

## Submission on behalf of the residents of Christmas Island

### **Concern: High cost of food and produce on the Island**

This submission is written on behalf of the residents of Christmas Island whose demographics are 70% Chinese, 10% Malay and 20% European.

Christmas Island has four main supermarkets who source their food from Singapore, Malaysia and Australia.

The availability of products and produce is highly dependent on shipping to this remote area in the Indian Ocean and Toll air freight. The supermarkets can often be described as representing “feast or famine” particularly during the wet season.

This is to be expected when living remotely. What is of concern, however, is the high price of food, the general lack of regard for Use by Dates and often low grade produce. This is especially noticeable with fruit and vegetables.

It is expected to pay higher costs than one would living on the mainland, but the prices are often exorbitant e.g. lettuce \$15, cucumber \$8, eggs \$13 per dozen, tomatoes \$5 for two and so on. Much of this produce is poor quality and if not bought and eaten fairly quickly doesn't often survive the week.

Islanders on fixed incomes struggle to eat well and I am reliably informed that many senior citizens in the Asian community live on rice and noodles.

Health is a major issue on the Island particularly as one is subjected to phosphate dust from the Christmas Island Phosphate Mines and the fact that many properties still have asbestos in their homes. Therefore maintaining good nutrition is essential but almost impossible to do for many residents because of the inflated cost of food.

Conversely because of the GST free status on Christmas Island the price of alcohol and cigarettes is extremely affordable.

**Suggestion:** Apply a levy that would be commensurate with the wine duty and GST taxation that would apply to alcohol and cigarettes to subsidise fresh food and freight costs to improve the health of Christmas Islanders.

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