

10 May 2021

Adjunct Professor Shelley Nowlan
Deputy National Rural Health Commissioner
Department of Health
GPO Box 9848
CANBERRA ACT 2601

By email: NRHC@health.gov.au

Dear Prof Nowlan

Congratulations on your appointment as Deputy National Rural Health Commissioner.

As you begin your work with the Federal Government's agenda to increase rural health services and address rural workforce shortages it is essential that access to dietitians and the role of dietitians, food and nutrition in health and quality of life are considered. Dietitians Australia has long advocated for recognition of this and we hope you can support this.

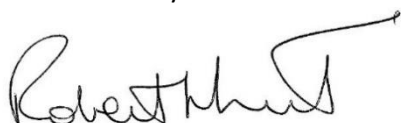
An area of recent work is in telehealth and its benefits to rural communities and Accredited Practising Dietitians' patient groups. These include:

- Increasing ease of access for those who are unable to or find it difficult to travel (for example, people who do not drive, require time off work or childcare, in lockdown, border town residents and carers).
- Reducing the potential health impacts from travelling to an appointment for clients who are in rural and remote locations with health conditions such as chronic fatigue, mental health conditions, mobility issues and people who are immune compromised.
- Eliminating travel time for all clients, regardless of location, and travel costs (for example, public transport, fuel/parking, taxi fares) which is particularly beneficial for clients with low income.
- Reducing fail to attend rates to appointments therefore improving continuity of care and reducing waiting lists.
- Expanding health services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Dietitians Australia [Position paper](#) on the benefits of telehealth and access to dietetic services provides more detailed information.

We are asking for your support to advocate for the continuation of telehealth as a permanent feature of the health care system and that dietitians are consulted in this process. Dietitians Australia would be glad to discuss these issues, and the role of food and nutrition in health and wellbeing further with you.

Yours sincerely



Robert Hunt
Chief Executive Officer