



## Joint Policy Statement: Towards a National Nutrition Policy for Australia

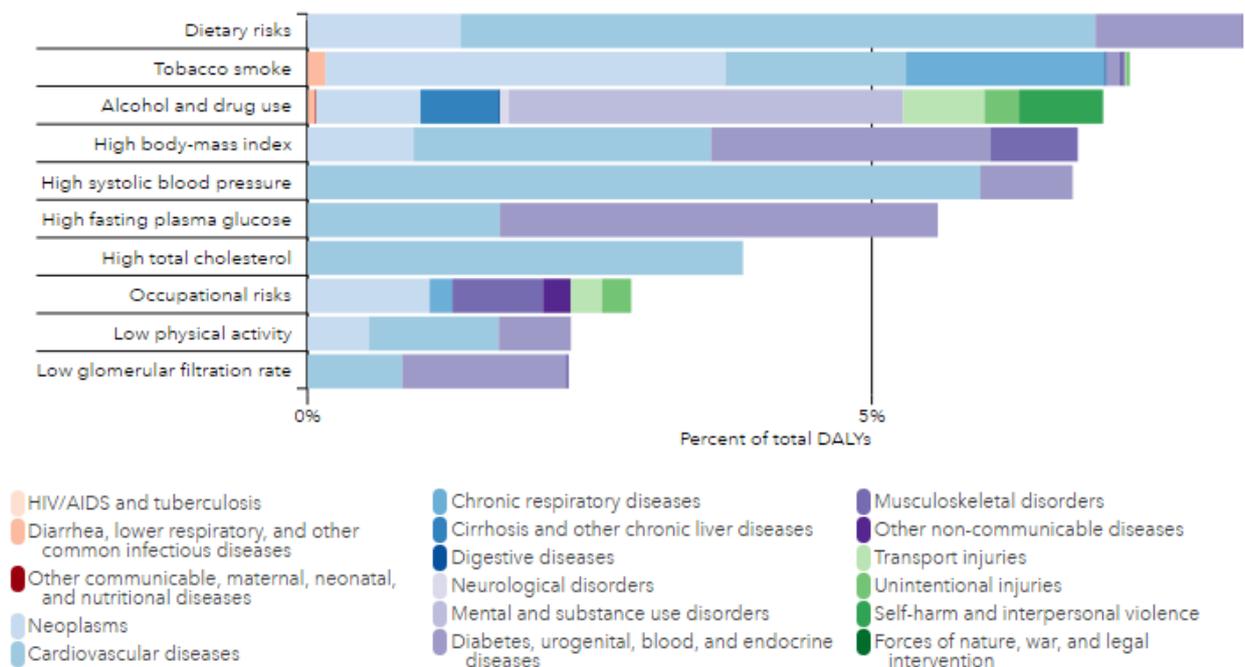
### Key Messages

The Public Health Association of Australia, the National Heart Foundation of Australia, the Dietitians Association of Australia and Nutrition Australia are calling for the Australian Government to develop a new National Nutrition Policy. The old 1992 policy urgently needs updating and expanding so it aligns with recommendations from the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Steering Committee on Nutrition (UNSCN) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

Poor diet and excess weight costs Australia dearly, not just the obvious medical costs, but also in reduced productivity and lower levels of well-being among the population.

Poor diet is a leading risk factor for deaths in Australia. In 2015, the Global Burden of Disease study determined poor diet contributed to almost 18% of deaths (over 29,000 deaths).<sup>1</sup>

### What risk factors drive the most death and disability combined?



Top 10 causes of DALYs with key risk factors, 2015

Adapted from [www.healthdata.org/australia](http://www.healthdata.org/australia)

Within Australia, diet-related diseases are especially common among the very young, the very old, those living in remote areas, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, those in culturally and linguistically diverse groups, and people in lower socioeconomic groups.

As the United Nations General Assembly identifies, strategic government leadership is essential for policies and programs to support health initiatives and community based interventions.<sup>2,3</sup> A coordinated 'whole-of-government' approach also means national, state and local governments can work together to reduce diet-related health problems.

A new National Nutrition Policy would:

- Address the high cost and increasing rates of diet-related chronic diseases, including coronary heart disease, stroke, hypertension, atherosclerosis, obesity, some forms of cancer, Type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis, some forms of arthritis, dental caries, gall bladder disease, dementia and nutritional anaemias.
- Promote sustainable diets which have low environmental impact.
- Provide food and nutrition security for all Australian.
- Fit with the Australian Dietary Guidelines and the evidence underpinning them, and also areas that support the guidelines, including food labelling, advertising and relevant taxes.
- Take account of cultural sensitivities, and also consider areas such as agriculture and trade.

A recent International Congress summed it well noting: "Food is the expression of values, cultures, social relations and people's self-determination, and the act of feeding oneself and others embodies our sovereignty, ownership and empowerment. When nourishing oneself and eating with one's family, friends and community, we reaffirm our cultural identities, our ownership over our life course and our human dignity. Nutrition is foundational for personal development and essential for overall well-being."<sup>4</sup>

We recommend the Australian Government:

- Starts public consultation with a discussion paper informed by the best available evidence. This should align with international (WHO, UNSCN, FAO) policy advice and national advice from the commissioned Scoping Study and the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nutrition Strategy and Action Plan (NATSINSAP) Evaluation Report.<sup>2,5-8</sup>
- Allocates funding and the structure to develop a National Nutrition Policy and a National Nutrition Implementation Action Plan.
- Commits to monitor Australia's food and nutrition system to support evaluation of the policy and its strategies.

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- Reports key targets to the WHO and the FAO as part of the response to the Rome Declaration, the United Nations 'Decade of Nutrition Action' and the WHO Voluntary Global non-communicable disease targets.<sup>3,7,8</sup>

For more information, please see the Towards a National Nutrition Policy for Australia [Background Paper](#).

### **Audience**

Australian Federal, State and Territory Governments and Agencies; policy makers; program managers; and, the media.

### **Responsibility**

Public Health Association of Australia, Dietitians Association of Australia, National Heart Foundation of Australia and Nutrition Australia.

**ADOPTED FEBRUARY 2017**

***This Joint Position Statement was first endorsed by nominated organisations in February 2017.***

## References

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- <sup>1</sup> Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation. Global Burden of Disease data Australia. [Available from: <http://www.healthdata.org/gbd/data>; accessed 28 February, 2017].
- <sup>2</sup> World Health Organisation. Framework for Action. Second International Conference on Nutrition; Rome: World Health Organization and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations; 2014.
- <sup>3</sup> United Nations General Assembly. A/70/L.42 United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016-2025). United Nations General Assembly; 28 March 2016; New York, United States of America: United Nations; 2016
- <sup>4</sup> Food and Agriculture Organisation WHO, editor Public Interest Civil Society Organizations' and Social Movements' Forum Declaration to the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2). Second International Conference on Nutrition; 2014; Rome, Italy.
- <sup>5</sup> Lee A, Baker P, Stanton R, Friel S, O'Dea K, Weightman A. Scoping Study to Inform the Development of the new National Nutrition Policy. (RFT 028/1213) Queensland University of Technology, 2013 Released under FOI, March 2016.
- <sup>6</sup> Urbis. National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nutrition Strategy and Action Plan Evaluation Report. 2010.
- <sup>7</sup> Food and Agriculture Organisation WHO. Rome Declaration on Nutrition. Second International Conference on Nutrition; 19-21 November, 2014; Rome, Italy 2014.
- <sup>8</sup> World Health Organisation. Global action plan for the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases 2013-2020. Geneva, Switzerland: 2013.