Government must support Australians with the cost of dietetic care now to reduce the blowout of our chronic disease bill

With 15.4 million Australians currently living with at least one chronic health condition and many struggling to afford to access the healthcare they need; Dietitians Australia is calling on the Government to urgently prioritise subsidising Australians to access dietetic care as part of its 2025-2026Federal pre-budget submission.

The peak body for nutrition and dietetic professionals is pushing for the expansion of the current Medicare Chronic Disease Management program, insisting access to **dietetic care mustn't be considered a luxury – but a necessity** for chronic disease treatment and management in Australia.

"The Government is currently spending$1.18 billion every year just to address dietary risk factors contributing to the chronic disease burden," Dietitians Australia President Dr Fiona Willer said.

"Type 2 diabetes is one example of many chronic conditions that can be managed well, and in Australia, we have 1.2 million people living with type 2 diabetes,costing 2.3 billion to the health system each year.

“There is, therefore, a burgeoning opportunity for dietitians to make a transformational difference in the lives of people living with these conditions and simultaneously generate health system savings.

“For example, nutrition therapy is an effective, evidence-based treatment for type 2 diabetes and for some people in the early stages of the disease, changing the diet can lead to remission of type 2 diabetes.

“Dietitians are skilled at treating the whole person, considering multiple complex health conditions people may be experiencing concurrently, the impact medication may be having on their appetite, their ability to absorb nutrients, and so much more.

“When people receive the nutrition and dietetic care, they need before their conditions worsen, they are far less likely to end up in emergency or a long-term hospital stay.

“For example, people living with a chronic disease conditions can work with a dietitian to manage their health more effectively through nutrition therapy, helping them avoid complications that may require hospitalisation.

“If the Government invested more in dietetic care to support Australians’ access to dietitians, healthcare costs and the impact of chronic disease would be significantly reduced.

“Most importantly, dietitians can enhance the quality of life for millions of Australians at risk of and living with a chronic disease.

“It would go a long way to ensuring Australians are better supported with the out-of-pocket costs and aren’t putting off accessing the diet and nutrition care they need to manage their conditions.

“We strongly recommend raising the allied health service limits within Medicare's Chronic Disease Management (CDM) program to ensure a minimum of 12 dedicated services with Accredited Practising Dietitians annually.

“This is vital to support Australians with the ongoing care and nutrition therapy they need to manage and treat complex diet-related conditions and prevent common complications.

“We implore the Australian government to implement**Recommendation 12 of the State of Diabetes Mellitus** report, which calls for increased and extended dietetic consultations, as dietitians can provide essential guidance to those managing this chronic condition.

“Increasing the use of early-stage support and preventive allied health care, including dietetic care, is a smart investment in our health system.

Dietitians Australia has put forward 11 requests on behalf of its 9000 strong community of dietetic and nutrition professionals to the Government as part of the pre-budget submission calls. These include requests for investment to:

- Expand the Medicare chronic disease management program to guarantee affordable access to essential healthcare
- Ensure children in early childhood education and care settings receive a high standard of nutrition that parents can rely on
- Securing critical dietetic and nutrition supports for National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) participants
- Improve our food system and take urgent nutrition action to ensure Australians have access to affordable, nutritious food and that every household in Australia is food secure.

“Ultimately, by investing in high-value dietetic services, we can curb the chronic disease trajectory and foster healthier communities across Australia,” Dr. Willer said.

"We urge the government to reduce the financial pressure on Australian families, invest in keeping people out of hospital and ultimately empower Australians to live well, through making smart investment commitments in early nutrition supports this budget.

Dietitians Australia’s full pre-budget submission for 2025-2026 can be foundhere.

For interviews with Dietitians Australia President Dr Fiona Willer, please contact 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.