

Submission on Australia's Food Processing Sector

In reference to (b) the regulatory environment for Australia's food processing and manufacturing companies including but not limited to:

(iii) food labelling.

(h) any other related matter.

I am one of many Christians, and everyday Australians, who are seriously concerned about the lack of clear "food labelling" and education provided to Australian consumers. People have a right of transparency to be informed where food products are imported from and where they are produced in Australia.

The Arabic word Halal simply means that which is acceptable, lawful or legal. Halal foods are those which a Muslim is allowed to eat. Halal food laws are based on interpretation of the Quran, the Muslim scripture. For meat that is Halal certified, means before *Halal slaughter*, the invocation of Allah's name over the animal is required. All kinds of foods now have the Halal seal of approval, ranging from *Vegemite* to *Cadbury* chocolates. There are official Islamic certification boards which decide these matters, and one such organisation has a listing of Halal products which extends to ten pages of fine print.

The Christian community and the broader Australian public as consumers have a right to be informed of *all* products where Halal certification practice is being carried out. Clear labelling is necessary so consumers (particularly Christians, many of whom would not want their food prayed over to Allah and monies going to support the Islamic faith) can therefore make an informed decision of whether they wish to purchase a particular item or not.

What is also apparent is that a number of stores are removing brands from their shelves which are not Halal certified. This creates a problem for consumers, especially if they require a particular product and the only option is a Halal certified product, they may have no choice but to purchase it.

What has become apparent, then, is that the larger supermarkets are paying the Muslim community to have foods which are Halal certified stocked on their shelves. Furthermore the consumer has a right to know that these Halal certified foods are supporting the Islamic faith networks. It is therefore in the best interest of the Australian public that these networks and organisations are transparent in at least revealing where they are from and disclose where the money is used. The consumer has a right to know, so they can decide if they wish to support this organisation or not.

In conclusion

* All supermarkets have the responsibility to consult with the **majority** of consumers on whether they wish to have meat, and other products Halal Certified. Labels should clearly state how these practices of slaughter and so forth have occurred.

* The general public of Australia must be openly informed and educated that Halal Certified foods are based on the Muslim faith.

* The general public has the right to know these meats and other products that are Halal Certified are generating income for Islamic organisations by supermarkets paying them for having these products on their shelves and secondly that the product the consumer buys also supports these organisations.

* All Halal Certified foods must be clearly marked that they are Halal Certified so that the general public clearly understands.

*The general public must be educated on understanding what the icons (labelling) on products represent.

Mrs Robyn Grace