

My submission about Food And Beverage Manufacturing In Australia.

My issues here concern a number of the Terms of Reference. As someone who is concerned about the environment, I am always amazed how little is ever done by governments to truly support recycling. Collecting people's recycling, then shipping it off to some third world country, where it builds up in their country instead, is not my idea of 'fixing' a problem. It's just shifting where the problem is! And when it's cheaper to use new plastics than recycled overseas plastics, companies are obviously going to decide to use new plastics! Governments should require, by law, all companies, wherever possible, to use recycled materials, as well as recyclable materials, so long as it does not have a detrimental effect on people's health. I like to use recycled garbage bags because I find them stronger, and because our rubbish is only going to the tip, anyway. If the plastic can at least be used once or twice more before it goes to landfill, then that's a good move in my books. Perhaps more foods can have recycled – and/or recyclable – plastics over them (so long as they're safe for our health)? The thing is, I have to throw so much plastic into my garbage bin because it's not recyclable. We feed most of our food scraps to our farm animals, I put the rest of our food scraps in the green waste, we always have twice as much recycling as we can fit into our large recycling bin every fortnight (!) and there's still space in our normal garbage collection each fortnight. We're doing what we can environmentally regarding our waste products, and from my long-term observations (over many years, living in multiple states, and in both city and rural areas), we're still doing way better managing our household waste than most people around us – and we have been for years. I can thus only assume that asking everyday people to do better on this front isn't really working, so perhaps Industry needs to be pushed to improve instead?

Although it's not a food product, the following example is perhaps a case in point of what's going on in industry: we normally buy deodorant that is healthy (no aluminium, natural ingredients etc). However, the Australian company making it, Miessence, wanted to use a sugarcane, eco-friendly packaging. I had no problem with this. However, they could only find one company willing to do this. ONE. And it was overseas! And they had to change their packaging shape to do this, which unfortunately resulted in a leaky product. After 2 years of these efforts (and accompanying dwindling sales due to the substandard albeit eco-friendly packaging), Miessence finally and unhappily returned to the old packaging. Trying to find an eco-friendly substitute for their packaging has been exceedingly difficult for this company!

In this day and age, it shouldn't be that hard to find a company to make sugarcane plastics – especially given how much sugarcane is grown in Australia – and yet it is. I therefore think the government should step in and promote eco-manufacturing: in some areas, at least. Perhaps this could be done via grants, or even with legislative requirements for larger companies (eg profits over \$1M) so the brunt of improving the food (packaging) industry falls on those who can most afford it, not the smaller companies who can least afford it. If you want industry diversity, you can't expect the smaller players in the market to make all the change! It needs to trickle from the top down. And governments need to make this happen by applying pressure in the right area/s. And it's not just the Food & Beverage Manufacturing Industry where this needs to occur. It needs to occur in most, if not ALL industries! Micro-plastic pollution is a real thing, and the sooner we move away from oil-based plastics and towards eco-plastics, the better. I know it would not be suitable to use 'plant plastics' for all foodstuffs, but they are being used in some areas already eg capsules for some vitamins/supplements or

small plastic bags for fresh foods (but these are only at some supermarkets, when they could be at all supermarkets). Plant plastics could certainly be used in a lot more areas in the Food and Beverage Industry, and if all companies in this Industry are not able to support the changes financially, then Government ought to persuade and help them (by making larger companies bear the greater burden of implementing change, and also providing financial aid). Putting packaged fresh foods into recycled cardboard trays/boxes instead of in plastic containers could also help. I have noted that Woolworths has certainly improved in recent years in this regard. A 1kg packet of pears might be sold in a cardboard box now, but are they surrounded by plant plastic? No. It's still regular plastic that struggles to break down – and when it does, it becomes micro-plastic pollution. Foodstuffs with short use-by dates (eg fresh foods) would do well to have eco-friendly. By the time the plastic is breaking down, the food will either be eaten – or well and truly past its use-by date!

There is plenty of scope here for the promotion of Australian manufacturing of eco-friendly products, and the Australian Government would do well to push this point.

