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For immediate release

TALKING ABOUT MILEY CYRUS COULD BE GOOD FOR WOMEN'S MENTAL HEALTH

October 10 is World Mental Health Day, and Women's Health Victoria is calling for community action on women's mental health.

'National data consistently shows that mental health issues affect 20% of Australian women,' said Rita Butera, Executive Director of Women's Health Victoria.

'We are especially concerned about the high rates of depression, anxiety disorders, self-harm, suicide attempts and eating disorders in women – particularly among young women', Ms Butera said.

'Women and girls are bombarded with messages about how they should look, how they should behave, and are constantly made to feel inadequate. These messages affect all women, but when you are young and still trying to figure out who you are, you can be particularly vulnerable to these pressures'.

'There needs to be greater public discussion about the social pressures that impact on women's mental health. We need to be vocal in saying that women's self-worth should never be tied to their weight, or their makeup, or what they wear (or are not wearing)'.

'We can help to empower women and girls by focusing on their abilities rather than on the way they look. Let's turn to the women in our lives and compliment them on what they do rather than on their appearance. Tell them how much you appreciate what they have done', Ms Butera said.

'We need to analyse the messages in popular culture. If your daughter talks to you about Miley Cyrus, use the opportunity to have a conversation about what it means to be an empowered young woman. Talk to her about the women you admire for their accomplishments'.

'These are things that we all can do right now to promote women's mental health. Although they are simple, these actions can have a significant impact in addressing the social pressures faced by women and girls.' Ms Butera said.

Women's Health Victoria acknowledges the support of the Victorian Government.

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For further information contact:

Rita Butera

Executive Director

03 9664 9300 or 0437 578 182