantages as well:

- Separate codes will not make such an impact in terms of gaining media attention and public awareness for the problem of negative body images.
- Since there would be no requirement to reach a consensus across stakeholder industries, separate codes may not achieve the same end result as one consolidated effort for change.
- Three codes may result in more administration.
- It is also worth noting that there is significant crossover between the stakeholder groups.

## **7.3 Option 3: Insertion of clauses within existing codes**

Existing codes regulating the advertising, media and fashion industries were reviewed.

For example, advertisers subscribe to the voluntary Australian Association of National Advertisers (AANA) Code of Ethics. There is also the AANA's Code for Advertising to Children and the AANA Food and Beverages Marketing Communications Code.

The media is regulated, again voluntarily, by the Australian Journalists Association's (AJA) Code of Ethics. There is also the ACMA (Australian Communications and Media Authority), which provides a self-regulatory assessment regime for broadcast and online media, as well as the Commercial Television Industry Code of Practice, which mostly handles public complaints.

There is no specific code related to the Australian fashion industry. There is, however, FairWear, the Homeworkers Code of Practice which aims to regulate and monitor the production chain from the retailer to the outworker. This Code is a result of joint negotiations between the Textile Clothing and Footwear Union of Australia (TCFUA) and representatives from the retail and manufacturing industries in Australia. Although this code is self-regulatory and members sign up voluntarily, FairWear uses guerrilla-style tactics to 'out'

non-members using sweat-shop labour, which we would certainly not recommend as effective or desirable in this instance.

Due to the disparate agendas of each of these codes, and the non-existence in the case of the fashion industry of an appropriate code consistent with the intention of a code on body image, this approach is not recommended.

There is a danger that a clause or clauses on the representative of body image may be 'buried' amidst these often lengthy and technical codes. Although there are clauses that touch on the issue of misleading consumers – such as the AANA's Code for Advertising to Children – and are, as such, of interest in terms of wording and code construction, it is preferable to have one code tackling the issue of negative body images.

There are further advantages, such as:

- Existing codes already have a degree of respect and currency with stakeholders.
- It may be easier to gain consensus from within the industry, rather than gaining agreement across different stakeholder groups.
- Member associations may be able to play a significant role in educating/persuading their members to comply with the new clause(s).

However, there are several disadvantages, including:

- Profiling opportunities for public awareness via media campaign may be diluted or non-existent.
- Danger of clauses being 'buried' within the existing codes.
- Missed opportunity for activating committed group to lead the new code.
- Diminished ability for the Office for Youth to 'lead the charge' and remain involved.

## **8. Development of the code**

A suggested approach to the 'infrastructure and implementation' of the code is also recommended, as well as advice on the specific content of the code clauses, including input from an ethics/code expert. There needs to be a dedicated group, that is, an alliance or coalition of industry stakeholders (this may be the same as the Working Group but not necessarily) formed to draft, present, support and speak publicly about the code at the time of its publication.

Suggested issues to be addressed in the code are:

### **8.1 Digital alteration**

The widespread use of digital enhancement, photo-shopping and airbrushing in the photographic, reproduction and printing process creates an unrealistic portrayal of body image. While there is recognition that constructed images of perfection can have a negative impact on self-esteem (especially in the impressionable teenage years), there is also recognition that such imagery is a legitimate expression of art in our society, just as fantasy in film, theatre and literature is enjoyed but recognised as not necessarily reflecting reality.

At present, the digital enhancement designer is, along with the photographer and make-up artist, often credited for their contribution to the construction of the image. While it would be possible for a 'tag' to be created and used which would warn of such digital interference, it is thought that this would be a long term aim and difficult to implement and/or enforce. It is suggested that industry stakeholders be consulted in an effort to bring some balance in this area.

Of relevance here is the AJA and MEAA clause in their shared code of ethics which states, 'Present pictures and sound which are true and accurate. Any manipulation likely to mislead should be disclosed.'

The educative process should include training young people to recognise the use of digital enhancement, particularly in relation to body image, such as that already being provided by The Butterfly Foundation and Dove – the *BodyThink* program.

