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**The Hon Roger Cook MLA  
Deputy Premier  
Minister for Health; Mental Health**

Our Ref: 60-22734

Ms Janine Freeman MLA  
Chair  
Education and Health Standing Committee  
Legislative Assembly of Western Australia  
Parliament House  
4 Harvest Terrace  
WEST PERTH WA 6005

Dear Ms ~~Freeman~~ *Janine,*

Thank you for your letter of 16 February 2020 regarding the Western Australian Government response to the *Food Fix Report*.

The previous advice provided to the Health and Education Standing Committee from the Department of Health stating that the *Australian Dietary Guidelines* are not suitable for people with a health condition is in line with the advice given by the National Health and Medical Research Council who produce the *Australian Dietary Guidelines*.

The Australian Dietary Guidelines are:

1. To achieve and maintain a healthy weight, be physically active and choose amounts of nutritious food and drinks to meet your energy needs;
2. Enjoy a wide variety of nutritious foods from these five groups every day;
3. Limit intake of foods containing saturated fat, added salt, added sugars and alcohol;
4. Encourage, support and promote breastfeeding; and
5. Care for your food; prepare and store it safely.

The *Australian Dietary Guidelines* (produced by the Commonwealth Department of Health) aim to promote health and wellbeing, reduce the risk of diet-related conditions and reduce the risk of chronic diseases. The *Australian Dietary Guidelines* state that they apply to all *healthy* Australians, but do not apply to people who need special dietary advice for a medical condition. Additional advice is recommended for people who have diagnosed medical conditions. Advice is usually provided by a member of the persons health care team and is known as Medical Nutrition Therapy (MNT).

The majority of these guidelines are considered by health professionals as a relevant starting point in the delivery of MNT of someone with type 2 diabetes. However once someone is diagnosed with diabetes (type 1 or type 2) it is advised they seek additional dietetic support within guidelines 1 and 2. It is the 'Australian Guide to Healthy Eating' (which is a consumer resource produced by the National Health and Medical Research Council to support the implementation of the Australian Dietary Guidelines) that is not appropriate for someone with diabetes because it specifically prescribes the number of serves from each of the food groups, some which have significant impacts on the carbohydrate content of the diet and the quantities may not be appropriate for some people with diabetes. MNT is therefore provided based on ensuring a range of food groups can be consumed for general health (e.g. to avoid constipation, osteoporosis etc.) and assisting the person with diabetes to achieve optimal blood glucose control. This is done within the context of their personal circumstances and current health risk/co-morbidities and self-management goals.

Recommendation 2 of the *Food Fix Report* was not supported as it is not within the Department of Health's remit to mandate the position of Diabetes WA. Diabetes WA is an independent non-government organisation and the advice they give to patients regarding dietary management of type 2 diabetes is solely under their control. In addition, Diabetes WA provides additional MNT services and tailored advice to support and assist people with type 2 diabetes to self-manage.

The Department of Health's Diabetes and Endocrine Health Network (DEHN) includes representation from Diabetes WA on their Executive Advisory Group. As the DEHN has a relationship and works in partnership with Diabetes WA, I will ask the Clinical Co-Leads of the Network to raise awareness of this issue with the Diabetes WA representatives.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Roger Cook', with a large, stylized flourish above the name.

**HON ROGER COOK MLA**  
DEPUTY PREMIER  
MINISTER FOR HEALTH; MENTAL HEALTH

- 4 MAY 2020