International Women's Day 2026

From one generation to the next: A mother and daughter's shared journey in dietetics.

This International Women's Day, we celebrate two generations of women who share more than a family bond - they share a profession and a passion for improving health through nutrition.

When Tania Wiesmayr-Freeman graduated from Deakin University, Geelong campus in 1991, dietetics in Victoria was a small, competitive field. She completed a Bachelor of Science with a Major in Nutrition and a Graduate Diploma of Dietetics, joining one of just 25 students accepted that year. From an early age, she had been drawn to healthcare - influenced by a childhood hospital stay, her interest in cooking, and learning about naturopathy from her aunt.

"So I wanted to be a Doctor, Nurse or Dietitian. I didn't have the marks for a Doctor and I didn't like the idea of shiftwork or wearing a uniform so it was Dietetics. Sounds really simplistic now, but those can be some of the things that 15 yr old's think about !!"

Beyond practicality, Tania's ambition was also global. "Being raised in a Christian household I also thought I wanted a career which I could take outside Australia to support people in countries with less health services. I felt Dietetics and Nutrition would fulfil that goal as well."

She reflects on how her determination set her apart at the time: "I stood out from a lot of females in my school because I had a specific career in mind and I worked really hard to get the marks to get into the degree... I can't thank my parents enough for encouraging me and supporting me to do a University degree of my choosing."



Tania and Yasmin on bike: 'When Yasmin was 2-3 yr old on the bike. Yasmin was born in South Africa when I was working as a Dietitian there.'

A profession that has transformed

Hospital dietetics in the 1990s required hands-on, detailed work. Dietitians calculated parenteral nutrition by hand, closely monitored patient meal orders, and spent significant time working with kitchen and catering teams.

“In the 90's there weren't triple phase TPN bags. Dietitians would calculate how much protein, carb and fat each patient would need, as well as micronutrients and trace elements.”

Resources were guarded, and dietitians often developed educational handouts independently each year. Tania recalls, “Each hospital was very protective of their education handouts. There was no sharing and caring.”

Over the decades, she has witnessed significant evolution. Group education has shifted from hospital wards to community settings, telehealth has transformed service delivery, and understanding of eating disorders and weight-neutral care has expanded. Yet challenges remain. “On reflection however, I still feel that Dietitians are not valued in the community... we still don't have adequate Dietitians in Hospitals, in Community Health Services or in integrated services.”

A Different Path

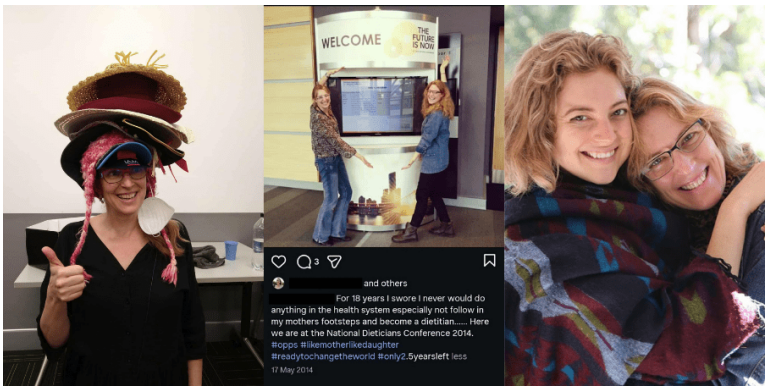
Tania’s daughter, Yasmin Wiesmayr-Freeman, initially had little interest in following her mother’s footsteps.

“Honestly, I never wanted to become a dietitian. I was always set on having a career in the Creative Arts, and definitely not follow in my mother’s footsteps (funny how statements come back to haunt you),” said Yasmin.

After a year studying Visual Art at QUT, Yasmin realised she missed science, particularly biology, and working with people. “Next thing I knew… I was studying Dietetics, with a goal of working clinically in hospitals, and ideally overseas… accidentally following in my mothers footsteps.”

Tania recalls her initial reaction with surprise and pride. “I was utterly shocked when Yasmin said she wanted to be a Dietitian. It came out of nowhere.”

Despite her surprise, Tania quickly saw her daughter excel. “In clinical placement she was like a duck in water - she was great with people and loved the academic side too.” says Tania. Yasmin later completed Honours research in Samoa through the New Colombo Plan Scholarship, echoing Tania’s own early international work experience.



