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Food security essential for remote communities to thrive

Dietitians Australia is calling for the Government to ensure all Australians have access to affordable, safe, and nutritious food, regardless of their location. This comes ahead of the final report from the Senate Inquiry into Food Pricing and Food Security in Remote Indigenous Communities, due to be handed down next week.

Submitting a [written response](#) in June, Dietitians Australia proposed 16 key recommendations, including the need to develop and implement a national strategy on food security, as well as elevating the status of community stores to an essential service.

“A National Food and Nutrition Security Strategy which includes local voices from remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, is vital to creating practical solutions to support adequate food access,” said Robert Hunt, CEO of Dietitians Australia.

“Local food stores often provide the only source of food available for purchase in the community. Food is a basic human right, and these stores need to be given the same priority status as health and education services.”

Distance, climate, and store viability are just some of the challenges impacting food access and affordability in remote communities. Accredited Practising Dietitians (APDs) often hear reports from their clients about the poor quality and high price of food in these areas. In some cases, locals simply can’t access the foods they need.

“We’ve heard recounts of mouldy tomatoes being sold at the local supermarket for more than \$10/kg, and that’s the only fresh option available. Others have reported a lack of variety of basic foods such as milk and bread, and poor-quality cuts of meat being sold at exorbitant prices,” said Hunt.

Lack of food choice can prevent community members from making diet and lifestyle changes. It can also be hard to access appropriate foods needed for certain health conditions.

With chronic diseases, many of which are related to a poor diet, accounting for 70% of the gap in disease burden between First Nations and non-Indigenous Australians, improving food access is key to strengthening health in remote communities.

“Dietitians have reported some clients have tried to opt for wholegrain instead of white bread to assist with their health conditions, but sometimes this basic level of choice is not available. This is just one example of why we need a national strategy to support local food stores and ensure every Australian can access the foods needed for their health,” said Hunt.

In addition to improving food accessibility, developing and delivering culturally relevant and community owned nutrition programs is also central to supporting these communities.

“Engaging an APD alongside an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community workforce is vital to championing good nutrition and health in remote communities,” said Hunt.

Dietitians Australia looks with anticipation to the release of the report, with the hope the recommendations result in a positive outcome for remote communities.

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For media enquiries and interviews, contact Pattie King, Dietitians Australia 0409 661 920.

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Note to Editors: Dietitians Australia (DA) is the leading voice of nutrition in Australia, representing dietitians nationally and advocating for healthier communities. Accredited Practising Dietitian (APD) is the only national credential recognised by the Australian Government as the quality standard for nutrition and dietetics services in Australia. For more information, including DA’s media releases and position on topical nutrition issues, visit www.dietitiansaustralia.org.au.