

8 July 2020

The Hon Darren Chester MP
Minister for Veterans' Affairs
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

By email: Darren.Chester.MP@aph.gov.au

Dear Minister Chester

Dietitians Australia would like to acknowledge your leadership in expanding telehealth services during the COVID-19 pandemic. We are now calling on you to support the permanent inclusion of Department of Veterans' Affairs item numbers for telehealth dietetic services.

Expansion of telehealth services has been key to ensuring Australians can access the healthcare they need whilst minimising risk of infection. Many Australians continue to seek support from their dietitian via telehealth, particularly those who face challenges to attend an in-person appointment.

As we continue to live with COVID-19, it is critical for telehealth services to continue, to increase the equity of healthcare access for all Australians and support the government's broader agenda for population health. As evidenced in the Dietitians Australia Position Statement on Telehealth (*Nutr Diet* 2020), dietetic services provided via telehealth are both cost-effective and as successful as face-to-face delivery of medical nutrition therapy for weight management, malnutrition and management of chronic health conditions.

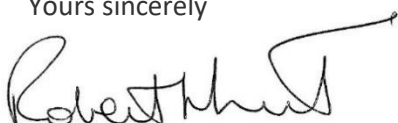
Telehealth overcomes the barriers Australians face in accessing dietetic care by:

- reducing time burden to travel to and attend appointments
- removing need to travel for people with difficulty accessing transport
- increasing access to dietitians for people living in regional and remote areas
- increasing access to dietitians with special knowledge of certain health conditions
- increasing support for culturally and linguistically diverse Australians

With more than seven million Australians affected by nutrition-related chronic disease, increasing access to dietetic care is more important than ever. By making permanent Department of Veterans' Affairs telehealth items, the Morrison Government will establish a legacy of caring for Australians during and beyond COVID-19.

Dietitians Australia would be glad to discuss the benefits of telehealth services further with your office.

Yours sincerely



Robert Hunt
Chief Executive Officer