Don’t rush the bill: Protecting dietetic support in the NDIS will save lives

Dietitians Australia is continuing its call on Australian federal and state governments to guarantee that people with disability won't lose access to essential nutrition and dietetic support as the NDIS is reformed.

With Senate hearings on the NDIS Integrity Bill underway this week, Dietitians Australia is continuing its advocacy through Allied Health Professions Australia (AHPA), which is representing the profession before the Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee today.

Dietitians Australia has lodged a submission and contributed toAHPA’s submission to the Committee, calling for this NDIS reform bill to be amended before it passes.

“Alongside our allied health colleagues, we’re urging the Committee to strengthen participant safeguards, protect review rights, and ensure that cost-effectiveness is achieved through timely, evidence-based supports that optimise participant outcomes and long-term scheme sustainability, consistent with the scheme’s fundamental principles,” Dietitians Australia President Dr Fiona Willer said.

“We strongly support efforts to stamp out fraud and improve scheme sustainability, but when funding is cut, a person's needs don't disappear; they show up in hospitals and emergency departments instead.

“It’s unacceptable that Australians were given just over a fortnight to respond to what amounts to more than 400 pages of highly technical legislation and explanatory material. This is an inadequate timeframe for a bill of this consequence.”

The emergent NSW and WA Thriving Kids programs have already indicated that privately provided dietetic support will likely not be included, a potentially disastrous gap in fundamental supports.

“Thousands of Australian people with disability rely on having access to dietetic support to eat safely, function, and stay out of hospital,” Dr Willer said.

“Dietitians play a critical role for many NDIS participants, particularly children with complex disabilities, feeding difficulties, and swallowing disorders.

“Making it harder for them to access vital dietetic support, simply put, is dangerous.

“We’ve urgently written to senior officials in New South Wales and Western Australia responsible for Thriving Kids implementation, seeking meetings to make the case for dietitians being embedded in the program's design from the outset.”

And finally, Dietitians Australia has made a[submission to the parliamentary inquiry into NDIS integrity](), calling for participant-centred planning that preserves access to essential nutrition and dietetic supports.

“We’ve made it clear to the Committee that NDIS integrity cannot be measured by fraud reduction alone,” Dr Willer said.

“Poorly designed policy is itself an integrity risk – when dietitians aren't explicitly recognised in the NDIS, participants and providers face confusion, and people fall through the gaps.

“Without clear boundaries between the NDIS and the health system, the demand and cost of supporting people with disability will shift onto GPs, hospitals and community health services that are already stretched to their limits.

“So, across the board, we’re fighting hard to maintain positive functional outcomes for participants, enable an efficient NDIS, and ultimately improve the sustainability of the scheme.

“Nutrition and dietetic care is not peripheral in disability reform; it’s central to whether participants stay healthy, out of hospital, and able to live the lives they choose.”

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