Nutrition action needed now in Northern Territory

Dietitians Australia is calling on the Northern Territory Government to commit to policies and actions that will break down the nutrition barriers Territorians face when it comes to eating well and reducing their risk of chronic disease.

Dietitians Australia and the Dietitians Australia Northern Territory Branch are urging all parties to commit to their **three-point nutrition action plan ahead of the coming election**, to address nutrition and dietetic support gaps, nurture more nutritious food choices through the Remote Stores program and establish coordinated nutrition programs within NT Schools.

“People living in the Northern Territory, particularly those in regional and remote communities, face significant barriers when it comes to access to nutritious food and to the support of health and allied health service providers, including dietitians,” Dietitians Australia Northern Territory Branch Chair Katelyn Paterson said.

“People living in the Territory, eligible for chronic disease funded support, can face up to six months or more on a waiting list to see a community dietitian and that is why we’re pushing for a commitment of a minimum of one new community dietitian per region as a first step to bridging this gap.

“Remote Northern Territory has the highest prevalence of diabetes in the world, with up to 30 percent of adults estimated to be living with predominantly type 2 diabetes.

“Diet is a major modifiable risk factor for type 2 diabetes, and more needs to be done to ensure both urban and remote Territorians have access to nutritious food, and guidance from dietitians to prevent, manage and even treat diabetes.

“For many in the Territory, the remote stores program is their single source to buy food for themselves and their families.

“There is a real opportunity to ensure remote stores and communities can access dietitians, and they are deeply involved in supporting the promotion of healthy food and beverage choices through education, stocking and placement.

“We need to ensure our children are given the best chance to develop strong nutrition habits, but unlike other states in Australia, we do not have Government funded and established school canteen and nutrition programs in all public schools in the Northern Territory.

“We’re asking for a commitment to fund dietitians to coordinate and enable the successful implementation of the NT School Nutrition and Healthy Eating Guidelines, through developing community specific nutrition programs in city and remote schools across the State,” Ms Paterson said.

“Culturally safe and responsive healthcare is embedded as a core competency within the accredited practicing dietitian program, and Dietitians Australia is committed to ensuring our workforce is equipped with best practice approaches for working with First Nations communities,” Dietitians Australia President Tara Diversi said.

“We are leading as a profession when it comes to this critical competency, and we have a workforce ready and willing to work in collaboration with Northern Territory healthcare in First Nations community-led nutrition programs.

“We look forward to working with the newly elected Government to deliver optimal nutrition outcomes for those living both in the urban and in remote pockets of our central state.

For media enquiries and interviews, contact our 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.