

Priorities for Federal Election 2025

Briefing paper

Dietitians Australia is calling on the Federal Parliament to support the following requests, to improve the health and well-being of Australians.

Primary Care

1. Implementing recommendation 12 of The State of Diabetes Mellitus in Australia in 2024:
 - a. Access to longer appointments with a health care provider, including Accredited Practising Dietitians, through Medicare for those people diagnosed with diabetes.
Cost: \$400 million per annum - items to attract double the current Medicare benefit
 - b. Increase in the number of Medicare Item numbers for allied health consultations for Australians with diabetes to access diabetes educators, dietitians and other allied health providers.
2. Increasing allied health service limits for Medicare's Chronic Disease Management (CDM) program to include a minimum of 12 dedicated services with Accredited Practising Dietitians per year.
Cost: \$310 million per annum (includes 1(b) above), based on current benefit and average rate of uptake

NDIS Pricing

1. Increase prices for NDIS therapy supports, including dietetic supports, in line with wage increases of 3.19%.

Early Childhood

1. Strengthen food and nutrition regulations, standards and practical guidance for Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) services to improve national health outcomes from an early age.
2. Fund on-the-ground food environment support from Accredited Practising Dietitians for ECEC services in all jurisdictions through an initial on-site visit and six-monthly follow-up visits.

Cost: \$32.5 million per annum (\$35.86 per centre-based child/per annum) for on-the-ground Accredited Practising Dietitian support.

Background

Primary care consumer need:

- 15.4 million (61%) Australians of all ages were living with at least one chronic health condition in 2022. This rate increases with age - 28% of 0–14 year olds to 94% of people 85 and over.
- The Australian Government spends \$1.18 billion dollars every year addressing dietary risk factors that contribute to chronic disease burden.
- \$320 million is spent each year on avoidable hospitalisations of people with heart disease, asthma, diabetes and other chronic diseases.
- Currently only 5 sessions per year shared between 13 allied health professions are available through the CDM.
- Current Medicare Chronic Disease Management Program does not meet best practice standards for dietetic care. It does not allow enough consultations for Australians.
- The Department of Veterans' Affairs recognises the need for longer consultations with a higher benefit for extended initial and subsequent consultations.

NDIS consumer need

- NDIS therapy supports pricing hasn't increased for 5 years.
- Pricing limits are driving dietitians out of the NDIS, threatening service availability, particularly in rural and remote areas.
- 24% of surveyed dietitians, providing NDIS services, plan to reduce or stop services.
- 25% of surveyed dietitians highlight disproportionate impacts on regional or remote participants.
- Rising operational costs and workforce challenges threaten the sustainability of dietetic businesses at current pricing and jeopardise access to nutrition support especially in underserved areas for people with disability.

Early childhood consumer need

- ECEC services play a critical role in shaping children's early food preferences, eating habits, and nutritional intakes, impacting their long-term health, development, and relationships with food.
- National Regulations and National Quality Standards for the ECEC sector provide limited guidance for food and nutrition, leading to varied interpretations and applications across jurisdictions.
- Currently, only 3 states (NSW, TAS, VIC) provide nutrition support to ECEC services, creating inequitable access and compromising food environment quality across jurisdictions.
- Strengthened regulations, standards and on-the-ground support from Accredited Practising Dietitians will enable ECEC services to create best-practice food environments, protect children from nutritional vulnerability and strengthen preventive health outcomes for children attending ECEC services.
- A nationally coordinated program would provide high-standard support, prioritising the most disadvantaged areas first.

What we do

Dietitians Australia is the national association of the dietetic profession with over **9,000 members across Australia**, and branches in each state and territory.

Dietitians Australia is the leading voice in nutrition and dietetics and advocates for food and nutrition for healthier people and healthier communities. Dietitians Australia also administers the Accredited Practising Dietitian program, which provides an assurance of safety and quality and is the foundation of self-regulation of the dietetic profession in Australia.