Prime Minister: Aged care residents are still starving

Almost one in ten residents in Australian Aged Care homes are continuing to lose weight, when they shouldn't, according to the latest data released by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

The Aged Care Quality Indicators Report released today found 13,490 residents experienced unplanned weight loss in the Quarter ending June 2022.

"In April this year, while in opposition, the now Prime Minister himself acknowledged that the Royal Commission into Aged Care found that up to 50 per cent of residents are malnourished.

"He said – "They're literally starving, this is a crisis in this country, and this is what this election is about."

"We acknowledge this is a crisis the new Government has inherited. Malnutrition has been a silent killer in aged care for decades. But now it's well and truly on the Albanese Government's watch[1]."

"Every week this Government waits to take action on fixing the food crisis in aged care is another week our loved ones are at risk of going hungry and winding up malnourished," Dietitians Australia CEO Robert Hunt said.

"While residents continue to lose weight, we continue to see nutrient-poor food dominating the menus in aged care.

It comes as the new Quality Indicators for Aged Care released last week failed to include malnutrition as a new quality indicator.

Dietitians Australia has long been calling for malnutrition screening to be used instead of the unplanned weight loss quality indicator.

“The horrifying thing is this, the data released today only scratches the surface. Unplanned weight loss is only one indicator of malnutrition. We believe the rates of malnutrition could be much worse’” said Mr Hunt.

“The Royal Commission found that up to 50% of residents were malnourished and highlighted examples of the appalling quality of meals served to residents, including party pies and chicken nuggets.

“Residents could be eating poor quality food and be drastically undernourished but won’t lose weight.”

“It is deplorable that malnutrition has been ignored in the renewed quality indicators.

“The Albanese Government promised better food for residents and to make sure dollars are going to care.

Dietitians Australia intends to hold the government to their promise,” said Mr Hunt.

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[1]The latest figures are for the April to June 2022 period.

For media enquiries and interviews, contact our Media team on 0409 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.