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Expanding access to Accredited Practising Dietitians at the heart of the Dietitians Association of Australia's pre-budget submission

In the lead-up to the 2018-19 Federal Budget, the Dietitians Association of Australia is calling on the Government to invest in a healthier population by expanding access to Accredited Practising Dietitians under Medicare.

DAA's Senior Policy Officer Annette Byron said improving access to Accredited Practising Dietitians would mean better health across the population, especially among those Australians living with mental illness or affected by a chronic medical condition, such as diabetes, heart disease or cancer.

In its 2018-19 pre-budget submission, the peak body for the dietetics profession recommends four strategies to expand access to Accredited Practising Dietitians under the Medicare Benefits Schedule:

1. Introduce a new Medicare item for people with mental illness, such as eating disorders, depression, anxiety or schizophrenia, to consult Accredited Practising Dietitians.
2. Extend Medicare to permit telehealth services, as an alternative to face-to-face services, by allied health practitioners, such as Accredited Practising Dietitians.
3. Extend Medicare's 'Chronic Disease Management' items to allow up to 10 consultations with allied health practitioners and introduce new items to allow for long consultations.
4. Introduce a Medicare item for allied health practitioners to take part in case conferencing.

"There's currently a cap of five consultations a year, rebated under Medicare, for people with a chronic condition to see an allied health professional (such as an Accredited Practising Dietitian), rebates are based on 20-minute (short) consultations, and services must be delivered face-to-face," said Ms Byron.

She added that health care team case conferencing has the potential to improve patient care and reduce hospital admissions, but there is no financial incentive for allied health professionals, including dietitians, to take part in this.

"Accredited Practising Dietitians are also not eligible for Better Mental Health items under Medicare to see people with mental illness. But recent Australian studies show diet is a really effective way of reducing symptoms in people with mental illness, as well as improving the physical health of these Australians," said Ms Byron.

She highlighted that poor diet is the leading preventable cause of ill health in Australia and globally, contributing to almost 18 per cent of deaths in Australia¹.



MEDIA RELEASE

“Poor nutrition can be fixed with proper government investment, including better access to Accredited Practising Dietitians to support Australians in self-care, to modify lifestyle behaviours and to address risk factors for disease,” said Ms Byron.

Read the full [DAA Pre-Budget Submission 2018-19](#).

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For further information or to organise an interview with Annette Byron, contact Pattie King, Dietitians Association of Australia, on 0409 661 920.

ⁱ Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation. Global Burden of Disease data Australia. Available from: <http://www.healthdata.org/gbd/data>; accessed March 2018.

Note to Editors: The Dietitians Association of Australia (DAA) is the professional body representing dietitians nationally. Accredited Practising Dietitian (APD) is the only national credential recognised by the Australian Government, Medicare, the Department of Veteran Affairs and most private health funds as the quality standard for nutrition and dietetics services in Australia. For more information visit www.daa.asn.au. For the Media section on the DAA website contains DAA's media releases and position on topical nutrition issues in the media.