I also have concerns regarding this Industry as to what constitutes 'food products'. Some foods are not really 'foods' at all. They are additives, modifications; unreal products. Even when they can be classified as a 'food', they are not whole foods and many times they are not conducive to a healthy gut or lifestyle. Aspartame, for instance, is a completely man-made product, with a range of potential health problems. Do you ever see ants crawling up the Aspartame tree? Of course not! It doesn't exist! Yet there is Aspartame, in our foods, supposedly 'safe'. And when food colourings like Tartrazine are still allowed in Australia, and are readily available to children in packets of lollies and biscuits, yet the European Union banned them years ago because of a range of health concerns, it does make me wonder just how safe 'food' really is in this country. So when there is an Inquiry into food 'innovation', it deeply concerns me, not just because I am a Health Professional (Chiropractor) with 18 years of practice, and have seen an awful lot of bad diets and the repercussions from that in my time in practice. It concerns me because my family and I have food allergies & intolerances and we've witnessed first-hand the problems with normal and non-foods. It also concerns me because I worry that food manufacturers will continue to take even more shortcuts, using more 'innovative' non-foods and manufacturing techniques to flesh out real foods, at a quarter of the price, whilst our health takes a turn for the worse.

This Inquiry has mentioned '*new proteins*' - but is that what we need? I think we should be moving towards more WHOLE foods, not 'pretend foods' (like vegan 'meat' – which might contain '*new proteins*'), so I would really like it if this Inquiry could consider the potential long-term effects on people's health when eating/drinking 'pretend foods' (I think of '*new proteins*' as 'pretend food') every day, as well as what constitutes something being labelled as a 'food'. The thing is, we have not evolved to eat a modern-day diet. Soft/sugary foods are affecting dental decay, let alone jaw shape and teeth positioning. Roughage in diet is vitally important, yet western society makes heaps of bread that is soft and fluffy – and full of extra gluten (and the science shows that gluten damages even healthy guts, by the way). Most foods are easily chewable, so our jaws and teeth are fast becoming obsolete! Look at Africans, with their wide jaws and teeth positioning. Compare it to an English person. Their diets are vastly different, and the science also shows this. Food 'innovation' is only any good if it is promoting good, healthy food, in ways that are amenable to people. Want a sugary snack? Chew on some whole

sugar cane! You get roughage along with (unmodified) carbohydrates. That's what plenty of people do in Asian countries. But here, we hand out packets of lollies, packed with modified sugars and starches as well as artificial colours and flavours. We really need to ask the question – do we love our countrypeople, or hate them? We are what we eat, and if we eat a pile of 'innovative' foods that often have non-foods in them, or are manufactured so that natural nutrition is drained from them, then the only things we're innovating are ways to reach an early demise. So this Inquiry needs to carefully consider what sort of 'innovation' we should have, because people are sick enough, and getting sicker, in this country, and if we don't get back to eating a more natural diet, we are going to suffer more problems. Promoting whole foods, and foods with more bite/roughage, would be best. People won't like it, because they're lazy, but it's what's best for them. Perhaps taxing foods with more artificial colours/flavours in them, as well as unnatural preservatives (eg sulphur dioxide vs citric acid) or other additives or modifications (eg acid-modified starches) would be a good way to not only gain extra money in the kitty, but to coerce food and beverage manufacturers to make healthier, whole foods, instead of crap. The thing is, 'value-adding' encompasses far more than mere finances. Value-adding towards people's health can almost be considered priceless, because providing good, healthy food is one of the most important steps in achieving a healthy population.

I would also like to point out some food labelling travesties in this country. I get eczema if I eat foods with acid-modified starches in them. If I read an ingredients list and it has 'acid-modified starch' in it, such as Thickeners 1422, I put it back on the shelf. Easy done. But many times, these starches are hidden. Some starches are even labelled as 'organic tapioca starch' when they are in fact acid-modified starches! The 'organic' part pretty well flies out the window, there. So it can make my shopping experience very daunting, given we have other food allergies and intolerances in our family. Luckily I am savvy, and I ask questions, so I figure things out. But not without finding problems beforehand. The problem is, it shouldn't have to be this way.

