

Dietitians Australia Priority for the Tasmanian Election 2024

Our ask: Increase the dietetic workforce in community health settings across Tasmania.

Background:

Nutrition is fundamental to health and wellbeing, including the primary and secondary prevention of chronic conditions and mental illness. Increasing the dietetic workforce in community health settings will enable dietitians to provide timely, effective, safe, and individualised care in line with evidence-based practice, leading to better nutrition outcomes for the Tasmanian population and reduced costs and burden to the Tasmanian health system.

The Health Workforce 2040- Allied Health report highlighted that there were 9.7 occupied FTE dietitians/nutritionists per 100,000 population.¹ This is lower than other jurisdictions around Australia. Growing the dietetic workforce in Tasmania, particularly in the community setting can ensure that food and nutrition activities are effectively implemented throughout the state and the community can access dietetic services to support their needs outside the hospital setting.

In 2022, up to 1 in 2 Tasmanian households were reported to have experienced household food insecurity.² The Primary Health Tasmania Health Needs Assessment 2022-34 to 2024-25 report highlights the current health status of the Tasmanian population, that includes lower life expectancy than other areas of Australia as well as higher rates of some chronic conditions and mental illness. This report highlights that “In Tasmania many deaths occur prematurely and could potentially be avoided through improvement in lifestyle risk factors and better multidisciplinary management of chronic conditions.”³

It is critical that nutrition and dietetic services are increased in Tasmania to support all Tasmanians to have access to quality, healthy and safe foods and be empowered to make healthier choices to promote their physical and mental health and wellbeing. This increase in services must ensure nutrition and dietetic services are better represented across the entire state, to mitigate equity issues.

References:

1. Tasmanian Department of Health. 2019. Health Workforce 2040-Allied Health. Available from: <https://www.health.tas.gov.au/publications/health-workforce-2040-allied-health>
2. Kent K, Murray S, Kocar S, Seivwright A, Visentin D. 2022. “Quality food is too expensive to afford”: 1 in 2 Tasmanians are food insecure in 2022 due to the rising cost of living, The Tasmania Project Report 61. Available from: [https://figshare.utas.edu.au/articles/report/Quality food is too expensive to afford 1 in 2 Tasmanians are food insecure in 2022 due to the rising cost of living/23254991](https://figshare.utas.edu.au/articles/report/Quality%20food%20is%20too%20expensive%20to%20afford%201%20in%202%20Tasmanians%20are%20food%20insecure%20in%202022%20due%20to%20the%20rising%20cost%20of%20living/23254991)
3. Primary Health Network Tasmania. 2022. Primary Health Tasmania Health Needs Assessment 2022-23 to 2024-25. Available from: <https://www.primaryhealthtas.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Health-in-Tasmania-Comprehensive-Needs-Assessment-2022-25.pdf>