

Advocacy Policy

Dietitians Australia is committed to improving the nation's health and promoting the dietetic profession. Advocacy is essential for Dietitians Australia to achieve its vision and goals of the strategic plan. Advocacy relates to the following points of Dietitians Australia's strategic objectives:

- Empowerment
 - Build the capacity for advocacy within the membership
 - Maximise opportunities to utilise full scope of practice
- Excellence
 - Champion the advancement of practice
 - Lead translation of evidence into practice
- Engagement
 - Build member satisfaction
 - Communicate credible and timely nutrition messages to the public

Dietitians Australia's Advocacy Policy and process will involve Dietitians Australia Board, the Advocacy and Policy Advisory Committee, member engagement committees, interest groups, key stakeholders, and our thousands of members as appropriate and as directed by the CEO and Board.

What is advocacy?

Advocacy is the deliberate pursuit of changes in policy, attitudes, behaviour, and decision making, usually in the public interest.¹

Successful advocacy relies on strategic thinking, planning, relationships with key stakeholders and a good understanding of audiences (i.e., their motivations, roles, influences, frames of reference).

Advocacy also relies on understanding the political and economic landscapes of the day and the priorities of governments and health and food industries. Alliances and relationships with decision makers is crucial.

Advocacy understands that the policy space is crowded and to get issues addressed and to effect change requires persuasive and well based arguments that are communicated to key decision-makers in government or industry. It is also important to communicate with decision-makers on shared values and approaches to policy decisions and to take opportunities that arise, i.e. 'trigger' or opportunistic moments for policy comment.

Advocacy will be a combination of:

- proactive and planned submissions, position statements &/or papers, discussions, and other activities
- reactive responses to an event, issue or policy decision by governments or the private sector.

How does Dietitians Australia set the advocacy agenda?

A variety of sources will feed into setting the advocacy agenda.

- Dietitians Australia Board will set the strategic plan and key priority areas for advocacy.
- The Advocacy and Policy Advisory Committee (APAC) will identify areas of priority and advise the Board.
- Dietitians will be engaged to form Dietitians Australia's position on key issues (e.g., appointed as Subject Matter Leads (SML), consulted via Interest Group Chairs, Interest and Discussion Group members) and will work with the APAC committee.
- Dietitians Australia Policy and Advocacy staff will work with APAC and Interest and Discussion Group members to present material to the Board for consideration.
- Member Interest and Discussion Groups in their yearly planning will identify areas for advocacy and advise APAC and the Board.
- When the Board approves areas for proactive priority advocacy, Dietitians Australia will allocate policy staff to those priority areas.

Lobbying

Lobbying is a form of advocacy that Dietitians Australia will use from time to time. Ethical lobbying is a legitimate activity and an important part of the democratic process. Lobbying can generally be defined as any attempt to influence a politician or government official on an issue in order to influence the decision of the government. This can involve direct or grass roots lobbying.

- **Direct lobbying:** Any attempt to influence new or existing legislation via communication with a member of the political landscape who has a say in the legislation.
- **Grassroots lobbying:** Asking the general public to contact their legislator and/or mobilising the public around a legislative issue. Examples of grassroots lobbying include creating an online petition to generate public support for a cause, distributing flyers, and organising a public demonstration or rally. This is more an Activist activity.

There are laws around lobbying and using organisations as lobbyists that are set out by the federal government and state governments.

Activism

Activism is the process of campaigning for a cause in public or working for an organisation to bring about political or social change. It has been described as the action of using vigorous campaigning to bring about political or social change.

The difference between lobbying and activism is that activism uses more emotional means and generally appeals to the general public and interest groups for support.

From time to time Dietitians Australia may seek to engage members in some "activist" processes such as writing to all their local members about matters the Board sees as vital to the profession. In this circumstance Dietitians Australia will provide material and wording for those activities to provide a unified voice.

Members Role in Legislation and public policy issues

Any Position Statement Dietitians Australia puts out, members can use to advocate to other professionals, clients and policy makers using the material Dietitians Australia has supplied. In that case the material will come on Dietitians Australia letterhead. Members cannot use Dietitians Australia branding for any other purpose without first getting the approval of the content through either the CEO or the Board.

Areas of advocacy

Dietitians Australia will advocate at various government, media and community levels for the profession, the client group and members of the public in the following jurisdictions:

- National - including local members of parliament, ministers, government department secretaries and directors
- State, local and regional governments and communities
- Private sector organisations as appropriate
- Not for profit entities
- Members of the public

Dietitians Australia will continue to form partnerships with similar-valued organisations to advocate and strengthen their case. Dietitians Australia will advocate for client groups from their base of knowledge and experience (e.g., in the areas of aged care, disability, mental health, First Nations peoples and issues relating to health care delivery).

Strategic Advocacy Framework Objectives

1. Set organisational advocacy agenda and priorities

Through evidence-based research, publications, data, government policy, member needs and the Dietitians Australia strategic plan, the advocacy priority projects will be set.

2. Influence decision and policy makers

Through planned advocacy campaigns, as set in the advocacy agenda (e.g., letters, position papers and/or statements, strategic partnerships, marketing, events, etc).

3. Advocacy for funding

Identifying available funding sources (e.g., grant submissions, strategic partnerships, promotion).

4. Build strategic partnerships

Organisations, peak bodies, alliances that support our advocacy and that we can work with to influence policy and decision makers.

5. Tell our story

Sharing the Dietitians Australia story with members, the community, policy makers, etc. around our vision, priorities, values, opportunities, and challenges.

Strengthen our position as the go-to experts in the field of nutrition.

6. Build confidence in the membership

Communicate to our members the advocacy being done on their behalf.

7. Build the advocacy capacity of members

Promote a culture of advocacy within the profession. Increase skill level and confidence of members to advocate on their, their client's and the organisation's behalf.

Setting the advocacy agenda

The Dietitians Australia Board and CEO will determine the advocacy agenda from recommendations of the APAC after advice from Interest and Discussion groups and members. In circumstances where agility and quick responses are needed, the APAC and CEO are empowered to make decisions to advocate on issues. The Board will respond to the majority opinion or make a decision they feel is needed. Not everyone will agree with the Board decision every time.

A variety of sources will feed into setting the advocacy agenda:

- Dietitians Australia Board, APAC and/or CEO may set and approve areas for proactive advocacy, responding to and looking for opportunistic 'trigger' moments.
- APAC and Dietitians Australia policy staff will identify areas of priority.
- Member interest groups will identify areas for advocacy.
- External agencies may approach Dietitians Australia to partner.
- Response to media articles & opinions and other situations that may arise.

References

1. https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/default-document-library/racp-advocacy-framework.pdf?sfvrsn=1d340b1a_2