More spent on prisoners' food than aged care residents' food - Media statement

Dietitians Australia is urging the strained aged care sector to add food and nutrition to its priorities throughout the current crisis.

Accredited Practising Dietitian and Aged Care Subject Matter Lead for Dietitians Australia, Julie Dundon explains why residential homes and home carers must take immediate action.

"Scientific reports have confirmed what we already suspected – that COVID-19 symptoms are more severe in malnourished elderly people," Julie said.

"We know nutrition and mortality are closely linked, as to, is nutritious food with quality of life, and better mental health.

"We're deeply concerned by reports of food supply shortages and staffing issues resulting in grossly inadequate, or even missed meals in aged care facilities.

"All affected homes should reach out to an Accredited Practising Dietitian to boost the nutrition of their residents through adequate meal planning."

Chief Executive Officer of Dietitians Australia, Robert Hunt explains how malnutrition in the aged care sector has long been of concern to the organisation.

"It's a shame that our nation would spend $10 a day feeding prisoners and only $6 a day feeding our elderly," Robert said.

“Our heart goes out to the people living in the affected aged care facilities, as well as those working in the sector who aren’t receiving the assistance they need to manage this situation.

“Incentivising facilities to reach out for the assistance of a dietitian may at least offer support to workers and boost the resilience of residents through nutrition.”

Dietitians Australia has been advocating for the Federal Government to take critical steps that will address what they believe to be a 30-year pandemic of malnutrition in the aged care sector.

“We’ve identified practical measures that government can take to ensure all residents are adequately fed in the future,” Robert said.

“Every facility should be subject to an onsite menu and mealtime assessment and malnutrition screening must be included in the National Aged Care Mandatory Quality Indicator Program.

“And let’s make sure this never happens again through updating our 30 year-old National Nutrition Policy.

“We don’t need a taskforce to tell us what we already know. The money from the taskforce would be better spent on meeting the basic nutritional needs of some of our most vulnerable – the elderly in aged care.

ENDS

Interview opportunities:

- Julie Dundon, Advanced Accredited Practising Dietitian, Aged Care Subject Matter Lead – Dietitians Australia *(Adelaide based)*
- Robert Hunt, Chief Executive Officer – Dietitians Australia *(Canberra based)*

Media enquiries

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Note to editors: Dietitians Australia is the leading voice of nutrition in Australia, representing dietitians nationally and advocating for healthier communities. Accredited Practising Dietitian (APD) is the only national credential recognised by the Australian Government as the quality standard for nutrition and dietetics services in Australia.