Budget must include the cost of living healthy and well into the future

Dietitians Australia is urging the Government to deliver a budget that not only provides relief for Australians making cuts to their own food budgets but invests in measures that will support their long-term health and wellbeing.

Australia's peak body for dietetic and nutrition professionals put forward9 recommendations to Government as part of its Federal Budget 2024-2025 submission, aimed at bolstering the nutritional status of Australians and reducing the costs to the health system associated with diet-related preventable disease.

"Nutritious food intake is one of the most influential factors contributing to our overall health and wellbeing, fueling and enabling people to contribute to economic prosperity," Dietitians Australia President Tara Diversi said.

"We're hearing more and more from dietitians working in the community that Australians in financial distress are cutting back their food budgets, reducing fresh fruit and vegetable intake and skipping meals to grapple with cost-of-living challenges.

"As a nation we cannot afford to risk the long-term consequences of poor nutrition of our people in our communities, "she said.

According to the latestAIHW data on health system spending, diet related risk factors are estimated to cost Australia's health system $16.2 billion dollars within a year.

"We are yet to see considered investment behind most of the actions in the National Preventative Health Strategy relating to nutrition, a strategy that is now three years in motion," Ms Diversi explained.

“To demonstrate commitment to the future health and wellbeing of Australians, we and others have been calling on the Government to commit a minimum of five percent of total health spending towards actions that support chronic disease prevention.

“We must also see funding to grow true multidisciplinary approaches to healthcare, bringing together experts across the health system, including accredited practising dietitians to deliver the support Australian’s need most now.

“We’ve been calling on the Government to deliver more alternative funding options to increase access to dietitians in community health, primary health and urgent care clinics, as well as allowing for increased consultation times.

“We’ve recommended the Government fund a national nutrition monitoring and surveillance system that includes producing at a minimum an annual report on the severity of household food insecurity.

“It takes courage to invest in measures, including health prevention, that will take more than an election cycle to pay dividends, and we hope to see courage in tomorrow’s full budget announcement.

For media enquiries and interviews, contact our Media Manager Amy Phillips on 0409 661 920.

Tara Diversi is Cairns based.

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.