



**MEDIA RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
TUESDAY 12<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2019**

## **FUTURE OF AUSTRALIA'S HEALTH DEMANDS IMMEDIATE ACTION**

Poor diet is a leading risk factor for many preventable chronic conditions, including heart disease, obesity, type 2 diabetes, cancer and arthritis. Today, almost half our adult population experience a chronic disease<sup>1</sup>, costing Australia over \$70 billion annually<sup>2</sup>. Despite deteriorating health, alarming predictions and preventable costs, Australia hasn't updated our National Nutrition Policy in over 26 years.

Today, over 20 of Australia's most important health organisations attended the Dietitians Association of Australia's (DAA) launch event, to support the call on the Government to put Australia's health back on the agenda.

The event is part of DAA's *Smart Eating Week 2019*, running until Sunday. Days of the week focus on a key issue affecting the health of Australians – Type 2 diabetes, nutrition policy, arthritis, heart disease and obesity.

Hundreds of Accredited Practising Dietitians (APD) are holding free events across the country throughout the week, including cooking demonstrations and nutrition advice stalls at hospitals and markets.

Over breakfast at Parliament House, DAA presented a new report, *Nourish not Neglect: Putting health on our nation's table*, detailing the social and economic cost of poor nutrition and the actions required to make a national framework a reality.

"Poor dietary habits, along with obesity, are now the top two preventable risk factors of Australia's burden of disease," said DAA CEO, Robert Hunt.

"Instead of ploughing billions of dollars into reactive healthcare for preventable chronic diseases, we need a coordinated nutrition approach to reduce the prevalence and cost of these diet-related diseases among all Australians - before it's too late," he said.

Report findings revealed 10% of Australia's total burden of disease is due to poor diet, with an additional 8.5% attributed to obesity<sup>3</sup>. Projections suggest by 2025, 83% of men and 75% of women will be overweight or obese<sup>4</sup>.

DAA recommends development of a contemporary framework, which integrates current and new guidelines and programs, including the Australian Dietary Guidelines (due for review) Nutrient Reference Values, food labelling initiatives (including the Health Star Rating system), with relevant taxes, laws and monitoring systems.

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<sup>1</sup>Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2018, Health Survey: First Results, Key Findings (4364.0.55.001) Commonwealth of Australia

<sup>2</sup>Estimated annual cost of healthcare for five diet-related chronic diseases; obesity, type 2 diabetes, arthritis, heart disease, cancer. See infographic and report for references.

<sup>3</sup> Lancet, 2017, GBD Risk Factors. Global, regional, and national comparative risk assessment of 84 behavioural, environmental and occupational, and metabolic risks or clusters of risks, 1990-2016: a systematic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study 2016

<sup>4</sup>Haby M, Markwick A, 2008, Future prevalence of overweight and obesity in Australian children and adolescents 2005-2025. Melbourne: Department of Health & Human Services.



This will address the cost and prevalence of diet-related chronic diseases, the nutritional needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged Australians and improve food and nutrition security, sustainability, social equity and productivity.

“25 years ago, Australia was a global leader with our National Nutrition policy but now we are lagging behind. With a federal election fast approaching, we are calling on both sides of Government to commit to start a process,” said Mr Hunt.

“There is no point spending money on portfolios to service the population, because the reality is, if we continue without a collaborative, contemporary nutrition framework, we won’t have a population.”

Over 6,900 dietitians across Australia joined the call by sending a letter to their local member of parliament this morning, urging them to petition for a new National Nutrition Policy.

Launch event attendees included: Heart Foundation, Nutrition Australia, Public Health Association, Diabetes Australia, Carers Australia, Mental Health Australia, National Rural Health Alliance, NDIS, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, CSIRO and Department of Health.

**-ENDS-**

### ***About Dietitians Association of Australia***

The Dietitians Association of Australia is Australia’s largest and most influential organisation for dietetic and nutrition professionals, representing a growing membership of 6,900 dietitians across Australia and overseas. Our mission is to support our members and advocate for important issues that impact the health of the Australian community, such as obesity, disability and mental health. 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](http://www.daa.asn.au).

### **To organise an interview or for more information including case studies, please contact:**

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## A Snapshot of Australia's Current Health




67% of Australian adults are overweight or obese<sup>1</sup>



Higher prevalence in regional, rural and remote regions<sup>1</sup>



Annual costs are estimated >**\$50 billion** for health care and lost productivity<sup>2</sup>



Poor diet is a leading contributor to obesity<sup>3</sup>




Experienced by **1 million** Australian adults<sup>1</sup>



Highest occurrence in low socioeconomic areas<sup>4</sup>



Health care, lost productivity and carer costs up to **\$6 billion/year**<sup>5</sup>



Overweight/obesity = risk factor of Type 2 Diabetes<sup>6</sup>



**1 in 20**  
Affects around **1 in 20** Australian adults<sup>1</sup>

**1** Leading cause of death in Australia<sup>7</sup>



Direct cost of **\$2.38 billion/year**<sup>8</sup>



Unhealthy eating increases risk of heart disease<sup>1</sup>




**3rd** most prevalent chronic disease<sup>1</sup>



Largest contributor to pain and disability in Australia<sup>9</sup>



Direct costs estimated to exceed **\$5.5 billion/year**<sup>10</sup>



**79%** of those with arthritis experienced an additional chronic disease<sup>9</sup>



**1 in 50**  
**1 in 50** Australian adults affected by cancer<sup>1</sup>

**30%**  
Diet is associated with at least **30%** of all cancers.<sup>11</sup>



Direct cancer costs Australian health services over **\$6 billion** a year<sup>12</sup>



Healthy foods can help lower cancer prevalence.<sup>13</sup>

\*all references found in DAA report, *Nourish not Neglect: Putting health on our nation's table*.