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**Submission from the Dietitians Association of Australia  
Review of the NHMRC Road Map**

The Dietitians Association of Australia (DAA) is the national association of the dietetic profession. DAA represents over 3500 members, with branches in each State and Territory. DAA is a leader in nutrition and advocates for better food, better health, better living for all.

DAA welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Review of the NHMRC Road Map: A Strategic Framework for Improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health through Research. While DAA is not a research organization as such, some members are engaged in research and others rely on research outcomes to inform programs which contribute to the improvement of the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Contact person: Ms Annette Byron  
Position: Policy Officer  
Organisation: Dietitians Association of Australia  
Address: 1/8 Phipps Close, Deakin, ACT 2600  
Phone: 02 6163 5216  
Fax: 02 6282 9888  
E-mail: [abyron@daa.asn.au](mailto:abyron@daa.asn.au)

DAA agrees that the scope of the Road Map, the underlying principles and research themes continue to be relevant and have ongoing importance. There are some areas where improvements might be made in the document itself or in the area of research in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. These are noted below.

- Health risks are summarised well in the Road Map, and poor nutrition is noted as a health risk. Apart from this however, nutrition attracts little attention even though it is important in many of the preventable and chronic diseases which are responsible for reducing the quality and length of life of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It would be desirable to see more emphasis on research related to nutrition, including the delivery of nutrition services, food security (especially in urban communities), nutrition education, and descriptive research of nutrition problems in communities.
- At times the differences in the field between evaluation and research are not clearly defined and both endeavours have a contribution to make in the improvement of population health. It may be useful to make some comments in a revised document about the roles and approaches of evaluation and research.

- While the Road Map is robust, there is a need to strengthen the training of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Environmental Health Workers in research and evaluation methods. Some Workers will need additional assistance to gain basic skills in information technology, as well as learning basic research and evaluation. Similarly, it would be desirable to provide more training and support to build confidence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers and health workers who are presenting research in conference venues for the first time.
- There are certainly benefits to be gained from extending the research, publication and presentation skills of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers. However, this tends to be approached in a Western fashion. Perhaps there should be encouragement to develop alternative ways for the presentation of research through oral or pictorial approaches, in keeping with traditional storytelling culture.
- Undoubtedly consideration of ethical issues is important in considering research in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, as it is in any research setting and the NHMRC guidelines on this are helpful. However, there are times when the ethics process is cumbersome and can put some researchers off proceeding. This is particularly the case where research of a quality assurance nature is undertaken, which in itself does not require approval from an ethics committee. However, publishers generally require such approval before they will accept an article.
- Although it is outside of the scope of this review, nutrition research in Australia would benefit greatly from being able to access current data on nutrient intake and food composition data for all Australians, and especially Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. I.e. routine food and nutrition monitoring in Australia should be a priority for the government at a national level.
- Also outside of the scope of this review is the important matter of funding. In general successful research in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities depends on the development of long term relationships between researchers and communities. However, funding is often fragile and this limits the development of such relationships, and the development of skills of members of the community in research.