

26 May 2021

Clare O'Neil MP  
Shadow Minister for Senior Australians and Aged Care Services  
House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

**By email: [clare.oneil.mp@aph.gov.au](mailto:clare.oneil.mp@aph.gov.au)**

Dear Shadow Minister

Dietitians Australia wish to express our concern regarding the continued elevated rates of 'unintentional weight loss' experienced by elderly Australians in residential aged care homes. The National Aged Care Mandatory Quality Indicator Program shows a grim picture.

It is alarming that in the October-December 2020 quarter:

- 14,985 aged care residents recorded three or more kilograms of unplanned weight loss.
- 15,274 residents recorded weight loss every month over a three-month period.

These figures are cause for serious alarm and prompt action. Accredited Practising Dietitians (APDs) are an essential part of reversing the rates of unintended weight loss and malnutrition in residential aged care. Currently APD services are only called upon by aged care providers when large amounts of weight have been lost and malnutrition is established. The current lack of provision of adequate food and fluids and access to APD services represents elder abuse by neglect or omission.

Dietitians Australia is calling for the following actions:

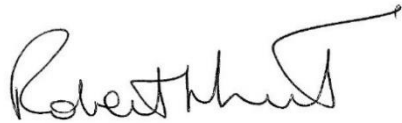
- The National Aged Care Mandatory Quality Indicator for 'unplanned weight loss' should be replaced with 'malnutrition' in residential aged care, as malnutrition risk and prevalence are not captured in the current quality indicator.
- In accordance with 'Recommendation 38' in the Royal Commission final report, there should be a mandate that approved providers of residential aged care employ (or retain) at least one dietitian, leading to improved quality of life for residents and savings of millions of dollars.
- The Australian Government should urgently develop and implement a national policy for nutrition care in residential aged care, which includes standards for meals and the mealtime environment, standards for assistance with eating and drinking, and annual obligations to a review (by an Accredited Practising Dietitian) on the nutritional adequacy of food provided to residents.

Both myself and members of our Advocacy and Policy team would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you to discuss these issues and to offer our expertise about broader issues relating to food and nutrition.

We have previously met with Minister Richard Colbeck and his advisors on this and are now looking to gain your support as well.

We look forward to a meeting at your convenience.

Yours sincerely



Robert Hunt  
Chief Executive Officer