Where possible the focus should be on encouraging young people to recognise their individual qualities and goals irrespective of the images they see around them, artificially constructed or not.

## **8.2 Diversity of body image in editorial content and advertisements**

The Code would encourage that consideration in both Editorial and advertising copy be given to the inclusion of a variety of body shapes and sizes, so as to provide a fair representation of the diversity apparent in reality.

Additionally, the placement of body-focused editorial next to diet or exercise or cosmetic surgery advertising with a view to eliciting a commercial response from readers would be discouraged. Editorial should not be used as a hook for the advertising on body – related products or services.

At all times, an effort should be made to educate other industry peers in positions of influence to consider and adjust their behaviours and practices to place greater emphasis on diversity, positive body images and a focus on health, rather than body shape.

## **8.3 Body Mass Index (BMI) as one measure of weight and health**

The use of models, either on catwalks or in magazines, suffering from eating disorders such as anorexia nervosa and bulimia is unethical. Although the desirability of using slim models is recognised, efforts should be made to employ healthy models, whose Body Mass Index (BMI) falls within the World Health Organisation's definition for healthy weight range for their age."

For women and men over the age of 18, this would involve the adoption of a minimum body BMI of 18.5 kg/m<sup>2</sup>, (e.g., a female model who is 5' 9" [1.75m] must weigh more than 56.6 kg) in recognition that weight below this is considered underweight by the World Health Organisation. For female and male models between the ages of 16 and 18, the adoption of a minimum BMI for age and sex equivalent to the 10th BMI percentile for age and sex – in line with the Council of Fashion Designers of America.

It must be noted however, that using BMI as the only measure of weight and health is not perfect. BMI can both over estimate and under estimate healthy weight. Cultural factors and individual genetic make-up also shape and influence BMI. The Code should not be prescriptive about BMI but rather use it as one of a range of measures, both quantitative and qualitative, in determining healthy weight.

#### **8.4 Additional considerations for inclusion in the code**

At all times, consideration should be given to the potential effect of body images depicted in the media and advertising on those members of society most vulnerable, such as young women and men and children, to associated feelings of low self-esteem and peer pressure.

The Code must not be vague, ambiguous or overly authoritarian. Signatories to the Code should feel, on the whole, that subscription is a positive step and brings opportunities, rather than limits to the exercise.

At the same time, there needs to be some consequence, written into the Code, in the event that a signatory to the Code violates a particular clause or clauses. If not, there is a risk that the Code will not be taken seriously by the signatories or the wider stakeholder industries. Other codes contain penalties for non-compliance including, censure, a fine or even expulsion. However, this approach is not recommended as there is a general agreement that stakeholders need to feel that signing up to the Code is a positive, welcoming action rather than a potentially punitive negative one.

More consideration of an appropriate response to code violation needs to occur, although a suitable tact may be to withhold signatory benefits, such as the ability to use a logo. It is not difficult to find companies which have already realised the commercial benefit of a more realistic portrayal of body image.

First initiated by Dove with its Self-Esteem Fund, teenage fashion magazine *Girlfriend* and fashion retailer Sportsgirl have both recently embarked upon positive body image campaigns. Obviously, the willingness of certain stakeholders to sign up to the Code may depend on their markets and the size of their businesses. One stakeholder commented that it would be less likely for smaller fashion design houses to take the risk of using 'normal' sized models as they are especially vulnerable to negative publicity or peer criticism.

#### **8.5 Code content**

During the research phase and the stakeholder consultations it was identified that the best way to achieve consensus and support for the Code is to encourage and promote positive actions, rather than endeavouring to infringe upon stakeholder freedoms. A Code which forbids the use of certain images will be seen, at least by some stakeholders, as draconian and oppressive, and thus less likely to be effective.

Stakeholders who sign up to the Code must abide by the clauses of the Code and, in so doing, they receive a number of benefits including:

- The right to use a 'badge of honour' logo, similar to the 'No Sweat Shop' label used by FairWear.

- Increased recognition by the public and consumers.
- Access to youth markets.
- Participation in awards etc.
- Media attention and positive coverage.
- Networking opportunities, including access to government and industry peers.
- Training opportunities.

