Dietitians call ostrich-election as major parties bury heads in the sand while Australia's health declines - Media release

Access to affordable nutritional support for people with mental illness and disability via Medicare, as well as mandatory reporting measures to protect older Australians in aged care, are not priorities for Australia's major parties.

Chief Executive Officer of Dietitians Australia, Robert Hunt explains why 8,000 dietitians from around the nation are calling an ostrich-election this year.

"Our major parties continue to bury their heads in the sand over Australia's declining health, and it's our most vulnerable Australians who will suffer the most," Robert said.

With pre-polling for the federal election now open, Dietitians Australia has published its scorecard rating the major parties' commitments to the organisation's federal election requests. These included:

- **Aged care** – mandatory malnutrition reporting and mealtime quality audits
- **Mental health** – Medicare items that support treatment for metabolic side effects of medications, as well as dietary intervention for depression
- **Disability** – Medicare items that allow affordable access to nutrition and mealtime support for children with Autism and other disabilities

- **National Nutrition Policy** – ensuring all Australians have equal access to affordable nutrition, reversing the trend of diet-related illness and combating unsustainable eating patterns.

“Despite numerous attempts to engage the Labor Party since January no response to our scorecard has been forthcoming,” Robert said.

“We can only interpret this apathy as denial that our nation’s health is in crisis.”

While Labor failed to respond to Dietitians Australia, the organisation received responses from the LNP and the Greens.

“We were grateful that the LNP saw Australia’s health and wellbeing important enough to at least respond to our priorities,” Robert said.

“But they only saw fit to support one and-a-half out of five priorities – the National Nutrition Policy and some measures within Medicare support for people with mental illness.”

The Greens supported all five of Dietitians Australia’s election priorities.

Download the scorecard.

View the LNP and Greens detailed responses.

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Australia’s health in crisis – key facts:

- Disease risk factors linked to diet costs Australia’s health system $16.2 billion
- Overweight and obesity is the number one risk factor contributing the highest cost to Australia’s health system at $4.3 billion
- By current trends more than 18 million Australians (two-thirds of our projected population) will be overweight or obese by 2030
- By 2050, Australia would need 6 ½ planet Earths to produce food at its current rate of consumption
- Food insecurity in Australia affects 1 in 6 adults and 1.2 million children in 2021
- 95% of adults don’t meet both the recommended intake of fruit and vegetables
- Up to 50% of people in residential aged care are malnourished

- 4.4 million Australians were prescribed medication for mental illness in 2019-20 – more than ever before
- 27,500 Australians die a preventable death each year from an unhealthy diet

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.