



Senator Gary Humphries
Chair
Senate Community Affairs Standing Committee
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600



20th April 2007

Dear Senator Humphries

Re: Food Standards Australia and New Zealand (FSANZ) Amendment Bill 2007

Thank you for the opportunity for the Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA) to make a submission to the Senate Community Inquiry into the Food Standards Australia and New Zealand (FSANZ) Amendment Bill 2007.

The PHAA is the leading organisation in Australia representing the interests of public health practitioners and with a mission to progress public health for Australians. We consider the amendment to the Food Standards Bill an issue of significant importance to the health and nutritional well being of the Australian population. We are disappointed in the very short notice we have been given to make our submission. The brevity of our submission should not however be construed as an indication of a lack of interest or commitment to this issue on our part.

In view of the tight timeframe for we have been unable to provide a detailed response. The PHAA therefore has chosen to endorse the submission of CHOICE (CHOICE submission on the FSANZ Amendment Bill 2007 (April 2007)). As is CHOICE, the PHAA is concerned that a number of food regulatory decisions outlined in the Amendment 2007 prioritise the interests of the food industry in relation to competition, product innovation and marketing, above the interests of consumers and public health.

The Foods Standards Australia and New Zealand Act 1991 sets out that the objectives of food regulation are;

- The protection of public health and safety
- The provision of adequate information relating to food to enable consumers to make informed choices and
- The prevention of misleading and deceptive conduct

In its current form this Bill does not incorporate a clear definition of public health. We also have concerns that the procedural changes outlined in the amended Bill will have real impact on the avenues for public consultation and the transparency of the process.

The PHAA does not support the amendments to this Bill in their current form. We recommend that both current and future amendment to this Bill (and the work of FSANZ) incorporate a focus on the public health interests and concerns over and above the need for industry marketing initiatives.

We again thank the Committee for the opportunity to make a submission to their enquiry into the Foods Standards Australia and New Zealand Amendment Bill 2007. If the Committee has any inquiries in relation to the comments provided please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Peta Laut
for Dr Cate Burns
Convenor Food and Nutrition Special Interest Group (FANSIG)
Public Health Association of Australia.