The content then should:

- Aim to encourage positive action rather than infringe freedoms.
- Reflect prevailing community standards.
- Must not operate in a vacuum, supporting activities essential – education, publicity, partnerships.
- State the commercial imperative.
- Benefits conferred for compliance – profile, marketing opportunities, access to markets, networking, and training.
- Spell out the consequences for non-compliance needs to be considered further.
- Seen as a culmination of deep engagement, no quick-fix solution – therefore a program of activities, including a national conference, before the code is introduced.

The content would include:

- An introduction from the Victorian Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs.
- A preamble that describes the aim of the voluntary Code.
- A statement of objectives.
- Definitions and who the Code is intended to cover.
- Clauses under section headings.
- Benefits and "consequences".
- Monitoring, self regulation and review mechanisms.
- Practical actions that promote positive body image.

## **9. Current programs and initiatives**

The Government's Media Code of Conduct on Body Image can link current and emerging initiatives:

- *Fad Diets Won't Work* is a Victorian Government initiative, introduced in 2005. The initiative followed Australian Medical Association's (AMA) research finding that a healthy lifestyle rather than a quick fix solution is the proven path to sustain a healthy weight. The initiative exposes fad diets or crash 'diets', which make claims of dramatic weight loss, weight gain, or performance enhancement, and made clear that they are often not nutritionally balanced and do not promote healthy eating habits. A strong

focus of this initiative was listening to the ideas and views of young people. In addition to brochures and tips on the perils of fad diets, community conversations with teenagers on fad diets were held around Victoria.

- *My Body, My Life* is an eight-week internet-based group program for 12 - 18 year old girls with a range of body image concerns, or unhealthy eating behaviours. The program is part of a research project by Ms Hannah Hoile and Professor Susan Paxton from the School of Psychological Science, LaTrobe University. Preliminary results show that the program significantly improves body satisfaction and disturbed eating behaviours in adolescent girls, such as dietary restraint and the use of extreme weight loss methods. In addition, significant improvements in self-esteem, depression and body comparison have been observed.
- *Set Your Body Free* is an eight-week therapy intervention program for women that offer free group therapy for body image dissatisfaction and related concerns such as eating problems and lifestyle issues. The program is part of a research project being undertaken by Professor Susan Paxton and Professor Eleanor Wertheim at the School of Psychological Science, LaTrobe University, and is supported by an Australian Rotary Health Research Fund Grant.
- *Young Women, Body Image and the Digital Age* (a Victorian Government funded initiative) involved a full day forum held in April 2007 with girls from a range of Victorian secondary schools to learn about the use of technology in creating images. As part of the funding, a small grant has been taken back to the schools involved with each team of girls presenting to classmates and friends.
- *Sportsgirl*, the fashion retailer and The Butterfly Foundation, a philanthropic organisation, have recently joined forces in a national initiative to promote and address prevention and early intervention of eating disorders and issues related to body image. *Sportsgirl* will raise money and awareness to assist The Butterfly Foundation to improve understanding about eating disorders and give support to people who need it most. *Sportsgirl* will also address the issue of negative body image by raising awareness amongst staff and customers and introducing store policies that set good examples.
- *Girlfriend* magazine and the *Supré* clothing chain have joined to form the Self-Respect Campaign in another recent initiative. It is aimed at 'creating a permanent, positive change to the way you think about and treat your most valuable possessions.' "No, not your iPod and mobile - your mind, body and spirit...We're making changes to the magazine that will inspire everyone to treat their bodies and minds with Self Respect."
- *Girlfriend* magazine has also taken the step of printing a disclosure 'sticker' on the front cover. Recently, Rachel Bilson was featured on the cover and beside her was a small black 'sticker' stating: 'Rachel Bilson has been styled and made up by a pro' team'. It was far from admitting that someone had been airbrushed, but this idea could perhaps be adopted in another form/s.
- *BodyThink* is a joint initiative between The Butterfly Foundation, the Dove Self Esteem Fund and the Victorian Government. The program was

created to raise awareness of body image issues, which can lead to eating disorders and low self-esteem. Program coordinator Julie Thomson says “*BodyThink* is a new program that can help all young people improve their body image and self-esteem regardless of what they look like or the current state of their own actual individual body image and self-esteem.” *BodyThink* stresses the fact that one’s body image is the perception that someone has of their physical self and the feelings they experience as a result of this perception. The program is designed to address body image issues and ways to prevent them. It provides these skills to teachers and professional who work with young people throughout Victoria.

