NDIS participants must not be denied the nutrition support they need

Dietitians Australia is urging the newly elected Government not to ignore the critical nutrition needs of NDIS participants and to urgently address the continual knockbacks of nutrition and dietetic therapy support within the scheme.

“We are deeply concerned by a growing number of reports from dietitians working within the disability sector, of participants being repeatedly rejected when requesting critical nutrition care to manage their disability,” Dietitians Australia President Dr Fiona Willer said.

“This is despite clinical reports being provided, highlighting justification in line with the legislative criteria and clear evidence-based need for a participant’s disability and functional capacity.

“NDIS participants around Australia rely on the support of accredited practising dietitians to meet their nutritional and mealtime goals, to eat food that is safe and appropriate to swallow and consume, and to reduce their risk of malnutrition and its associated functional impacts.

“Many participants require comprehensive individualised nutrition support and meal planning, which may include nutrition support products being prescribed including texture-modified foods, thickeners and gastro tube feeding products (Home Enteral Nutrition, HEN).

‘Disturbingly, we are hearing reports from our dietitians that some of these critical and life-sustaining dietetic nutrition support products and HEN products are being denied within the scheme for the first time.

“Safe, nutritious mealtime experiences for people with disability should not be compromised as we navigate the NDIS reforms.

“There are cases where food and fluid are quite literally a lifeline.

“We cannot stand by and allow Australians with disability to be denied essential nutrition care and therapeutic nutrition products, especially when there are circumstances where this can be life-threatening.

“We cannot risk preventable choking deaths.

“The trauma of choking incidents can lead to people with disability developing fears around certain foods, placing them at severe risk of malnutrition.

“Nutrition care designed by a dietitian saves lives.

“Dietitians Australia is continuing to engage the NDIA to provide the clarity needed in the NDIS supports list to ensure that accredited practising dietitians and nutrition support products are funded for participants under the scheme.

“We have made numerous attempts to offer our assistance to both the Government and the NDIA to improve the gaps in the system, and to ensure NDIS participants are being empowered to access the nutrition and dietetic supports they need.

“Dietitians will not stay silent on this issue, Australians with disability deserve to be safe and well nourished.

For media enquiries and interviews, 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.