

15 September 2021

Professor Sarah McNaughton
Chair
Dietary Guidelines Expert Committee
National Health and Medical Research Council

By email: dietaryguidelines@nhmrc.gov.au

Dear Professor McNaughton

Congratulations on your appointment as Chair of the NHMRC expert steering committee for the Australian Dietary Guidelines review. It is wonderful to see the broad experience of dietitians and researchers on the committee. Please extend our congratulations to the other members of the group.

As you likely know, Dietitians Australia was heavily involved in the last review of the Dietary Guidelines, and we have a great interest in the current review. We would like to offer the expertise of our membership to you as you embark on this mammoth task.

Please find below a brief summary of our reflections on the last review:

- Australia is one of the few countries that has conducted original systematic reviews to inform its dietary guidelines, and we should be proud to be leaders in this space.
- It is essential that all members of the evidence review team have expertise in nutrition science.
- During the planning stage, the available resources must be carefully considered, including time constraints, financial resources, and human resources.¹
- The framing of the research questions will influence the types of evidence that are reviewed.² To ensure the review process is as efficient as possible, research questions (including the populations, exposures, and outcomes of interest) must be clearly defined from the outset.
- Evidence review methods should be selected based on the research questions that are asked.
- Quality assessment of existing systematic reviews must be conducted using a suitable tool. The evidence that is included in existing systematic reviews should also be assessed for applicability to the Australian context.
- Tools to assess risk of bias and certainty of the evidence included in original systematic reviews must be fit for purpose.³ Some of the tools that are routinely used in the field of medicine may not be the most appropriate tools for use in the field of nutrition.¹ Dietitians Australia is well-equipped to provide advice on the most suitable tools.
- At all stages of the evidence review process, conflicts of interest must be declared and suitably managed. Conflicts of interest can exist at the committee level and at the reviewer level. These may be potential, perceived or actual conflicts.

We hope you find these reflections helpful as you begin planning for the duration of the guideline review process. We would invite the opportunity to meet with you to offer more detail on these reflections or answer any questions you may have. Please be in touch.

Sincerely



Juliana Chen
Chair
Australian Dietary Guidelines Review Working Group

References

1. Allman-Farinelli et al. Aust J Prim Health. 2014: <http://doi.org/10.1071/PY13016>
2. Wingrove et al. Nutr Res Rev. 2020: <http://doi.org/10.1017/S0954422420000190>
3. Bero et al. BMJ. 2019: <http://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.l1579>