## **10. Next steps**

To maximise the chances of success for the code, and based on stakeholder feedback, it is recommended that a comprehensive program of stakeholder engagement and education is undertaken before the publication of a Code.

A staged approach is recommended as a more effective way of gaining stakeholder support for the government’s aim to improve the self esteems of young people. By collaborating and seeking the opinions of as many vested stakeholders as possible, and then incorporating these findings into the development of a Code, the capacity for success and stakeholder buy-in will be maximised.

Accordingly, the Working Group recommends these next steps:

### **10.1 Milestone activities leading up to the release of a Code**

A drafting process is initiated while further stakeholder engagement takes place. A drafting group can be formed to work individually with stakeholders, managed by the Office for Youth.

A forum hosted by the Office for Youth, at which interested stakeholders are invited to contribute their point of view and hear the opinions of other stakeholders. This forum would also provide an opportunity for the Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs to speak about key issues as well as stakeholders to hear from academics and not-for-profit organisations such as The Butterfly Foundation. The forum could also be used as a first stage in discussing the draft code and would provide a valuable media publicity opportunity.

### **10.2 A stakeholder-centric engagement and education campaign**

Anecdotal evidence shows that the majority of stakeholders, or parties identified by them, do not feel socially responsible for the negative impact body images are having upon young people.

Any initiatives directed at stakeholder or industry groups would be of value because:

- The more aware they are that there is a groundswell of public opinion about the importance of positive body images; the more likely they are to start considering supportive activities.
- The more supporters, and parties championing the Code, the more effective it will be.

Government needs to demonstrate that the Code is a credible initiative and that every effort is being made to consult with all parts of the industry, gather their views and ensure that it receives wide-ranging appeal and promotion, and, most importantly, effects real change.

### **10.3 A youth-focused education campaign**

The majority of stakeholders, regardless of whether or not they were in support of any potential code, considered a public education program crucial to raising the community's awareness on the issue and were keen to see Government commit resources to funding such a program.

This funding could take the form of a government-led education campaign or a new joint initiative with one or more partner organisations. For example, a schools-based campaign aimed at media literacy and criticism such that young people are better informed about the use of photo-shopped images. It may also include a focus on positive self esteem and healthy body image.

Recently, the successful recipients of a new body image grants program aimed at community-based not-for-profit organisations to promote positive body image activities to young people, with a particular focus on those aged 12-16 years have been announced. It will be important to track the outcomes of these innovative grant initiatives and incorporate case studies/learnings into further youth-focused positive body image activities. Positive and successful outcomes of the grants initiatives need to be publicised.

A schools-based education campaign is a highly regarded and effective way for the Government to approach the issue, because it allows Government to have an impact on those young people who are considered most vulnerable to manipulated portrayals of body image in the media.

Most stakeholders suggested that any Code that attempted to infringe upon perceived media rights and freedoms would not be respected. Instead, stakeholders generally advocated a Code that promoted positive images and greater transparency when it comes to digitally-altered or photo-shopped imaging. It was also suggested that improving the education and awareness of young people to be able to critically evaluate the media should be a high priority. A more aware and better informed youth audience may also impact on how media outlets choose to react to the Code.

There are several non-for-profit groups like The Butterfly Foundation which already run highly successful education body image initiatives – in this case the *BodyThink* program. Many of these programs rely on commercial partners (such as in Butterfly's case, Dove) to deliver their programs. The *BodyThink* program is being formally evaluated by LaTrobe University, with some results available by the end of 2007. This evaluation should inform the benefits of a broad education campaign targeting school age young people in relation to Body Image.

