The month in Australian history where nutrition and dietitians become deeply embedded in Aged Care law - Media release

Dietitians Australia is celebrating this month's historic reform milestone, which cements food, nutrition, and appetising mealtime experiences as central to quality care in the aged care sector.

Under the Strengthened Aged Care Quality Standards that must be upheld under the Act, all residential aged care providers are required to have their food menus and mealtime experiences reviewed by an accredited practising dietitian at least once a year.

"This is a pivotal moment in history for Australian aged care and dietitians who are ready to work much more closely with the sector," Dietitians Australia President Dr Fiona Willer said.

"For the first time, food and nutrition has a dedicated quality standard, backed by legislation, and accredited practising dietitians are legally recognised as a cornerstone of quality, safe, and enjoyable food and nutrition in aged care.

"We know many providers have already embraced the new Quality Standard 6 on Food and Nutrition in the lead up to this legislative change, and we thank all those in the aged care sector and the dietitians who support them for their transformative work to date," said Dr Fiona Willer, President of Dietitians Australia.

“We know better nutrition in aged care is a health investment – it reduces malnutrition, dehydration, falls, pressure injuries, wounds, and unnecessary hospitalisations for residents in care.

“Weight loss and malnutrition should not be considered a normal part of ageing. These are health-related red flags that cannot be ignored.

“Good nutrition helps older people maintain energy levels, their strength, mobility and independence – it also supports memory and thinking skills and vastly improves their quality of life in their ageing years.

“We are very hopeful that more and more aged care providers, chefs, cooks and staff will continue to find innovative ways to work with dietitians, and ensure older Australians are receiving meals suited to their individual preferences, cultural backgrounds, swallowing and dexterity needs.

“We know there is more work to do to make malnutrition in aged care history. We deeply urge the Government and Aged Care providers to continue to embrace the expertise of dietitians widely across the sector.

“We are continuing to advocate to the Government for an increase in allied health dietetic care minutes, and we would like to see a move towards quarterly malnutrition screening of residents, not just on admission to care.

“We look forward to seeing growing numbers of older Australians nourished and finding joy in every mealtime.

For media interviews please contact Amy Phillips on 0409 661 920.