

MEDIA RELEASE

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Critical need for a national residential aged care malnutrition audit

Malnutrition is a serious issue within aged care in Australia, silently abusing a substantial number of older Australians. Despite this, the true extent of this issue is unknown due to a lack in national data on the prevalence of malnutrition in aged care.

The Dietitians Association of Australia (DAA) calls for a national audit into malnutrition in residential aged care. This would not only quantify the extent of the issue but also better understand of the needs of aged care residents.

“Data presented to the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety in 2019 was based on research undertaken in residential aged care homes and indicates malnutrition or risk of malnutrition is present in 50% of residents. This is a snapshot of malnutrition in aged care, and likely just the tip of the iceberg,” said Robert Hunt, DAA CEO.

Despite these figures, malnutrition is not routinely assessed as a part of on-going care of older Australians living in residential aged care.

“We cannot afford to wait until the recommendations in final report from the Commission are handed down in November – by then, many at-risk residents will have become malnourished. These figures should act as a tsunami warning and without action, we will soon be over-run with the economic, social and health costs, as malnutrition progresses,” said Hunt.

Funding and implementing a nation-wide residential aged care malnutrition audit is a cost-effective solution that provides a benefit for the Government and residents alike. Understanding the true extent of malnutrition will allow the Government to develop the policies and frameworks to assist the aging community. This will also identify malnourished and at-risk residents who require immediate help.

Dietitians can help to lead the solution to the malnutrition crisis in aged care. They can provide critical nutrition improvements to ensure better quality of life outcomes for older Australians.

“I urge the Government to act now, to address the critical issues concerning older Australians,” said Hunt.

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**For further information or to organise an interview with Robert Hunt, DAA CEO,
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