

**INQUIRY INTO CURRENT AND FUTURE PROVISION OF  
HEALTH SERVICES IN THE SOUTH-WEST SYDNEY  
GROWTH REGION**

**Organisation:** Dietitians Association of Australia (DAA)  
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The Hon. Greg Donnelly MLC  
Chairperson  
Current and future provisions of health services  
In the South-West Sydney Growth Region  
Parliament of New South Wales  
Macquarie Street  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

**By email: [PortfolioCommittee2@parliament.nsw.gov.au](mailto:PortfolioCommittee2@parliament.nsw.gov.au)**

Dear Mr Donnelly,

We commend the work that the NSW Government is currently completing to support the growing population in South West Sydney. We welcome the opportunity to provide you with recommendations for how you can best support the health and nutrition status of those living and working in South West Sydney with dietetic services.

This community is characterised by high birth rates contrasted with an aging population, a lower social economic status and people from a range of cultural and linguistically diverse backgrounds. This diverse set of circumstances can pose a challenge when planning health services.

The Dietitians Association of Australia (DAA) make the following recommendations in regards to dietetic services in the region.

### **Child and maternal health services**

**Recommendation 1:** Child and maternal health specific dietetic services are increased and prioritised in the NSW Government agenda.

It is important to develop comprehensive maternity and paediatric specific dietetic services to support the rapidly growing young community in this area. We know that good nutrition beginning from pre-conception and into childhood can positively influence lifelong health including reducing the risk of developing allergies and obesity later in life. Dietetic services are essential for children and families with complex feeding issues, including those associated with a disability. The issue of childhood obesity is of concern with families presenting to health services with severe childhood obesity issues that need the expert input of a dietitian.

### **Mental health services**

**Recommendation 2:** Increase dietetic staffing to meet the needs of a growing mental health service and to optimise health outcomes.

With an increase in mental health services moving out to the South West Sydney area it is important that dietitians are part of the health care team. Early nutrition intervention is essential



for the management of metabolic conditions (often associated with psychotropic medications). In addition to this, dietitians are integral to the eating disorder treatment team. Inclusion of dietetic services is crucial to achieve good health outcomes for those who are experiencing mental health issues.

### **Chronic disease management**

**Recommendation 3:** Comprehensive dietetic services should be integrated and strengthened in both the inpatient and community settings to address the rising rate of chronic diseases.

South West Sydney, like the rest of Australia, is experiencing high rates of chronic disease. Dietitians are the experts in prevention and nutritional management for chronic diseases. In particular, dietitians are essential in providing nutrition interventions that prolong health and delay the transition to costly medical therapies such as hospital admissions and dialysis. Acute care dietetic services have not kept up with the demand of complex medical conditions such as those presenting in ICU. This includes the need for weekend cover, essential for enteral nutrition and support of patients upon discharge.

### **Dietetic support in multidisciplinary teams**

**Recommendation 4:** Optimise patient outcomes by including dietitians in multidisciplinary teams.

DAA support the integrated care model that many areas of NSW are using. With the growth of specialised services being developed in South West Sydney such as oncology, mental health, renal, gastroenterology, and immunology, it is in the interest of best practice care that dietitians are members of these teams. We also recognise the rise in need for dietetic support in hospital in the home and NDIS services.

### **Specialised allied health workforce**

**Recommendation 5:** Develop incentives for expert allied health professionals to provide services in South West Sydney.

It is essential that strategies are developed to incentivise specialist allied health professionals to move out to health services in South West Sydney. This includes dietitians who have expertise in specific areas of nutrition care such as gastroenterology, paediatrics, allergy, diabetes and eating disorders.

Strategies should be put in place to incentivise the establishment of private dietetic clinics that can reduce the burden on the public health system. These dietitians could also service NDIS clients that struggle to find suitably experienced allied health professionals to provide service. There is an existing dietetic workforce who are highly skilled and entrepreneurially minded ready to take up positions in South West Sydney.



### **Preventative health**

**Recommendation 6:** Develop comprehensive preventative health strategies in collaboration with dietitians.

Evidence-based preventative health initiatives are essential for reducing the incidence of lifestyle related diseases and the cost burden to the health care system. Adequate funding should be provided to support development, evaluation and monitoring for initiatives which aim to improve the diet quality of people living in South West Sydney.

### **Nutrition assistance for older adults**

**Recommendation 7:** To provide dietetic services which optimise the health of the ageing population.

Dietetic services are needed to manage the aging population in the home setting to reduce the incidence of hospital admissions and within aged care facilities. Issues that will benefit from dietetic services include wound care, palliative care, home enteral nutrition, falls prevention and identifying malnutrition.

We thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the current and future provision of health services in South West Sydney. If you require further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Robert Hunt  
Chief Executive Officer  
Dietitians Association of Australia