Nutrition concerns raised as Australians buy below recommended daily intake of core food groups

Dietitians Australia is highlighting the urgent need to prioritise nutrition action in Australia – with new data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics finding the nation is buying below the recommended daily intake of core food groups.

The data released found Australians are buying less food overall on average, but it's the core food groups including fruit, vegetables, grains and cereals where the largest cuts are being made.

The greatest absolute decrease was found in the vegetables, legumes and beans group, down from 2.4 serves to 2.2 per day.

"The Australian Dietary Guidelines recommend an average of 5 serves of vegetables, legumes and beans per adult per day.

"We therefore assume based on the ABS findings that on average, Australians are achieving less than half of that requirement.

"This is absolutely a trend we need to work hard together to reverse," Dietitians Australia President Tara Diversi said.

The data also found Australians have increased their food purchases from the discretionary categories of the Australian Dietary Guidelines including potato chips, chocolate and energy drinks.

“What we want to see is Australians prioritising the purchase of affordable nutrient dense foods including seasonable vegetables and fruits, legumes and beans, and spending much less on discretionary foods high in sugar, salt and some fats including chocolate chips and confectionary.

“Poor diet is one of the leading chronic disease risk factors in Australia.

“Australians deserve to be supported with affordable fresh fruit and vegetables and nutrient dense foods as well as affordable access to personalised nutrition therapy delivered by an Accredited Practising Dietitian.

“But we also need to really look holistically at the environment we live in and enable policy actions that empower Australians to make affordable and suitable choices in the best interest of their health and wellbeing.

“There is work underway to redevelop Australia’s National Nutrition Policy.

“These findings highlight the urgent need to prioritise the development of this policy and ensure funding is secured to act on it.

“We know from the dietitians working in population health that one of the first places Australians are making budget cuts to cope with the rising cost of living, is their food budget.

“You can’t mend what you don’t measure – and in Australia, we don’t routinely measure food and nutrition data, including actual food intake and levels of household food security.

Dietitians Australia, as part of our2024 Budget Submission is calling on the Government to invest in a national food and nutrition monitoring surveillance program.

“We need this data to inform and drive policy improvements relating to access, affordability and availability of nutritious food in all communities,” Dietitians Australia President Tara Diversi said.

For media enquiries and interviews, contact our Media Manager Amy Phillips 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.