#### **10.4 A public campaign to raise awareness of the development and launch of the Media Code of Conduct on Body Image and supporting initiatives**

Although the Code is not directly applicable to the general public, its effectiveness does rely on a greater public awareness and pressure that something needs to be done. The general public are the primary media consumers and therefore if public attitude shifts, the advertising, media and fashion industries will necessarily have to change. As such, a targeted campaign could be used to drive awareness by the public of the Government's aims to address the body image issue via consultation and collaboration with a wide variety of stakeholders.

The creation of a targeted public awareness campaign could achieve several desirable outcomes:

- Existing and potential supporters of the Code would benefit by seeing that the Government is committed to raising public awareness of the Code. The majority of stakeholders suggested that being able to receive public recognition for participating in the Code was an attractive incentive to compliance.
- The better currency the Code has with the general public, the better resultant effect this will have with the supporters of the Code and thereby a stronger momentum will be built for the Code's acceptance amongst stakeholders.

As well as code-specific awareness campaigns, the Government could also direct resources to a more general public awareness campaign to deliver education of the alteration of media images and other media tactics used to manipulate body image. This may also provide an avenue for members of the public to voice their opinion about negative body image depiction they have observed.

There are several members of the Media Code of Conduct on Body Image Working Group, as well as other stakeholders interviewed during the consultative phase who expressed an interest in participating in the creation or promotion of the Code or suggested alternative activities to support the Code.

There is scope for involving partners as media spokespeople for the Code, either through their own organisations or high profile persons or celebrities associated with their brand or industry association. For example, a well-known celebrity with a personal association to body image issues may be valuable in promoting the Code.

These media spokespeople could be used to leverage activities of other partner organisations. For example, they could also participate in school education visits thus enhancing the image of the Code as being driven not only from a media front but also at community level.

As well as creating synergies between any potential partner's existing or upcoming activities and the Code, there is also scope for the Government to drive its own initiatives and invite potential partners to become involved. Many stakeholders were keen to see the Government take a holistic approach, not just relying upon the Code to effect change.

To this end, it is suggested that the Government considers a multi-faceted public awareness and advocacy campaign to promote positive examples of body image in the media and through other targeted channels. Options for such non-code activities are detailed next.

### **10.5 Establishment of strategic alliances and partnerships**

Several stakeholders stressed the importance of complementary activities to support the code. There was a strong feeling that the code should not exist 'in a vacuum' and may fail if this was to be the case.

The Working Group members would act as ambassadors for the code through a planned "advocacy campaign", with at least one representative from each stakeholder group able to discuss how the code impacts on their specific industry.

For example, Zoë Edquist, General Manager for the Australian Fashion Council, has already expressed an interest in talking on behalf of Australian fashion designers in relation the body image issue. Obviously, these members would need to embrace the spirit and goals of the code, as well as being well-positioned to explain the code to the media and other influencers.

There should also be an intention for the members to 'spread the word' and recruit other individuals and organisations to sign up to the code. This group may also be responsible for monitoring the behaviours and practices of the signatory members and/or hearing complaints from the public on the use of negative body images by organisations that have or have not subscribed to the code.

It may also be of benefit to engage several "ambassador-type" spokespeople to appeal to different segments of the general public for the Code initiative. For example, it may be valuable to have someone with a health perspective to talk about the serious issues behind the topic of body image as well as a younger celebrity spokesperson for a youth audience.

It is worth noting that a dedicated 'celebrity' media spokesperson may produce negative feedback, such as:

- There has been some feedback from stakeholders and in the mainstream media that the Dove campaign, for all its good intentions, also uses very 'beautiful' versions of 'real' people. Engaging a celebrity spokesperson who is a model, actress or similar who is attractive and slim, even if they have previously struggled with body image issues, might leave them open to negative feedback.
- The body image 'credentials' of the spokesperson would need to be firmly established so that it did not appear that they were simply being used to attract greater media coverage but a genuine and passionate desire to make a difference.

It may also be valuable to offer key stakeholders from the fashion, advertising or media industries the chance to speak publicly on the Code. Based on the list of potential partners at the end of this document, suggested parties here include a retailer like Sportsgirl, or a not-for-profit organisation like The Butterfly Foundation.