Dietitians Australia

Disability advocate and emergency doctor Dr Dinesh Palipana OAM calls on Government to guarantee the nutrition rights of people with disability

Australians with disability are at risk of chronic disease and preventable deaths, if their nutrition rights are not upheld, Dr Dinesh Palipana OAM warns.

Dr Palipana is calling on the Government and National Disability Insurance Agency to guarantee the nutrition rights of people with disability will be well supported within the upcoming National Disability Insurance Scheme reforms.

It comes as the Disability Royal Commission final report is being handed down today and the NDIS Review final report by October.

“Every person with disability has unique nutrition needs.

“As a person with quadriplegia, managing my energy intake is different to someone who doesn’t have quadriplegia.

“Some people with disability may need supports to safely swallow and consume food.

“The one thing that all people with disability have in common when it comes to nutrition, is the right for their individual nutrition needs to be upheld.

“I’ve been fortunate to benefit from the advice and guidance of accredited practising dietitians throughout my health journey, but not all people with disability who need nutrition therapy supports have been or are as fortunate.

“Navigating the National Disability Insurance Scheme to access nutrition support from a dietitian can be incredibly challenging.

“There are also very limited options for people with disability to get access to a dietitian through the wider public health system.

“Working with an accredited practising dietitian to manage my nutrition and overall relationship with food has had a profound impact on my health and wellbeing.

“All Australians with disability should be afforded the right to the nutrition support they need to meet their health and wellbeing goals,” Dr Palipana said.

“The gaps in access to nutrition support for people with disability, across the healthcare system, must be dealt with,” Dietitians Australia CEO Marco Xuereb said.

“We hope to see reforms to the National Disability Insurance Scheme that will make it easier for participants to access all the services they need.

“What we don’t want to see, is a situation where people with disability struggle even more than they do now to access the critical therapy supports, including nutrition therapy from dietitians,” Mr Xuereb said.

“We know that funding limits can be a barrier for many people with a disability when it comes to accessing a dietitian through their NDIS plans.

“But it can also come down to the availability of information and education, either they, their family or their NDIS provider has about how proper nutrition can enable their individual health and wellbeing goals and to reduce their risk of chronic disease.

“Dietitians Australia is calling on the Government to set the NDIS up for a future where Australians with disability are well supported with proper food and nutrition to achieve their utmost health potential.

“We thank Dr Palipana for his steadfast advocacy for the nutrition rights of people with disability.

For media enquiries contact Amy Phillips Media Manager on 0409 661 920

Note to Editors: Dietitians Australia is the leading voice in nutrition and dietetics, 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.