



Research Priorities in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health

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The Dietitians Association of Australia (DAA) is the national association of the dietetic profession with over 6100 members, and branches in each state and territory. DAA is a leader in nutrition and advocates for food and nutrition for healthier people and healthier nations. DAA appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback on the call for research priorities in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health by the National Health and Medical Research Council

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DAA interest in this consultation

The Dietitians Association of Australia (DAA) is the peak professional body for dietitians in Australia. DAA is responsible for self-regulation of the profession through the Accredited Practising Dietitian (APD) program.

DAA is concerned about the physical and mental health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people¹ and advocates for programs which keep individuals and communities strong. Good food and nutrition is a key factor in improving health and well-being in urban, rural and remote communities.

Accredited Practising Dietitians (APDs) work in a variety of practice settings with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to improve health and well-being through food and nutrition.

Key messages

There have been numerous reports on the gaps in health² and quality of life for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. DAA suggests the following research priorities

- Nutrition through the life cycle, with particular emphasis on interventions which support women and children in the first five years.
- Interventions for prevention and management of chronic disease, with emphasis on behavioural interventions which support individuals and communities to make healthy choices.
- Research into programs which assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people choose healthy foods away from home, including programs which support healthy eating in hostels or supported accommodation.
- Research into food labelling programs and nutrition literacy programs which assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to choose healthier packaged foods.
- Interventions which address nutrition issues related to mental health and disability. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples experience poor quality of life because of the burden of these issues, and nutrition is a key factor in improving the wellbeing of affected people.
- Research around workforce strategies which build the capacity of health workers and dietitians to support their communities.

- Research into strategies which promote food security in urban areas and in rural and remote areas.

DAA supports the use of NHMRC publications which guide appropriately conducted research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as research leaders and partners.

References

1. Lee AJ, Leonard D, Moloney AA, Minniecon DL. Improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nutrition and health. *Med J Aust* 2009; 190: 547-548
2. [Healthy lifestyle programs for physical activity and nutrition](#) Resource sheet no. 9 produced by the Closing the Gap Clearinghouse January 2012. Accessed 30 August 2016