



13 December 2019

Dear Health ministers, secretaries and medical colleagues,

Recommendations for National Obesity Strategy

We, Doctors For Nutrition, are writing as a collective of medical doctors and dietitians who are committed to contribute to the National Obesity Strategy for Australia. We thank the Department of Health for the opportunity to respond to this important piece of engagement that is set to influence the health of millions of children and adults alike.

To make meaningful progress on obesity, this strategy must be bold and commensurate with the importance and scale of the obesity issue in Australia. Dietary risks are one of the most significant contributing factors to the burden of disease and premature death in Australia¹. Defining and nurturing evidence-based eating patterns must be a priority for the Department of Health, at both federal and state/territory levels, to enable individuals from all backgrounds to have the best chance of a healthy life.

Our recommendations

We urge the Department of Health at both federal and state/territory levels to adopt specific, evidence-based recommendations as follows:

- Adopt national policies and regulations to have the greatest impact on curbing obesity.
- Update the National Dietary Guidelines to emphasise whole plant foods and environmental sustainability.
- Reduce poverty and inequities to reduce the toll of obesity.
- Ensure that the development and implementation of the national obesity strategy remains independent from food and beverage industry interests.
- Ensure that all health professionals and students of health disciplines undertake training in the large body of evidence that supports whole food plant-based nutrition in chronic disease prevention.
- Centre public health initiatives on shifting to a plant-based dietary pattern and promoting consumption of minimally processed fruits, vegetables, whole grains and legumes (An evidence summary on the benefits of plant-based nutrition is available on request. Further chronic disease-specific nutrition information can also be found on the [Doctors For Nutrition website](https://doctorsfornutrition.org)).
- Focus ideas and actions on nutrition as a priority over those focused on exercise due to their relative influence on obesity and health outcomes.



The National Obesity Strategy has the potential to meaningfully transform health outcomes for our population, allow government to benefit from healthcare expenditure savings, and ensure Australia becomes a global leader in the obesity crisis through proactive, and innovative policy creation and implementation.

We welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss our recommendations and responses to this strategy. As an independent health-promotion charity, we are hopeful that the National Obesity Strategy will also help support our vision for “a society and healthcare system that embraces evidence-based nutrition solutions to help people optimise their health and quality of life.”

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Heleen".

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marion".

Dr Heleen Roex and Marion Meloni on behalf of [Doctors For Nutrition](https://doctorsfornutrition.org).

Reference

1. Australian Bureau of Statistics. Webpage; accessed 20 November 2019. <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/burden-of-disease/burden-disease-study-illness-death-2015/contents/summary>.