We're not getting any better at eating fruit & veg - we need a coordinated approach to nutrition now - Media release

94 per cent of Australians aren't getting their recommended daily intake of fruit and vegetables, **according to the latest data on dietary behaviours released by the Australia Bureau of Statistics this morning.**

Only 6.1 per cent of adults and 8.5 per cent of children are meeting the recommended daily intake of fruit and vegetables.

"When we reflect on these numbers, which have stayed consistent for some years now, it is clear that nutrition is a huge issue in this country and we need to act on this now." Dietitians Australia CEO Robert Hunt said.

"We need a coordinated approach, that joins the dots back to nutrition across a range of projects and one that is backed by serious dollars," Mr Hunt said.

The latest ABS figures provide insight into how Australians were eating during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown periods.

In the face of the current fresh food price and supply crisis, these numbers are only likely to worsen, Dietitians Australia CEO Robert Hunt said.

“While fresh food was challenging to source during COVID panic buying outbreaks, it was far more affordable than it is now.”

“We can only imagine how damning the dietary behaviour data would be if it was sourced in the last few weeks, where most people can barely contemplate forking out $10 or more for a fresh produce staple like lettuce.

“We’ve called on the previous Government and we’re asking the Albanese Government now for a major redevelopment of the National Nutrition Policy, which hasn’t been updated since the Labor Government of 1992.”

“If we keep eating the way we do, the most recent data available shows Australia is on track to foot an over 80 billion dollar bill to deal with obesity-related health costs,” he said.

“The Morrison Government had committed to $700k to develop the framework for a National Nutrition Policy. We want the Albanese Government to dig deeper on this for us and commit to full funding and resourcing to action it.”

“One of the recommended actions in the strategy is funding the development and publication of wide-scale education campaigns to improve nutrition uptake in this country.

We’ve proven we can turn around public health education campaigns quickly in this country, with most of us understanding the concepts of masks and social distancing.

“Yet most of the Australian public are unaware of how critical fruit and vegetable intake is to prevent chronic disease and even death,” Mr Hunt said.

While we wait for the Government to act on a National Nutrition Policy and action plan, Dietitians Australia President and Accredited Practising Dietitian Tara Diversi has some practical advice for Australians looking to up their fruit and veg intake.

"We know accessing affordable, nutritious food including fruits and vegetables is a huge challenge across the country right now and may take months to ease," Ms Diversi said.

"When you do source fruit and veggies within your budget, use as much of them as you can.”

“Stems off broccoli and cauliflower are great in stir-fries or grated into mince dishes like tacos or spaghetti bolognaise.

“In most cases, from a nutrition point of view, frozen vegetables are just as good as fresh.

"Try something new. Do not be afraid of trying another fresh green like watercress or rocket over lettuce for example. There is a number of other greens that make great alternatives for cooking, look at what is available in your area and try something new. Your body and your tastebuds will eventually get used to the bitterness, and they may end up being foods you grow to love as they become more familiar."

"For those who are finding it challenging to plan their meals without their relied upon fresh staples, it is worth booking in to see your local Accredited Practising Dietitian for more tailored dietary advice," Ms Diversi said.

Browse our directory of Accredited Practising Dietitians in Australia.

Media enquiries

For further information, media enquiries and interviews contact our Media Officer on0409 661 920.

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.