

COAG INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF FOOD LABELLING LAW AND POLICY

MEDIA RELEASE

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FINALISATION OF FOOD LABELLING REVIEW

Following two rounds of public consultation, the Independent Review of Food Labelling Law and Policy is now in the final stages of writing its report.

The Panel, chaired by Dr Neal Blewett AC, met recently for its 13th meeting and reported good progress in its thorough evaluation of information gathered during the review process, including the views and ideas submitted by stakeholders, to ensure that it formulates robust recommendations that will withstand scrutiny and address the Terms of Reference for the Review.

In March this year, the Review Panel embarked on its second phase of stakeholder consultation, which included public meetings held in all capital cities in Australia and New Zealand and an invitation to the public to provide written submissions in response to the Panel's Issues Consultation Paper.

"The public's response to our second round of consultation was very pleasing. More than 550 people attended the public consultation forums, and we received almost 600 written submissions from stakeholders in response to our Issues Consultation Paper," Review Panel Chair, Dr Blewett, said.

"The Panel appreciates the time taken by so many stakeholders and members of the general public to contribute to the Review process. We know a lot of people – consumers, interest groups, industry and governments - are looking to the outcomes of this Review to satisfy their concerns and to motivate change and I and the other panel members are very conscious of the responsibility we have to meet people's expectations."

Dr Blewett said a range of issues generated considerable debate during the consultation. Examples of these include the role of food labelling in addressing population health priorities, and the extent to which information about food ingredients, production processes, manufacturing technologies, and the presence of additives and allergens should be declared on food labels.

"There were diverse views about the current requirements and further justification for country of origin labelling and extensive discussion about the degree to which endorsements and health claims should be standardised and regulated," Dr Blewett said.

"Another key issue raised by stakeholders was enforcement and the need for an adequate and effective means of ensuring the truthfulness and accuracy of the information provided on food labels.

“The Panel is directly approaching individuals and organisations if we require any information to further refine our recommendations.”

The Review Panel will make a presentation to the Food Standards Ministerial Council at its meeting on 3 December 2010. COAG will decide on the public release of the report after it receives the final Report in early 2011.

More information, including public submissions (unless confidentiality was requested) are available at www.foodlabellingreview.gov.au

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