

Why should you support the Code?

Businesses and organisations are being asked to support the Code and to promote its aims to their industries, colleagues and the community. By supporting the Code, individuals and organisations are taking a positive step, one that will be recognised by consumers and will have a real impact on young people.

Code partners will be provided with a range of opportunities to promote their support.

What else is the Victorian Government doing to support Positive Body Image?

A number of activities will support the Code under the \$2.1 million Teenagers 'Go for your life' Positive Body Image strategy. Other elements of the strategy include:

- **The Positive Body Image Small Grants program** which provides small grants to organisations wishing to deliver programs to young people to improve healthy eating habits, self-esteem and media awareness.
- **A youth-focussed education campaign** to support young people to be better informed about how images may be manipulated.
- **An industry engagement program** will promote awareness of the negative impact of body image on young people as well as understanding of the Code to ensure it receives wide-ranging support. Code partners will be actively promoted and acknowledged.
- **A public awareness campaign** will be developed and promoted, based on research and young people's input. The campaign will actively promote the Code's supporters and applaud their commitment.

GETTING ON BOARD

To become involved, read about the Code and its champions, find out more, make suggestions or get a speaker to an event, visit either www.youth.vic.gov.au or www.youthcentral.vic.gov.au

Further information is available from the 'Go for your life' Positive Body Image Strategy, Office for Youth on 03 9208 3220.

"Media portrays what it thinks the public will want to see; and what will be 'effective marketing' - however who says Australians want to see these unrealistic and air-brushed images?"

(Online submission to Parliamentary Body Image Inquiry)



Message from the Minister

Young people today are constantly exposed to idealised images of the perfect (and often unattainable) body shape and size. Recent research tells us that body image is now the issue of most concern for Australia's young people and that the media play a key role in shaping their views of what the 'ideal' shape should be.

We believe the Victorian Voluntary Media Code of Conduct on Body Image is a significant step in encouraging changes in the way images are portrayed and in improving body image in young people.

This Code is the result of significant consultation across the media, fashion and advertising industries. I thank the organisations partnering with the Victorian Government on this important initiative.

The Victorian Government is proud to take the lead in Australia in launching this Code. I have every confidence Victorian organisations will respect the aims of the Code so it becomes best-practice in selecting images depicted in the media.

By working together to promote positive body image, government and the fashion, advertising and media industries can truly make a difference to young people.

The Hon. James Merlino MP

Victorian Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs

18 April 2008
Melbourne

**go
for
your
life™**



Preamble – the aim of the Code

Research shows that both females and males often compare themselves with idealised images seen in the media. Studies show that viewing idealised magazine images can lead to increased depression and decreased body satisfaction.

The Code is designed to encourage the fashion, media and advertising industries to place greater emphasis on diversity, positive body images and a focus on health rather than body shape.

In doing so, the Code aims to decrease young people's vulnerability to feelings of low self-esteem, disordered eating and negative body image associated with exposure to idealised, unrealistic images in the media and advertising.

Why is the Victorian Government supporting a Voluntary Code?

The Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into the impact of negative body image on young people identified an important part of the jigsaw when it comes to the development of body image.

Unrealistic images promoted in the media, advertising and the fashion industry can affect the way young people feel about themselves. As one young person told the Inquiry, "You end up missing most of your life trying to be perfect."

One of the key recommendations of the Inquiry was to develop a voluntary code of conduct for the display of images in the media. A number of key people from the media, fashion and advertising industries then advised the Government on the role the media can play in the responsible portrayal of images to young people. This four-point voluntary code of conduct is the result.

The Code asks that consideration should be given to the potential effect of unrealistic and unattainable images on the self esteem and resilience of young women, young men and children.

"I believe that showing the latest fashion on people who look like they're having a ball whatever they're doing is definitely going to reach out to a whole lot of people. Associating clothing not just with a look, but with a whole feeling, an emotion could help with the increase of good body image."

(youthcentral survey)



the CODE

Altered and Enhanced Images

The use of unachievable and unrealistic digitally-manipulated images of people in the media is discouraged. If such alteration has occurred, digitally-altered images should be disclosed and accompanied by a 'tag' stating that "this image has been digitally altered" to help young people make a balanced appraisal.

Diversity in Shapes

Consideration should be given to the inclusion of a variety of body shapes, to provide fair representation in both editorial and advertising images.

Fair Placement

Consideration should be given to the editorial context in which diet, exercise or cosmetic surgery advertising is placed.

Modelling Health

Glamorisation of severely underweight models or celebrities is potentially dangerous; effort should be made to depict people of healthy weight and size.