

Our Healthcare Future: Allied Health Workforce 2040

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Dietitians Australia is the national association of the dietetic profession with over 7500 members, and branches in each state and territory. Dietitians Australia is the leading voice in nutrition and dietetics and advocates for food and nutrition for healthier people and healthier communities. Dietitians Australia appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback to Tasmanian Government regarding Our Healthcare Future: Allied Health Workforce 2040

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Dietitians Australia interest in this consultation

As the leading organisation of nutrition and dietetic professionals in Australia, Dietitians Australia supports reforms to allied health workforce 2040.

The Accredited Practising Dietitian (APD) program provides an assurance of safety and quality and is the foundation of self-regulation of the dietetic profession in Australia. Accredited Practising Dietitians have an important role to play in Tasmanian Healthcare system.

This submission was prepared by the Dietitians Australia (Tasmania Branch) following the Conflict of Interest Management Policy and process approved by the Board of Dietitians Australia. This policy can be viewed on the [Dietitians Australia website](#). The Tasmania Branch membership is comprised of Dietitians Australia members with wide ranging expertise across the government, non-government, and community sectors in areas including acute care, primary care, community nutrition and public health nutrition.

Recommendations:

1. Invest in dietetic clinical governance and leadership in the primary care and community care sector as well as outreach services for district hospitals across Tasmania to address a significant gap in services in this area. Strengthen investment in clinical and community dietitian services across the existing Tasmanian public service to a level at least equivalent to the National rate. Noting that needs in Tasmania may be greater than the National average due to an older age demographic and increasing rates of diet-related chronic conditions and risk factors (diabetes, heart disease, some cancers, obesity and overweight etc).

Related consultation question – Reform Initiative 1: How can we target our current investment as well as future investments in health to ensure a sustainable and balanced mix of services are delivered across the whole of the health system to provide right care in the right place at the right time?

2. Provide protection and security to existing dietetic services in the acute sector, community nutrition and public health nutrition from budget cuts. Good nutrition is fundamental to health and wellbeing and the prevention of chronic diseases. Improvements in nutrition and a reduction in diet-related chronic conditions are associated with lowering the cost burden to the Tasmanian healthcare system.

Related consultation question – Reform Initiative 3b: How should the Health Workforce 2040 strategy be further refined to guide and inform the development of a strong and suitable professional workforce that is aligned to meeting the future health needs of Tasmanians?

3. Increase recognition and acknowledgement of the specific role of dietetic services in the Tasmanian Role Delineation Framework and Clinical Services Profile.

Related consultation question – Reform Initiative 3b: What changes are needed to our health workforce to more closely align our professional health teams with the future needs of Tasmanians?

Key messages:

- The 2015 World Health Organisation (WHO) strategy report states that “The foundations for a strong and effective health workforce able to respond to the priority needs of the 21st century

require matching today's supply of health professional with the demand of tomorrow's populations".

- The Department of Health, Australian Government report in 2018 on "Australia's Future Health Workforce" has no mention of the dietetics workforce because it is not a registered profession under the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency. Dietetics is a self-regulated profession with regulator requirements aligned with the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency.
- Recent analysis of Australian dietetic workforce indicated an average of 15 dietitians per 1000,000 people nationally. However, in Tasmania, according to the Executive Reporting System Human Resources: Establishment in 2018 demonstrated 9.6 FTE dietitians per 100,00 population.
- An increase in the dietetic workforce in Tasmania, at least to match the national capacity ratio, would contribute to an improvement in the nutritional status of Tasmanians throughout the healthcare system from public health (primary prevention through to primary care, community care and acute care. This will lead to significant cost savings for the Tasmanian healthcare system by
 - minimising the cost burden from malnutrition- Dietitians Australia recent Position Statement, [Malnutrition in Aged Care](#), shows more than \$80million in savings nation wide with investing in dietetic services
 - reducing chronic health conditions associated with nutrition including overweight/obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease and some cancers
 - preventing avoidable hospital admissions associated with nutrition for example reducing falls in the elderly, chronic wound care and delayed wound healing post surgeries.
- Priority should be considered to a review of nutrition and dietetic services in the Tasmanian healthcare system to address current service shortages, bridging service gaps between primary prevention/public health, primary care, community care and acute care and planning the workforce for future needs of Tasmanians.

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