A little less conversation, a little more action' needed on Australia's food and nutrition policy

Australia has gone backwards and is well behind international best practices when it comes to food and nutrition policy according to the latest Food Policy Index Scorecard released today.

Deakin University's Global Centre for Preventative Health and Nutrition Scorecard provides an analysis of Australia's food and nutrition policy progress over the last five years, evaluated against globally recommended policies to improve population diets.

"The benchmark has been set for the new Albanese Government when it comes to food and nutrition policy, and we're looking forward to working with them on opportunities to bring Australia in line with international best practice," Dietitians Australia CEO Robert Hunt said.

"The time to raise the bar is now - we encourage this Government to take action on the immediate and long-term food and nutrition policy recommendations in this report," Mr Hunt said.

The latest Food Policy Index Scorecard has been developed with the support of 84 experts in population health and diets across 37 leading preventative health organisations in Australia.

"Unhealthy diets and obesity present a public health crisis in Australia. The evidence is clear that, unless we see comprehensive government action to improve population diets, there will be enormous health and financial costs to individuals, communities, and the economy overall ," Associate Professor Gary Sacks from Deakin University's Institute for Health Transformation

(IHT) and Co-Director of IHT's Global Centre for Preventative Health and Nutrition (GLOBE) said.

"It is promising to see momentum building around a legislative ban on the marketing of unhealthy food and beverages to children and we commend the Member for McKellar Sophie Scamps for bringing this to the table as a priority," Mr Hunt said.

"Dietitians Australia has long been calling for the Health Star Rating system to be mandated.

"Robust front-of-pack labelling systems have been shown to impact both what people choose to buy and how the industry manages product reformulation.

It is heartening to see this backed as a priority recommendation for Government action in this report."

One of the ten longer-term policy recommendations in the report includes the development of a new national nutrition strategy, echoing continuous calls from Dietitians Australia.

"All good work needs a strong strategy behind it, and there is an incredible amount of good work needed to bolster the nutritional status of the Australian population," Mr Hunt said.

"The Morrison Government had committed $700,000 to the scoping of a new national nutrition framework, to replace the existing thirty-year-old policy, originally brought in by a Labor Government.

"With the Chalmers Wellbeing Budget due to be handed down in just four sleeps - we hope to see this commitment matched.

"It would be disappointing to see this trimmed from the Budget when Australia is in dire need of more population-wide preventative health investments."

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For media enquiries

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