

10 March 2021

The Hon James Merlino MP
Deputy Premier
Level 3, 1 Treasury Place
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

By email: james.merlino@parliament.vic.gov.au

Dear Deputy Premier,

I welcome last week's release of the final report from the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System and I commend the Andrews Government on its commitment to implement every one of the report's recommendations.

I am encouraged to see that mental health is recognised as inextricably linked to physical health and that dietitians were identified in the report as supporting people living with mental illness. When these points are properly addressed in system reforms, they will improve equity of access to the right health services for all people living with mental illness.

Accredited Practising Dietitians (APDs) play a critical role in improving the symptoms of some mental illnesses and in preventing, treating and managing commonly associated chronic physical illnesses like heart disease, diabetes and osteoporosis. Our [Briefing Paper on Mental Health](#) includes more detail on the role of dietitians in mental health services.

Extending access to APDs in mental health services can have a substantial positive and cost-effective impact on the quality of life of people living with mental illness. I implore you to advocate to your Federal colleagues for greater access to dietetic services through Medicare (both in person and via [telehealth](#)) to ensure Victorians living with mental illness are receiving optimum physical and mental health care. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss the vital role of dietitians in mental health further with you and to offer our expertise to your advisors.

Your government is in a powerful position to spearhead the reforms so desperately needed in the mental health system across Australia.

Yours sincerely



Robert Hunt
Chief Executive Officer