I have had lengthy conversations with people from Food Standards Australia (FSA) as well as a range of food manufacturing companies over the past number of years. Some of these conversations with FSA were regarding when is a food classified as an additive, and when is it classified as a food product, and what food labelling is required for each? As it turns out, some starches labelled as "organic tapioca starch" are deemed to be food ingredients, not additives, even though they might make up only 1% of the entire product by weight, thus we are not told that they are in fact ACID-MODIFIED starches – because they are a food 'ingredient', not a food 'additive'! The problem here is not just a food labelling issue, it is also a chemistry issue. When starches are modified, especially when they are acid-modified, they become different compounds, which makes the ingredients list incorrect. Corn starch, for example, when acid-modified, first becomes Maltodextrin. Further acid modification results in Corn syrup solids. Thus if we simply read the ingredients list and see 'organic tapioca starch' we firstly have no idea if it is an additive, or a food ingredient, and secondly, we have no idea what the actual ingredient in that food even IS. If any starch has been acid-modified (but is still considered a food 'ingredient' by the manufacturer so we, the consumer have no idea about it because we can't read minds and it might simply read 'organic tapioca starch'), that starch may in fact be a different molecular weighted structure altogether – which is therefore not the same product as written! THAT, in my mind, is equivalent to lying; false advertising. Yet FSA does nothing

(even though, reading between the lines, some people who work there would really like this changed but their hands are tied and they are not allowed to comment to callers on whether they think current legislation is right or wrong!). Australians are being lied to and have been lied to for absolute decades. Whilst this Inquiry is looking for submissions that provide *'opportunities for expanding innovation and value-adding in the food and beverage manufacturing industry in Australia'*, I think this Industry firstly needs to have the opportunity to tell people the Truth about what's in our food & drink! FSA needs an overhaul in some areas of Legislation and also needs to have frank discussions with the Food and Beverage Manufacturing Industry. Only when we have transparency regarding Ingredients lists can we move forward.

Regarding food manufacturing, we also need to consider food growing. Stretching out cities onto food bowl areas is foolish. As an example, the area of Parramatta in Sydney was one of the original good food-growing areas in the region. However, it is now the approximate centre of Sydney! And there's no commercial food growing there, just more houses, apartments and industrial complexes. It is difficult to maintain *'sustainable growth'* in the sector if good food growing areas are passed over in place of people's homes. Food must then be grown in lesser soil and the nutrients in the foods become lower, leading to less nutrient-dense food being eaten across the country – and a more unhealthy population. Expanding on this, selling off (prime) agricultural land (again, in place of homes) rurally is occurring all over the country. This means less and less livestock grazing on land, higher meat prices and less meat available overall. Grass-fed whole meat is a wonderful source of nutrients, and in general, causes far less bodily inflammation and far less health problems compared to eating a vegan/vegetarian diet that is often rich in inflammatory lectins and/or vegetable oils. If the Australian Government truly wants to support the Food and Beverage Industry in Australia, then sourcing healthy food is important! Selling off good land so people can build houses on them is stupid. Making up 'new proteins' instead of eating nature-ready proteins is also stupid. It's like re-inventing the wheel, but doing it worse!

Australia can be a difficult country to farm, and often soils are not great, and low in selenium and some other minerals, but Nature has also provided us with ways to improve on this naturally (eg rotational grazing/farming), and to also eat whole foods. Modifying foods to become non-foods, favouring 'new proteins' in place of natural animal proteins, barely recycling anything, building houses on (prime) agricultural land and looking to 'innovate' everything are not the key. Sustainable growth is vitally important, but to achieve that, it may very well be that 'innovation' needs to take a back seat in the coming years in favour of getting back to basics and cleaning up our country and making more sensible decisions, especially when it comes to the food industry! Innovation can be great, but we haven't even got our general farming practices right in this country. 'Innovation' should be focused on 'Getting Back To Nature'. Getting 'pretend' foods out of our diet and using better/more sensible farming practices lead to better land and animal health, and ultimately, our health, as we eat/drink the proceeds from these farms. Sensibly improving how we're growing and manufacturing our food, in natural ways only, is one of the best value-adding things we can do for our population!

Thankyou for your time.

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