All hands on deck to turn mental health numbers around - Media statement

Dietitians Australia CEO Robert Hunt is urging the Government to bring more Accredited Practising Dietitians into the mental health care workforce to help turn Australia's mental health numbers around.

It comes as mental health topped the list of chronic health conditions, self-reported by Australians in the 2021 Census results.

“2.2 million Australians reported a diagnosis of mental illness this time last year. We know there is mounting evidence to show how an improved diet could improve the lives of these 2.2 million people,” Dietitians Australia CEO Robert Hunt said.

“Dietary intervention plays a critical role in the prevention and treatment of mental illnesses, with research showing it can even alleviate the symptoms of depression,” Mr Hunt said.

“Currently, eating disorders are the only mental health conditions recognised under Medicare for dietary interventions.

It is time for the Government to expand access to dietitians for people living with other mental illnesses to receive holistic care."

“Australians deserve affordable access to dietetic care, and particularly all those living with a mental illness deserve to have food and nutrition therapy as part of their treatment plans.”

“Queensland has made a step in the right direction. The recent Queensland Government Inquiry into mental health outcomes for Queenslandersacknowledged our evidence showing food and nutrition care is essential in the treatment of mental illnesses.

“We hope Queensland can set the gold standard, following through on the inquiry’s recommendation to integrate Accredited Practising Dietitians into the mental health workforce.”

“Everyone can ultimately benefit from a better diet.The latest data shows that 94 percent of Australians aren't getting adequate fruit and vegetable intake.

“We can’t continue on this trajectory, our physical and mental wellbeing depends on turning this around,” Mr Hunt said.

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.