

Submission to the Productivity Commission Inquiry: Delivering Quality Care More Efficiently

Topic: Draft Recommendation 3 – A National Approach to Prevention

Introduction

I welcome the opportunity to provide input into the Productivity Commission's inquiry into Delivering Quality Care More Efficiently, particularly Draft Recommendation 3, which calls for a new national approach to prevention. This is a timely and important reform opportunity.

As an education provider delivering government-accredited qualifications in weight management (Certificate IV in Weight Management – 10859NAT, and Diploma of Weight Management – 11133NAT), I strongly advocate for recognition of Weight Management as a regulated health profession. This would provide Australia with a much-needed preventive workforce, equipped with the skills to address one of our most pressing public health and economic challenges: obesity.

The Case for Weight Management as a Profession

1. Health and Economic Burden of Obesity

- Two in three Australian adults and one in four children are overweight or obese (AIHW, 2023).
- Obesity is a leading risk factor for chronic disease including cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, musculoskeletal disorders and some cancers.
- The estimated annual cost of obesity to Australia exceeds \$11.8 billion, including direct healthcare costs and lost productivity (PwC, 2015).
- Without intervention, these costs are projected to rise substantially.

A regulated weight management workforce would directly contribute to reducing these burdens through evidence-based prevention and early intervention.

2. Workforce Gaps in Preventive Health

Australia currently lacks a nationally recognised workforce dedicated to preventive, client-facing weight management. While dietitians and nutritionists provide specialised services, their reach is limited, and they are often concentrated in treatment-focused rather than preventive settings.

Graduates of the Certificate IV and Diploma of Weight Management are trained to:

- Conduct health screening and collect relevant client history.
- Provide evidence-based education on nutrition and healthy behaviours.
- Develop and adapt personalised meal and lifestyle plans within their defined scope.
- Support sustainable behaviour change.

- Collaborate with and refer to other health professionals when required.

By recognising these qualifications as the basis for a regulated profession, the system would gain a workforce capable of delivering preventive services consistently, safely and at scale.

3. Alignment with Draft Recommendation 3

Draft Recommendation 3 calls for:

- Sustained investment in prevention programs – A regulated weight management profession provides a skilled workforce to deliver these programs.
- Equity of access – Qualified practitioners can be deployed in diverse community settings, ensuring prevention reaches high-risk and underserved populations.
- Independent oversight and evidence-based priorities – Accreditation frameworks already exist for these qualifications, which can be aligned with national standards for practice, accountability and evidence.

4. International Precedents and National Strategy Alignment

- Many OECD countries have established regulated preventive health professions that sit alongside clinical services, reducing system strain.
- The National Obesity Strategy 2022–2032 identifies the importance of workforce capability and coordinated action. Recognition of weight management practitioners would operationalise this strategy by creating an accessible, trained workforce.

Recommendations

1. Recognition of Weight Management as a National Profession: Establish a regulated scope of practice for practitioners holding the Certificate IV and Diploma of Weight Management.
2. Integration into Preventive Health Workforce Planning: Include weight management practitioners in preventive health investment models under Draft Recommendation 3.
3. Sustained, Evidence-Based Investment: Fund preventive interventions delivered by this workforce, including community-based programs, workplace health initiatives, and collaborations with primary care.
4. Independent Oversight: Align accreditation and practice standards with national frameworks to ensure quality, safety, and effectiveness.

Conclusion

A new national approach to prevention will only succeed if it is supported by a skilled, recognised workforce. By formally recognising weight management practitioners as a national health profession, Australia can strengthen its capacity to prevent obesity, improve health equity, and reduce the economic burden of chronic disease.

I strongly urge the Productivity Commission to consider the establishment of a regulated weight management profession, grounded in existing accredited qualifications, as part of the framework for sustained investment in prevention.

References

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW). (2023). Overweight and obesity. Retrieved from <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/overweight-obesity/overweight-and-obesity>

PwC. (2015). Weighing the cost of obesity: A case for action. Retrieved from <https://www.pwc.com.au/pdf/weighing-the-cost-of-obesity-final.pdf>

Australian Government Department of Health. (2022). National Obesity Strategy 2022–2032. Retrieved from <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/national-obesity-strategy-2022-2032>