



3 April 2020

The Hon Michael Gunner
Chief Minister
Northern Territory Government
GPO Box 3146
DARWIN NT 0800

By email: chief.minister@nt.gov.au

Dear Chief Minister,

We are writing to you on behalf of the Dietitians' Association of Australia (DAA) to request your leadership and guidance in establishing a co-ordinated response to food security within the Northern Territory (NT) during the current COVID-19 pandemic.

Many dietitians working within the NT work with vulnerable populations across both urban and remote settings. Numerous issues have been arising with food supply as a result of the current pandemic, particularly in remote Aboriginal communities, including:

- Increased prices of staple foods in remote stores;
- Reduced availability of many core food items; and
- Community food providers who were previously relying on bulk food orders through major supermarkets no longer being able to access this supply.

Currently however, there is no centralised channel through which to report and action responses to these issues of food security in a systematic and co-ordinated manner. To our knowledge, there are multiple pandemic and emergency response groups within the NT Government which are understood to be addressing issues related to food security, including:

- The Pandemic Coordination Cell;
- The Emergency Welfare Group;
- The Critical goods and services Group; and
- Northern and Southern Incident Management teams.

Experience of our members suggests that these groups often seem to be unaware of each other and communication channels from service providers in the community into these groups are undefined or non-existent. In addition, at least two of these groups have no health service representation, and specifically, no nutrition and dietetic representation, which we believe is a major gap.

Dietitians in the NT have a wealth of knowledge and experience in the food and food security space and are well positioned to contribute great expertise to this type of response. Dietitians have a long history of working with many key stakeholders in this area, including food services, food providers and food suppliers, and in many cases have strong and established working relationships with these stakeholders.



With this in mind, we would like to request that the following actions be taken by the Northern Territory Government to ensure a systematic and co-ordinated response to food security issues, and allow services and groups experiencing food security issues to access accurate information and support as appropriate:

1. Create a designated food security response group with key stakeholders across sectors, including health;
2. Involve key members of the nutrition and dietetics workforce from Top End and Central Australia within this food security response group; and
3. Establish clear and transparent communication channels for community services to be able to report food security issues to and receive information from this group

Thank you for your consideration, and we look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A Hill', is positioned above the name Amanda Hill.

Amanda Hill
Chairperson
DAA NT Branch

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robert Hunt', is positioned above the name Robert Hunt.

Robert Hunt
Chief Executive Officer
Dietitians Association of Australia