

NETWORK OF DIETETICS AND NUTRITION RESEARCH LEADERS

**Terms of Reference
May 2021**

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1. BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

The Network arises from collegiate but informal meetings of key research leaders in Nutrition and Dietetics in Australia during 2017, who discussed the current international climate around nutrition and dietetics including the WHO Decade of Action on Nutrition, the evolving Decadal Plan for Nutrition in Australia and the Future of Dietetics research in the UK. The outcomes of these discussions is the more formal development of a Research Leaders Network governed by a Research Leaders Network Steering Group (RLNSG) to create a network structure to support research and researchers in nutrition and dietetics through leadership, strategy and advocacy activities.

Nutrition and Dietetics (N&D) research is defined as the application and translation of food-related science research into policy and practice in individual and population health in the community at large and in health settings. This definition of nutrition and dietetic research is a 'current working definition' – as such it is expected that this definition may flex and be further influenced by the outcomes of ongoing research. This includes

- implementation and translation of food-related research (wide science backgrounds) in a range of settings which encompass all social, cultural, economic and health of individuals and populations.
- research informed by nutrition science (nutrients and food) and behavioural nutrition (psycho-social and environmental determinants) which is applied or translated via implementation science into diets and dietary patterns of individuals and populations.
- cross disciplinary research which may be integrated across a range of systems (food, sustainability, economic, education, health, employment)
- dietetics as application AND translation of nutrition and behavioural science into public health policy and clinical practice.

The Unique Proposition

Collectively N&D researchers conduct research in the basic and clinical sciences and determine the efficacy, effectiveness, cost-effectiveness levels of nutritional interventions. They are uniquely placed to translate the complexity of food and nutrition systems into feasible solutions for the nutritional well-being and food security, health gains and improved well-being for individuals and populations.

Core aspects are

- food-related research leading to cost effective health gains for the individual and for the population;
- cross-disciplinary research collaboration for transformation;
- utilise implementation science to transfer discoveries into practice and practical solutions.

2. NAME

The Nutrition and Dietetics Research Leaders Network Steering Group (RLNSG) under the auspices of the Council of Deans of Nutrition and Dietetics (CDND) will establish and facilitate a Nutrition and Dietetics Research Leaders Network.

3. RESEARCH LEADERS NETWORK MISSION AND PURPOSE

3.1. MISSION

- **Leadership:** provide strategic direction and influence the agenda for N&D research priorities with achievable goals for the next 2, 5 and 10 years.
- **Visibility:** ensure N&D-related research has the prominence it deserves and is being led by appropriately credentialed people, given the attributable disease burden caused by poor diet.
- **Advocacy:** lobby more effectively for allocated funding for N&D research using a common voice for agreed goals.
- **Communication:** to promote and support N&D research goals and methodologies to other peak bodies, government and industry.
- **Capacity Building:** Support the next generation N&D researchers in their career development and long term research pathways for PhD students and post-docs.

3.2. PURPOSE

- To promote the scholarly aspects of N&D Nationally and Internationally
- To provide a leadership group to increase growth and the successful funding of N&D research
- To lobby successfully for an increase in the funding to N&D research in priority areas
- To provide advice on research priorities and the national research agenda in N&D to key stakeholders and key decision makers
- To support Fellowship holders and provide mentorship/assistance in support of potential future Fellows.

4. GOVERNANCE

The RLNSG sits under the auspices of the Council of Deans of Nutrition and Dietetics Australia and New Zealand.

RLNSG

The operation of the Network is overseen by a Research Leaders Network Steering Group comprising the RLNSG Chair, RLNSG Deputy Chair, CDND Chair, an Early Career Researcher (ECR) representative, a co-opted Network member

representative and the CDND Strategic Projects Manager. The RLNSG is responsible for: Ensuring activities align with the RLNSG mission and purpose; Administrative management of the RLNSG; Reporting to the CDND; and Making the final decisions on the functions of the Network. The RLNSG considers the views of the CDND and Network members carefully before making decisions.

The RLNSG will be chosen ('elected') by the Network members on a bi-annual basis.

