

26 February 2021

The Hon Warren Snowdon MP
Assistant Shadow Minister for Indigenous Australians
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

By email: Warren.Snowden.MP@aph.gov.au

Dear Assistant Shadow Minister Snowdon

As COVID-19 vaccines roll out this week, I would like to extend my congratulations on the leadership the Opposition has shown to support the health of Australians as we continue to live through the virus pandemic. Now is a prime opportunity to capitalise on the national focus on health, and push the Government to officially announce the permanency of telehealth allied health services.

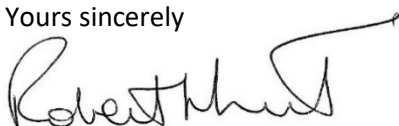
On 27 November last year, Minister for Health and Aged Care, the Hon Greg Hunt, advised Australians that telehealth would be made a permanent part of Medicare and be universally available for all Australians. This announcement was enthusiastically welcomed by dietitians and their patients across Australia, who because of telehealth were able to take control of their health during the pandemic. Engagement in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander dietetics follow ups almost doubled due to this improved access. However, the lack of information about what conditions might apply to see a dietitian via telehealth is causing patients great concern.

As the peak body for Dietitians in Australia, Dietitians Australia would be glad to offer our expertise to your advisors about the value of telehealth for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and any conditions that should be placed on telehealth dietetics, to ensure all Australians are receiving high quality dietetic care in person, online or over the phone.

This matter is urgent, with current Medicare telehealth items expiring after 31 March 2021 and no information public about their permanency or any conditions of access. Hence, I implore you to support your colleague Shadow Minister Butler in holding the Government to account and upholding their promise to make telehealth universally available to Australians. I will also be speaking with your colleagues with relevant shadow ministries, in the crossbench, and those in government about this critical issue.

I look forward to hearing Labor's support for including permanent telehealth over the next month.

Yours sincerely



Robert Hunt
Chief Executive Officer