# Weight loss medication and dietitian referrals must go hand in hand

Dietitians Australia, the peak body for dietitians and nutrition professionals, is insisting anyone prescribed a weight loss medication in Australia must also receive a referral to a dietitian for ongoing support.

It comes following calls today from the Royal Australian College of GPs (RACGP) for effective weight management medication to be subsidised under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS).

“We acknowledge the strong and growing evidence base on the efficacy of semaglutide medications for inducing weight loss and regulating blood sugar as well as the significant side effects experienced,” Dietitians Australia President Dr Fiona Willer said.

“We know more Australians are turning to semaglutides for weight loss.

“We also know these medications can have a major impact on people’s appetite and nutrition and it is critical they are well supported by their GP and dietitian.

“Any prescription of weight loss medication in Australia must happen alongside a referral to an accredited practising dietitian, to ensure an individual’s unique nutrition needs and preferences are supported.

“These medications can have significant impacts on people’s appetite and nutrition status and it is vital that dietitians are there to help people prevent malnutrition and to ensure the best possible health outcomes while on these medications.

“We must remember both malnutrition and eating disorders can be life threatening, and this is why dietitians must be engaged to ensure people do not develop restrictive eating

behaviours and become malnourished as a result of being on these medications.

“When people are well nourished, they are less likely to develop diet-related chronic disease, experience cardiac function risks associated with malnutrition and will avoid unnecessary trips to the hospital, and ultimately live healthier lives.

“As part of our commitment to the health and wellbeing of all Australians, Dietitians Australia has long been calling on the Government to commit to funding for people with chronic conditions to access the dedicated nutrition and dietetic support they need, depending on the severity of their condition, at a minimum of 12 sessions annually.

“Many Australians who are being prescribed weight loss medications, or who may be prescribed these medications are living with chronic disease and it is vital they also receive affordable access to dietitians for the nutrition guidance they need to gain health.

**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.