Network Activities

The activities of the Network will be organised through projects that align to the Mission of the Research Network. Small project teams will comprise of a lead(s), RLNSG and Network members. Project teams will function autonomously with Stream meetings occurring as often as needed. Project leads will report to the RLNSG quarterly ahead of Council meetings. Initially the activities and projects of the RLNSG will fall under three themes: Strategic Direction; Advocacy and Communication; and Capacity Building.

5. NETWORK MEMBERSHIP

Network membership will represent relevant members of the Council of Deans of Nutrition and Dietetics as well as research leaders in nutrition and dietetics from esteemed health research institutions and organisations.

Membership of the Network will be based on Nutritionists and Dietitians with a proven expertise and success in research funding and publication output by nomination of Council or Network members.

This includes:

- Fellows of Learned Nutrition/Dietetics Societies and Organisations
- Fellows or former Fellows funded via competitive National Awards
- Level D & E academics with a strong continuous track record in research output including competitive funding
- Nutrition or Dietetics Researchers with a strong continuous track record in research output, particularly competitive funding.

The RLNSG may invite co-opted members aligned to the purpose and values of the Network into the RLNSG by being nominated by 2 members of the RLNSG. By definition, delegation is not allowed as the RLNSG is based on individual merit.

The process for network membership will be reviewed again in May 2022 by the RLNSG.

6. RESPONSIBILITIES & ROLES

The functions and responsibilities of the RLNSG follow:

CHAIRPERSON

The RLNSG Chairperson will provide: Report of the RLNSG activity to the CDND; Strategic leadership to the group; Chair and organise meetings as per needs of the RLNSG. They will be assisted by a Deputy Chairperson who can act as a delegate.

PROJECT LEADS

The RLNSG Project Leads will report to the RLNSG quarterly ahead of CDND meetings. The activities and projects of the RLNSG will fall under three themes: Strategic Direction; Advocacy and Communication; and Capacity Building.

MEMBERS

Agendas will be provided for meetings, however, in order to ensure reactivity to relevant issues, members are encouraged to utilise email to alert other RLNSG members of relevant consultations, funding submissions or other issues relevant to the group. This should be done through the CDND Strategic Projects Manager role who will co-ordinate distribution to the broader Network or co-ordinate relevant responses to consultations or other issues relevant to the group.

ADMINISTRATION & COMMUNICATION

The CDND Strategic Projects Manager position will be responsible for minutes and assist co-ordinate Communications, Marketing, and Social media.

7. COMMUNICATION

7.1. GENERAL ACCOUNTABILITY

The RLNSG and Network members are collectively accountable to the CDND. Media comments can only be made on behalf of the RLNSG or Network if they reflect position statements or agreed upcoming events or collaboration.

This group can take on no legal liability as a result of the actions of its members.

Members of the RLNSG and Network are encouraged to promote, to those meeting the criteria, their membership of this group. Members of the RLNSG are also encouraged to promote membership/participation in the Network of Dietetics and Nutrition Researchers.

7.2. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Key to the RLNSG achieving its aims, engagement with multiple stakeholders is essential. Members will be encouraged to share where possible, key strategic priorities from their various committees and to support other members of the RLNSG.

8. OPERATING PROCEDURES

8.1. Agenda

The agenda is the responsibility of the Chairperson, but any member of the group can propose agenda items. The agenda will be circulated to members one week prior to the meeting date.

8.2. Minutes

The minutes will be taken by the CDND Strategic Projects Manager role and will be circulated to members within two weeks following a scheduled meeting.

8.3. Meetings

National meetings will be held every 8 weeks initially then quarterly or as needed. Face to Face meetings will be held at relevant conferences

8.4. Priorities

RLNSG priorities will be determined on an ANNUAL basis by consensus amongst the membership with reference to strategic position of national research agenda.

9. REVIEW OF TERMS OF REFERENCE & MEMBERSHIP PROCESS

These Terms of Reference shall be reviewed annually or earlier as and when required from the date of approval and may be altered to meet the needs of the members.

The process for network membership will be reviewed again by the RNLSSG in 12 months.

Dates for next reviews:

Terms of Reference: OCTOBER 2020

Membership process: OCTOBER 2020

Review Terms of Reference: MAY 2021

Next Review: MAY 2022