Dear Colleagues

We live in an age where opinions can be easily and widely broadcast both through conventional and social media. Few would debate the importance of freedom of speech but free speech comes with a responsibility for its consequences. Opinions expressed by prominent personalities not based on evidence can be widely disseminated and accepted as fact – but may be erroneous, and even potentially harmful.

Recently, celebrity chef Pete Evans gave his opinion on dietary calcium and bone health, particularly when calcium is obtained from dairy foods. Mr Evans is reported as saying that “calcium from dairy can remove the calcium from your bones", and can worsen osteoporosis (reported by the Sydney Morning Herald, the Guardian, ABC, and other news outlets; and more recently broadcast on the programme *Sunday Night* (26 March 2017) seen by 1.4 million Australians). Mr Evans does not have either medical or scientific qualifications; and the Australian Medical Association has expressed grave concerns that Mr Evans is disseminating misinformation and by so doing may endanger lives (<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/mar/27/ama-accuses-pete-evans-of-endangering-lives-with-unscientific-health-advice>).

The Australian and New Zealand Bone and Mineral Society, Osteoporosis Australia and the Endocrine Society of Australia collectively reject Mr Evans’ nutritional views on calcium, particularly his opinion of the effect of dairy foods upon bone health. In 2009 we published a joint position statement on Calcium and Bone Health (<https://www.mja.com.au/system/files/issues/190_06_160309/san10083_fm.pdf>). In 2016 we issued a joint statement reinforcing the importance of calcium in bone health throughout life and reassuring men and women with osteopaenia or osteoporosis that a good dairy intake does not have adverse consequences upon bone health (https://www.anzbms.org.au/statement-on-the-benefits-of-dietary-calcium.asp).

Today, and with the help of Prof Kerrie Sanders, we have published a piece on The Conversation (http://theconversation.com/explainer-how-do-our-bones-get-calcium-and-why-do-they-need-it-75227) providing further information about calcium, bone health, and dairy foods. We are motivated by our desire that the Australian public receive scientific facts, not by conspiracy with big business or pharma, and this article has not been sponsored by the dairy or any other industry. We hope this will be useful not only for men and women with osteoporosis but also for the general community.

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