NUTRITION SHOULD FEED THE FEDERAL ELECTION

Dietitians Association of Australia
Nutrition feeds the foundation of health, and just as dietary variety is needed for good health and wellbeing, a multi-faceted approach to policy and decision making is required to nourish all Australians.

Dietitians Association of Australia (DAA) is focused on working to build healthier communities through food and nutrition. Across the country, more than 5,700 Accredited Practising Dietitians work to improve health outcomes of all Australians by providing evidence based medical nutrition therapy, undertaking research, quality and safety projects and community education.

Poor dietary habits and obesity are now the two leading preventable risk factors contributing to the burden of disease in Australia and internationally. 67% of Australian adults are currently classified as overweight or obese, contributing to almost one in two adults experiencing a chronic disease. Addressing the role of food and nutrition in health is imperative.

In the lead up to the 2019 Federal Election, DAA calls on Australian politicians to nourish, not neglect their electorates.

**KEY PRIORITIES FOR THE 2019 FEDERAL ELECTION**

1. Develop a new National Nutrition Policy
2. Equip Australians to make informed food choices for their health
3. Ensure all Australians are able to access appropriate care for their nutrition needs
4. Regularly evaluate health initiatives for a meaningful impact
Australia has not updated its National Nutrition Policy in over 26 years. During this time the health of the nation has deteriorated.

Over 35% of the population's energy intake is now derived from unhealthy, discretionary foods and drinks (those high in saturated fat, added sugar, salt and alcohol). Australian families are spending 58% of their food budget on energy dense, nutrient poor choices. These dietary choices contribute to the risk and development of lifestyle related chronic diseases, such as heart disease and type 2 diabetes.

A new National Nutrition Policy will reduce the incidence and prevalence of diet-related chronic disease risk factors and conditions among Australians, as well as improve nutrition for the benefit of Australia’s health, wellbeing, sustainability and prosperity.

**1. DEVELOP A NEW NATIONAL NUTRITION POLICY**

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**PRIORITY ACTION**

- Commence national consultative workshops to develop a National Nutrition Policy discussion paper and to design future governance structures (estimated funding $10 million).
2. EQUIP AUSTRALIANS TO MAKE INFORMED FOOD CHOICES FOR THEIR HEALTH

Prevention and early intervention is vital to support the health of the Australian community at both the population and personal level. The solution lies in empowering personal behaviour change, and addressing lifestyle changes through dietary interventions.

Communication of current, evidence-based nutrition is vital to allow the nation to make informed choices around food and nutrition. For those experiencing diet-related chronic disease, sufficient nutrition consultations are required to introduce and reinforce complex concepts for ongoing self-management and lifestyle change.

PRIORITY ACTION

- Review the Australian Dietary Guidelines and commence a multifaceted marketing campaign to help Australians make informed food and nutrition choices.

- Increase Medicare funded Chronic Disease Management items to a minimum of 10 services per annum for allied health services.
3. ENSURE ALL AUSTRALIANS ARE ABLE TO ACCESS APPROPRIATE CARE FOR THEIR NUTRITIONAL NEEDS

Social equity is imperative to reduce diet related health disparities. This is particularly pertinent for geographically isolated, marginalised and vulnerable Australians. Utilising technology such as telehealth and providing incentives for practitioners to practice in rural and remote communities are just some strategies to increase health care access. Addressing the ability to access nutrition care services and appropriate food choices, equips Australian’s to put their health first.

PRIORITY ACTION

- Permit telehealth services by allied health practitioners, such as Accredited Practising Dietitians under the Medicare Benefits Schedule.
- Provide access for Australians living with mental illness to receive dietetics services under the Better Mental Health Program.
- Reintroduce scholarships for allied health students to undertake placement in rural and remote areas.
- Resolve the Health Disability Interface to give certainty for NDIS participants to access dietetic services and specialised nutrition products.
- Allocate an Accredited Practising Dietitian to lead an annual nutrition care audit in each residential aged care facility across Australia (estimated funding $6 million).

4. REGULARLY EVALUATE HEALTH INITIATIVES FOR A MEANINGFUL IMPACT

To measure dietary change, extensive benchmarking of Australia’s nutritional intake is required, along with effective and co-ordinated food and nutrition monitoring. Tracking the progress of the population will ensure policy and practice undergoes timely updates and align with the nation’s health needs.

PRIORITY ACTION

- Commit to fund a new National Nutrition Survey (last conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in 2011 - 2013) to provide adequate benchmarks for a new National Nutrition Policy.
ABOUT US

The Dietitians Association of Australia is Australia’s largest and most influential organisation for dietetic and nutrition professionals, representing a growing membership of 7,000 across Australia and overseas. Our mission is to support our members and advocate for important issues that impact the health of the Australian community, such as obesity, disability and mental health.

For more information visit: daa.asn.au

REFERENCES


GET IN TOUCH

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