

Dietitians behind the push for emphasis on nutrition in Government's Early Years Strategy

Dietitians Australia has welcomed the opportunity to contribute to the development of the Commonwealth Government's *Early Years Strategy*, advocating for a strong emphasis on food and nutrition as part of the national vision for supporting the future of Australian children.

It comes following a roundtable held this week, bringing together accredited practising dietitians from around the country, providing critical insights into how nutrition underpins the health, well-being, education, and development of children in their foundational years.

"If we're serious about setting up children for the best start in life, dietitians have to continue to be at the table," Dietitians Australia President Tara Diversi said.

"We commend the Minister for Social Services, the Hon Amanda Rishworth MP and Minister for Education and Youth Dr Anne Aly MP, for leading this work and enabling dietitians to contribute to this much-needed strategy," Ms Diversi said.

"Every Australian family and child deserve to be able to access affordable expert food and nutrition support through accredited practising dietitians.

"The *Early Years Strategy* must provide a direction that ensures dietitians, and the expert nutrition advice we offer are within reach for all Australian families and be backed with a budget that ensures its implementation.

"This is an opportunity for the Government to acknowledge that expert food and nutrition support is not only a health service, but a critical component of all areas of early childhood development.

"Access to dietitians should be prioritised and integrated across all areas of social service and health delivery," Ms Diversi said.

"Embedding food and nutrition within Australia's *Early Years Strategy*, together with evidence-informed services, workforce training and funding models, means that we can ensure children have the nutrients for optimal growth, brain function, and long-term health, setting them on a path towards a brighter future," Accredited Practising Dietitian and Professor at the Flinders Caring Futures Institute Rebecca Golley said.

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“The *Early Years Strategy* is an opportunity for parents, caregivers, schools, and communities to work together to cultivate a culture that values healthy eating habits and the role of nutrition in the first years of a child’s life,” Professor Golley said.

“The first 2000 days, from conception to five years is a critical time to shape lifelong eating behaviours and health outcomes,” Advanced Accredited Practising Dietitian at the Deakin Institute for Physical Activity and Nutrition (IPAN) Dr Penny Love said.

“Australian children spend a significant amount of time, an average of thirty- one hours a week or more than four days in childcare.

“Providing a supportive food environment within childcare should therefore form an essential component of the *Early Years Strategy*,” Dr Love said.

Read more about the Australian Government’s *Early Years Strategy* [here](#).

To read Dietitians Australia’s full submission to the Department of Social Services *Early Years Strategy* [click here](#).

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