A hard pill to swallow: Newly elected Government must focus on future-proofing the health of Victorians

As Victorians head to the polls this weekend, Dietitians Australia is calling on the newly elected Government to commit to future-proofing the health and well-being of the state.

“We know the hospital system in Victoria is under enormous pressure and we’ve all heard the horror stories of ambulance ramping and staggering wait times for emergency responses,” Dietitians Australia CEO Robert Hunt said.

“To those who take office next week – I ask – where are your plans to tackle chronic disease and illness to stop Victorians from ending up in emergency in the first place?

“It’s a hard pill for policymakers to swallow – but taking a future-focused approach to managing the health system and health budget must be a priority for the new Government.

Dietitians Australia has received responses from all major parties on their Victorian Election Priorities and found no guarantee it will be easier to access an Accredited Practising Dietitian under any newly elected Government.

“All of the major parties have provided loose commitments to advancing access to Accredited Practising Dietitians, including through capacity building of the allied healthcare workforce.

“But to turn the health of Victorians around we need the new Government to firmly focus on policy measures and investments that tackle the root causes of chronic disease – and that includes far more emphasis on engaging the leaders of diet and nutrition.

“The newly elected Victorian Government has a chance to lead the nation when it comes to leveraging the power food has on our mental health and wellbeing.

“Having a dietitian as part of every team in the Local Area Mental Health and Wellbeing Services would allow a well-rounded approach to mental illness prevention and treatment, including equitable access to evidence-based, individualised dietary advice.

“Our workforce is underutilised in the Victorian public health system. There is an opportunity to increase the number of Accredited Practising Dietitians across the board including in public hospitals, community health, justice, and disability.

“We also encourage the new Government to dust off the Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing plan and pay particular attention to the recommended actions for increasing healthy eating and bolstering preventive health of the state.

“The most considered announcement during this campaign we’ve seen towards improving the diet of young Victorians has been the Liberal National’s $300 million school lunch box program.

“While we welcome this initiative, we need a guarantee the food served in schools will align with dietary guidelines, individual needs and cultural needs, and to do this, Accredited Practising Dietitians must be directly involved.

“Victorian Labor has promised they’ll continue to fund healthy eating initiatives including the recently launched Vic Kids Eat Well program and the Healthy Eating Advisory Service, and if re-elected we look forward to advancing and strengthening these initiatives.

“We congratulate the Victorian Greens for their commitment to $12 million in funding for Eating Disorders Victoria, we know just how critical the role of Accredited Practising Dietitians is in the prevention and treatment of eating disorders.

“Whichever way the polls flow this weekend, all members of the newly elected Government can be assured they will be hearing from us soon to dig into the detail of getting dietitians where they are urgently needed in the Victorian health system,” Mr Hunt said.

For more, read our key priority areas in the Victoria Election. We also asked the Victorian Labor Party, the Liberals and Nationals and the Victorian Greens to complete an election scorecard, rating their commitment to our 3 key election requests.

Media enquiries

For media enquiries and interviews, contact0409 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.