



**Australian Government**

**Department of Health**

Ref No. MC14-013323

Jessie Reimers  
Get a Fresh Start  
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Dear Ms Reimers

Thank you for your correspondence of 8 October 2014 to the Minister for Health and Minister for Sport, the Hon Peter Dutton, regarding concerns on the Heart Foundation's and the Government's health advice. The Minister has asked me to reply.

The Australian Government recognises the burden of disease often associated with poor dietary habits. This a complex problem with multiple contributing factors and tackling this public health issue requires a community-wide approach as well as behaviour change by individuals. The Government's preferred approach is to actively educate, support and encourage Australians to adopt and maintain a healthy diet.

To promote healthy eating the Government maintains the Australian Dietary Guidelines (the guidelines). The guidelines provide evidence based recommendations for Australians on how best to enjoy a healthy balanced diet from a variety of foods to reduce the health problems that are associated with a poor diet and an unhealthy lifestyle. The guidelines included a rigorous analysis of 55,000 peer-reviewed scientific literature papers by some of Australia's leading health experts.

The guidelines recommend eating a wide variety of nutritious foods from the five food groups and limiting intake of foods containing saturated fat, added salt, added sugars, and alcohol. With the exception of the milk and alternatives food group, foods high in saturated fats (which also often include high amounts of added salt and added sugar) are generally not included in the five food groups. Foods high in saturated fats include biscuits, cakes, pastries, pies, processed meats, commercial burgers, pizza, fried food, potato chips, crisps and other savoury snacks, which are considered discretionary.

The guidelines recommend mostly reduced dairy product choices. This is largely to do with the high kilojoule content of full fat options and the additional recommendation in the guidelines to 'choose amounts of nutritious foods and drinks to meet individual energy needs'.

The guidelines note that polyunsaturated fats (PUFAs) appears to reduce coronary heart disease risk, however the balance between omega-6 and omega-3 PUFAs may be important. The *Nutrient Reference Values for Australia and New Zealand* which helped to inform the guidelines recommend 4 to 10 percent of energy come from omega-6 PUFAs as part of a total daily fat intake of 20 to 35 percent. Eating a variety

of foods from the five food groups will provide a fatty acid profile in proportions which appear to be protective against heart disease risk and support the maintenance of cognitive function.

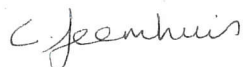
The guidelines also recommend the consumption of mostly wholegrain grain foods/and or high cereal fibre varieties. This is supported by evidence which confirms eating in accordance with this recommendation will reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes and weight gain.

The guidelines and accompanying research documents, including the Evidence Review and Modelling System used to inform the dietary guidelines are available at [www.eatforhealth.gov.au](http://www.eatforhealth.gov.au) along with accompanying resources for health professionals.

Additionally, as you would be aware, the Heart Foundation has recently begun reviewing the Heart Foundation Tick Program. The review will assess what role the Program can play in improving the Australian food supply and helping Australian's to make the healthier choices. The review is expected to be completed at the end of 2015.

I trust the above information is useful to you.

Yours sincerely



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A/g Assistant Secretary  
Chronic Disease and Food Policy Branch

27 October 2014