



4th March 2024

Joint FAO/WHO Secretariat
UN Decade of Action on Nutrition esn-director@fao.org

RE: CAN DReaM (Creating Alliances Nationally to address Disease Related Malnutrition) -
Commitment under the UN Decade of Action and Nutrition

To Whom It May Concern:

The Australasian Society of Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition (AuSPEN) is pleased to submit a commitment under the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition. Our commitment focuses on our new initiative titled CAN DReaM (Creating Alliances Nationally to address Disease Related Malnutrition) that will establish evidence-based practices and advocate for policies to address Disease Related Malnutrition (DRM).

Disease-Related Malnutrition (DRM) is a complex condition resulting from inadequate intake of energy and nutrients that do not fulfil the patient's physiological requirement. Recent national data on DRM rates in Australia are lacking, but data from 2010-2013 found that DRM is present in a third of Australian adults and 15% of Australian children admitted to hospital^{1,2}. Evidence demonstrating association between DRM and poor outcomes, including increased health care cost, hospital readmissions, mortality, functional decline and complications^{3,4,5}, has been accumulating in Australia and around the world over the last four decades. The burden of malnutrition also extends to the community, where it is estimated to affect 3-8.5%⁶ of the population and has a disproportionate effect on older adults and those in care homes⁷. Further, pandemic measures have resulted in increased frailty and food insecurity⁸. There are nutrition care solutions that can address these problems^{9,10,11,12,13}. Australian health care standards have recently been updated to integrate DRM as a key component of Comprehensive Care Standard for hospitals¹⁴, with hospital-acquired malnutrition now recognised as a hospital-acquired complication¹⁵. A recent Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety¹⁶ identified nutrition as a priority, with proposed legislative reform including a new Food and Nutrition Aged Care Quality Standard¹⁶.

A significant challenge that we face relates to a lack of coordinated approach to address DRM. This inhibits opportunities to support Australians dealing with DRM through policy-level action. In the absence of a National Nutrition Strategy in Australia, current health policy is driven largely by conditions related to overnutrition, such as obesity, and there is a dearth of health policy related to undernutrition and malnutrition in Australia.

This situation is not unique to Australia, and many countries across the globe struggle with the absence of frameworks and/or policies to address DRM.

As part of our commitment, AuSPEN has established five goals:

1. Create a national alliance and set the foundation for a national coordination mechanism for improved DRM policy that will involve a diverse range of stakeholders including state and federal governments, health care organisations, academia, agri-food and industry.

2. Scope existing national and state policies that are relevant to disease-related malnutrition across settings and populations. A goal will be to identify gaps in existing policies related to DRM that will inform the design of a policy brief and health policy related to DRM.
3. Design a policy brief on DRM and Policy Framework by 2025.
4. Expand and strengthen global coordination mechanisms for policies and practices to address DRM. This will enable other countries to create alliances to leverage best practices and policies from around the world, and to create capacity for policy level change globally.
5. Create national and state health policy(ies) to address DRM as prioritised in the policy brief by 2026.

Our commitment will specifically address two of the Nutrition Decade's six action including:

Area 2

ALIGNED HEALTH SYSTEMS PROVIDING UNIVERSAL COVERAGE OF ESSENTIAL NUTRITION ACTIONS ACTION AREA

The AuSPEN commitment will strengthen and enable more resilient health systems and will support the development of policies that will ultimately improve nutrition for the health of Australians and citizens globally. Best practices and opportunities to create new health service Interventions to improve health services will be identified.

Area 6

STRENGTHENED GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY FOR NUTRITION ACTION AREA

The AuSPEN commitment will allow more attention towards governance and coordination mechanisms for food security and nutrition and the establishment of policies and programs related to nutrition. It will also support multisectoral information systems related to food and nutrition.

The opportunity to join our efforts with the World Health Organization declaration of 2015-2026 "The Decade of Action on Nutrition"¹⁸ is fitting since a key goal is to eradicate malnutrition in all its forms. WHO has identified malnutrition as a health crisis globally and DRM is an important consideration given its impact on health systems. Further, AuSPEN is one of over 75 associations who has signed a declaration recognising nutritional care as a human right.

AuSPEN are pleased to have the opportunity to take leadership on this important issue by formalising our commitment. Thank you for the opportunity to participate.

Sincerely,



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