Speech pathologists and dietitians urge Minister Shorten to update the NDIS Supports lists to ensure people with disability can eat and drink safely

Joint media release

Speech Pathology Australia and Dietitians Australia have written to the Hon. Bill Shorten, Minister for the NDIS, requesting urgent updates are made to the lists of NDIS supports.

Choking and respiratory disease have been found to be leading causes of death amongst people with disability. More than 80 percent of choking incidents involved food items.

The peak bodies are concerned the current NDIS Supports lists fail to address requirements of people with dietary and swallowing needs, leaving them without access to essential items, including modified fluids, thickeners, food processors and liquid aerators.

To ensure people with disability can manage their dietary and/or swallowing needs, these items must be funded through the NDIS when prescribed by a qualified speech pathologist or

accredited practising dietitian.

Without clear detail, naming speech pathologists and dietitians - there is a risk of confusion for participants and NDIA staff about which allied health professionals can be funded by the NDIS.

“We know that choking and respiratory disease are leading causes of death among people with disability” Speech Pathology Australia’s Interim CEO, Lyn Brodie said.

"These lists must be urgently amended to ensure safe and effective mealtimes for people with dietary and swallowing needs.”

“Speech pathologists and dietitians are highly qualified allied health professionals who are committed to ensuring people can eat and drink safely. They must be able to prescribe these items for NDIS participants to access.”

"It is deeply concerning that essential supports for safe eating and drinking, such as modified fluids and thickeners, have been omitted from the NDIS supports lists,”

Dietitians Australia’s CEO, Magriet Raxworthy said.

“These items are critical for the health and safety of people with dysphagia, and their absence creates risks for people with disability.”

"We are calling on the NDIA to urgently correct these omissions and make clear that the services of dietitians and speech pathologists are essential supports for participants with dietary and swallowing needs.”

“Without these corrections, participants are left vulnerable to miscommunication and unsafe practices.”

We look forward to working with Minister Shorten and the NDIA’s CEO, Ms Falkingham on these vital updates to the Lists to ensure the safety and wellbeing of people with disability who have dietary and swallowing needs.

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About Speech Pathology Australia

Speech Pathology Australia (SPA) is Australia's peak body for speech pathologists, representing over 15,000 members. Our purpose is to empower speech pathologists and strengthen access to speech pathology for people with communication and swallowing needs. Learn more at https://www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au/

About Dietitians Australia

Dietitians Australia is the peak industry body for dietetic and nutrition professionals, representing over 9000 members in Australia and overseas.

Our mission is to champion the professional nutrition and dietetic workforce to empower people and communities.

We're the leading voice of the dietetics and nutrition profession.

Find out more at https://dietitiansaustralia.org.au