Failing to fund nutrition support now will push health costs even higher - Media Release

Dietitians Australia is urging the Federal Government to use the 2026–27 Budget to make long-term, meaningful investment in nutrition and prevention, warning that continued underinvestment will drive chronic disease rates higher and place even greater pressure on Australia's health system.

Australia's peak body for dietetic and nutrition professionals, Dietitians Australia has put forward 13 evidence-based recommendations as part of its pre-Budget submission, focused on preventing, treating and managing diet-related disease, improving access to nutrition care, and ensuring vital access to dietetic support across early childhood education, aged care and the disability sector.

"Diet is one of the most effective and modifiable drivers of health in Australia, yet nutrition continues to be treated as optional rather than essential in our health budget," Dietitians Australia Chief Executive Officer Magriet Raxworthy said.

According to the most recent data from the Australian Institute of Health and Wellbeing, three of the top risk factors currently contributing to health spending include overweight (including obesity) ($7.0 billion), high blood plasma glucose ($5.6 billion), and impaired kidney function ($3.4 billion).

“We are paying the price of years of underinvestment in diet-related disease prevention, avoidable hospitalisations, and Australians struggling to access the care they need to stay well,” Ms Raxworthy said.

“The consequences of delaying nutrition investment are impossible to ignore.”

Dietitians Australia is calling for urgent action to expand access to Medicare-funded dietetic services, including a minimum of 12 dedicated sessions for people living with chronic disease.

“People living with diabetes, cardiovascular disease and other chronic conditions need affordable access to dietitians to prevent complications, not a system that forces them to delay or forgo care because of cost,” Dietitians Australia President Dr Fiona Willer said.

With the rapid uptake of GLP-1 medicines across Australia, Dietitians Australia is calling for a mandatory referral to an Accredited Practising Dietitian before, during and after use, and funded wraparound nutrition care.

“Dietitians must be embedded as core members of the healthcare team to support Australians using these medicines, to ensure they are gaining health outcomes and avoiding major health risks,” Chief Executive Officer Magriet Raxworthy said.

“When people use GLP-1 medicines without expert nutrition support, they are at risk of malnutrition, eating disorders, loss of muscle and bone mass, and weight regain following treatment.

“Funding GLP-1 medicines without adequate nutrition support undermines their effectiveness and becomes an investment that simply doesn’t deliver sustainable value. Ultimately, the health system will end up paying again,” she said.

"We’re also calling on the Government to invest in stronger nutrition standards and on-the-ground dietetic support in early childhood education and care, multidisciplinary care in aged care, and guaranteed access to dietetic services for NDIS participants,” Dietitians Australia

President Dr Fiona Willer said.

The organisation is also urging investment in a National Public Health Nutrition Mass Media Campaign, aligned with the rollout of the revised Australian Dietary Guidelines, and targeted measures to secure a sustainable dietetic workforce.

Dietitians Australia Chief Executive Officer Magriet Raxworthy said the 2026–27 Budget represents a critical opportunity for the Government to shift from short-term fixes to long-term health reform.

“We should not be continually paying for avoidable health costs. This Budget is a chance to put the health system on a more sustainable footing.”

For interviews please contact Media Manager Amy Phillips on 0409 661 920