

16 November 2020

The Hon James Merlino
Minister for Mental Health
Level 3, 1 Treasury Place,
East Melbourne, VIC 3002

By email: james.merlino@parliament.vic.gov.au

Dear Minister Merlino

DIETITIANS - ESSENTIAL TO THE MENTAL HEALTH SYSTEM

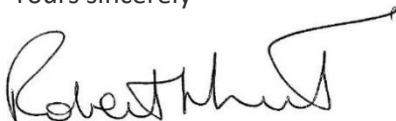
Dietitians Australia would like to express our support for the Andrews Government's investment in the mental health of Victorians. This is a crucial step in urging Victorians to prioritise their mental health and we congratulate you on this.

A good quality diet is fundamental to the prevention and treatment of mental health conditions. Dietitians Australia urges the government to include a strong focus on nutrition in mental health services, including recommendations to see an Accredited Practising Dietitian (APD) and ensuring funding to include APD's as part of mental health teams as prevention and treatment. The link between a nutritious diet and good mental health is one that must not be overlooked.

There are many ways that the foods we eat affect how we feel, with a growing body of evidence highlighting how nutritious food choices can reduce symptoms of depression and rates of remission.(1) Making healthy food choices helps prevent and reduce the risk of developing lifestyle related chronic diseases commonly associated with mental ill-health. Engaging APDs in prevention and treatment of mental illness is a cost-effective solution for government and consumers.(2)

As the leading voice in nutrition, Dietitians Australia would like to invite you to engage with us to help highlight the importance of nutrition in mental health.

Yours sincerely



Robert Hunt
Chief Executive Officer

References

1. Jacka, F.N., O'Neil, A., Opie, R. *et al.* A randomised controlled trial of dietary improvement for adults with major depression (the 'SMILES' trial). *BMC Med* 15, 23 (2017). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12916-017-0791-y>
2. Leonie Segal, Asterie Twizeyemariya, Dorota Zarnowiecki, Theo Niyonsenga, Svetlana Bogomolova, Amy Wilson, Kerin O'Dea & Natalie Parletta (2020) Cost effectiveness and cost-utility analysis of a group-based diet intervention for treating major depression – the HELFIMED trial, *Nutritional Neuroscience*, 23:10, 770-778, DOI: [10.1080/1028415X.2018.1556896](https://doi.org/10.1080/1028415X.2018.1556896)