

Tuesday 30 April 2019

## POLITICIANS MISSING THE MARK WITH HEALTH APPROACH

Our country's leader's obsession with quick fix prescriptive medicines, is missing the mark when it comes to our long-term health. Prevention is being swept under the carpet by our politicians, with disastrous impacts on the health of the Australian community.

The Dietitians Association of Australia (DAA) calls for all politicians to put the health of Australians first by committing to a new National Nutrition Policy.

A new National Nutrition Policy would allow Australians to live longer and healthier lives through increased food accessibility and affordability, as well as equip our nation with the skills to make healthy food choices. A co-ordinated and collaborative approach will reduce diet-related chronic disease risk factors and promote health, wellbeing, sustainability and prosperity.

Without it, our nation's health will continue to decline. Currently, 67% of Australian adults are overweight or obese, which increases the risk of chronic disease development, and other health complications<sup>1</sup>.

Addressing the factors which contribute to obesity in Australia, has the potential to save much of the more than \$50 billion spent<sup>2</sup> on healthcare, lost productivity and carer costs for this condition, each year. Consuming a healthy diet has the ability to reduce burden of disease with heart disease reduced by 52%, type 2 diabetes by 34% and diet-related cancers by up to 37%<sup>3</sup>.

"If diet-related chronic diseases were prevented in the first place, we could save billions of dollars. Investing in the management of existing conditions through Medicare and the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme is important, but prevention needs to be a priority," said DAA CEO Robert Hunt.

A priority action outlined in the DAA Election Statement is for the elected government to commence national consultative workshops to develop a National Nutrition Policy discussion paper and to design future governance structures. The estimated funding required is \$10 million, a fraction of the potential healthcare savings.

"Food is one of our most basic human needs, but for more than 26 years no significance has been given to nutrition. It's time for our politicians to take charge of building a healthier Australia by committing to a new National Nutrition Policy."

Key health associations including Nutrition Australia, Public Health Association of Australia, and the National Heart Foundation have also stressed the importance of a new National Nutrition Policy. Converging in Canberra tomorrow at Nutrition Australia's event 'Nourishing the Nation', the need to make nutrition a national priority will be the focus.

"The reality is, funding a new National Nutrition Policy is a win-win, and it's time our leaders put our money where their mouth is," said Mr Hunt.

To read the DAA's election statement and Nourish not Neglect report, visit: [Call for new National Nutrition Policy](#)

ENDS

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

<sup>1</sup>Australian Bureau of Statistics. Health Survey: First Results, Key Findings (4364.0.55.001) [Internet]. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia; 2018. Available from: <http://abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/4364.0.55.001~2017-18~Main%20Features~Key%20Findings>

<sup>2</sup>Colagiuri S, Lee CM, Colagiuri R, Magliano D, Shaw JE, Zimmet PZ, et al. The cost of overweight and obesity in Australia. *Med J Aust.* 2010;192(5):260-4.

<sup>3</sup>Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. Australian Burden of Disease Study: impact and causes of illness and death in Australia 2011. Canberra: AIHW; 2016.