Images from left to right.

Hats: *'This was one of the lectures I gave to students. It was my 'hat talk'. I would talk about all the different jobs* (hats) that I had had over my life. It highlighted the various jobs I had using my dietetic and nutrition skills. '*

Tania and Yasmin at DA conference in 2014*: 'It was surreal when we both attended our first DA (DAA) conference together. It was in 2014 and being held in Brisbane. Yasmin was still a Dietetic student. We had a great time enjoying the conference together.'*

Tania and Yasmin: '*Yasmin and I when she was doing her Honours year*'

Independence and Mentorship

Studying dietetics at the same university where her mother later lectured required careful navigation. Yasmin ensured her independence:

“I was very conscious to not be or be perceived as a dietitian ‘nepo baby’… I’ve always worked hard to be a dietitian in my own merit, intentionally limited involving mum much regarding my university studies/assessment, and intentionally taken jobs that were not where mum had worked.” Yasmin said.

Still, having a mother with decades of experience proved invaluable. “It however has been very handy at times when I need to think out loud within the bound of confidentiality about a complex case or to vent about the challenges of advocating for nutrition in hospital settings… Mum was an excellent role model. She showed me that a career could be creative, challenging, often very frustrating and rewarding.”

Tania also developed a mentoring approach inspired by her conversations with Yasmin during placements. She initiated weekly peer tutorials and one-on-one check-ins for clinical students, creating safe spaces for students to share highs, lows, and lessons learned. Over her career, she mentored many new graduates through the Dietitians Australia program, often helping students persevere during early career challenges.



Yasmin Rostrum Graduation: '*Yasmin receiving her testamur with her name on the screen. I am sitting in the background with the academics, third from the left.*'

Shaping the Future of Dietetics

Today, Yasmin works predominantly in child and youth mental health and eating disorders - a field that reflects one of the profession’s most significant evolutions.

“A key area I’ve seen evolve is the change from weight centric models, to weight neutral/ health at every size models. This is an important shift, that has greatly improved the outcomes and experience of people working with dietitians,” she explains.

She has also seen the increasing integration of dietitians in mental health care, promoting holistic health and wellbeing.

Both mother and daughter value the connection Dietitians Australia provides. Tania reflects, “It means that I am part of a larger community of dietitians who has a voice and who is recognised... The DA conference was absolutely wonderful for me... I love DA conferences!”

Yasmin, who recently served on the DA Tasmania Branch Committee, shares: “It helped give me perspective into the work DA does behind the scenes, especially regarding advocacy, policy and promoting our profession.”



Images from left to right.

Graduation Family: *'Yasmin and parents Andrew and Tania at her graduation.'*

Tania and Yasmin: *'Just a nice photo of us together while we visited her in Tasmania in 2023.'*

Yasmin's graduation with both in gowns: *'I was on the stage in my University regalia when Yasmin crossed the floor in her graduation gown to accept her Testamur.'*

A Shared Legacy

For Tania, retirement marks the close of a distinguished career spanning hospitals, functional food manufacturing, lecturing, and mentoring. For Yasmin, her professional journey continues, shaping a new generation of practice. Together, they embody the evolution of dietetics - and the impact of mentorship and advocacy.

Sometimes, influence doesn’t look like persuasion - it looks like leading with purpose.

For content enquires contact Georgia at content@dietitiansaustralia.org.au

*Tania Wiesmayr-Freeman's Hats (roles)

The students loved this talk. Jobs I've had utilising my Dietetics skills are:

Hospital, Community Health and Private Practice Dietitian in Australia, Hospital Dietitian in an urban Zulu hospital, Hospital Dietitian in remote Kwazulu-Natal where I used to get flown with other health professionals to provide services in 4 small bush hospitals. Hospital based Dietetic Clinical Education Officer, Research Governance Officer, Alied Health Education Officer, Patient Safety Officer, Project Manager, Quality and Safety Manager, Complaints Officer, Founding Director of Fermented Food and Beverage Business, Private Food and Beverage Dietetic consultant (formulations, labels), Consultancy services for U.S. based Accredited Dietetic Education Business, University Dietetic Placement Coordinator, Nutrition and Dietetic Lecturer, Consultant Dietitian for Honiara Hospital (Solomon Islands).