

18 August 2015

Chief of Staff
Channel 7 - Sunday Night

Dear Madam,

Re: Paleo diet on *Sunday Night* (16 August 2015)

The Dietitians Association of Australia (DAA) was disappointed to see the story on Mike Willesee's 'Paleo challenge: The first five weeks' given air-time on Channel 7's *Sunday Night* program (16 August 2015). This one-sided piece seemed to be a blatant promotion of the personal dietary views of one of the network's prime time stars, celebrity chef Pete Evans.

Nutrition advice must come from those qualified to provide it

As with any field, it is crucial that those providing advice are qualified to do so. The qualified nutrition professionals in Australia are Accredited Practising Dietitians (APDs), who have years of university study behind them, and base decisions and advice on scientific fact. Like other health professionals, APDs are bound by professional standards and accountable for the advice they provide.

Following the Australian Dietary Guidelines = A step in the right direction for many Australians

DAA applauds Mike Willesee's resolve to improve his diet. From watching *Sunday Night*, it appears many aspects of his former diet (such as overdoing sugar-sweetened carbonated drinks) were inconsistent with the recommendations of the Australian Dietary Guidelines (ADG)*. So regardless of whether he goes the 'Paleo way' or not, tweaking these habits will undoubtedly make a difference to his health and weight.

Evidence for the Paleo diet is limited

As Mike rightly points out, his 'road test' of the Paleo diet and the outcomes of this are anecdotal – so no match for well-designed scientific studies in nutrition, involving many people. When it comes to the 'Paleo diet', there is insufficient good-quality research to support the health benefits often claimed by advocates of the diet. In fact, the Paleo diet has been studied in very few people and certainly not over the long term.

Eliminating grains, legumes and dairy is without scientific basis

DAA acknowledges that there are some good aspects of the Paleo Diet – such as the focus on nutritious, whole foods, which APDs also recommend. However, eliminating grains, legumes and dairy foods is without scientific basis, other than for people with a diagnosed food allergy or intolerance. In addition, demonising certain foods incorrectly suggests these foods are a barrier standing between healthy and unhealthy living. This is overly simplistic and misleading.

Bubba Yum Yum book: Gross under-representation of the issues in *Sunday Night* interview

Of most concern to DAA from the *Sunday Night* program was the inaccurate statements relating to the DIY infant formula promoted in the book 'Bubba Yum Yum: The Paleo way for new mums, babies and toddlers'. The very serious concerns raised about Bubba Yum Yum earlier in the year were not mentioned in the *Sunday Night* interview, and Australian health professional's well-publicised concerns were essentially dismissed.

So to be clear, the issues included (but were not limited to):

- The DIY liver and bone broth-based infant formula was promoted in the 0-6 month section of the book, as a sole source of nutrition, along with the statement: '(The DIY infant formula) is a wonderful alternative and the next best thing when breast isn't an option'. This was despite a lack of clinical studies into its safety and efficacy.
- The high vitamin A content of the DIY infant formula – and this concern still stands. Even though the 'recipe' has now been modified in a revised version of the book, it still exceeds the recommended upper limit for vitamin A for babies aged 0-12 months. The formula also lacks carbohydrates, which are required for brain development, and does not mimic the composition of breast milk (despite claiming to do so).
- A lack of instructions for parents around preparing and storing the formula, and around how much to feed babies.

In providing evidence to publisher Pan MacMillan, DAA and several other health agencies presented compelling data including an analysis of the DIY infant formula recipe by FSANZ and the Food Standards Code. We would like to think that infant safety was the main consideration of the publisher, in deciding not to publish the book, rather than 'how the big retailers would respond to negative publicity' surrounding the book (as stated by Pete Evans on *Sunday Night*).

DAA believes Pete Evens has misrepresented on *Sunday Night* the reason that the book was not published through Pan Macmillan and we feel compelled to ask that this misrepresentation of the facts be corrected by:

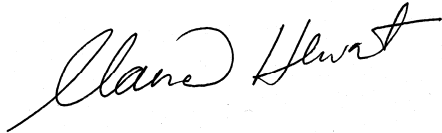
- Making this letter from DAA available to the public through the *Sunday Night* website, and
- Providing an apology and outlining the facts in the follow-up segment (the second part of Mike Willesee's challenge)

The reasons for withdrawal of the book are summarised above and were well publicised at the time and coincided with other controversial issues regarding celebrities providing dietary advice.

About the Dietitians Association of Australia

DAA is a member-based organisation, representing more than 5,700 of the country's nutrition and dietetic professionals. DAA and its members provide food and nutrition advice based on scientific research to Australians to help them eat better, and to the Government to help make better policy decisions.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Claire Hewat', is positioned below the 'Yours faithfully,' text.

Claire Hewat AdvAPD
CEO
Dietitians Association of Australia

* The Australian Dietary Guidelines (ADGs) were developed by independent nutrition experts, based on a review of the evidence in nutrition science, and released by the National Health and Medical Research Council in 2013.