

2/12/25

To the ELAA Policy team,

It is my absolute pleasure to offer my support for the implementation of work done by Better Health Network (BHN) Health Promotion team for ELAA. The BHN team has provided a comprehensive summary of the evidence and suggested a practical way to support best practice within the policy.

I have worked as a Paediatric Dietitian for 20 years, in many roles including policy development and clinical work. I appreciate the difficulties policy makers have with staying abreast of the ever-evolving evidence base, particularly around nutrition. I work with thousands of families a year in my online programs and I know the challenges they face with feeding their children.

We all want our kids to be healthy. Parents, educators, teachers and organisations are wanting the same outcomes. Increasingly, we're seeing signs that we might be going about this in the wrong way. Our rates of childhood 'overweight' have stabilised, but our rates of eating disorders are on the rise. Young children are aware of dietary restriction as a strategy for weight loss. In later years we know a third of Australian teenagers develop some form of disordered eating. Families are increasingly stressed about packing an 'appropriate' lunchbox, while teachers and educators feel pressure to 'get' children to eat well in their care. We all need to review what's being done across the sector.

It's time to shift towards supporting children to be confident and adventurous eaters, rather than sharing reductionist or fear-based food messaging rooted in diet culture and weight stigma.

I believe that children and families will benefit from the updates to your policy. I am confident that the clarity of the messaging in the policy will better support Early Childhood Education and Care setting Educators to foster environments that provide accurate and inclusive information about food and eating.

I confidently and wholeheartedly endorse the review of Early Learning Association Australia *Nutrition, Oral Health and Active Play Policy* and the suggested changes to the policy template.

Sincerely,



Dr Kyla Smith
Paediatric Dietitian
Founder of Mealtimes