

Chapter 1

Introduction

Background

1.1 The Unit Pricing (Easy comparison of grocery prices) Bill 2008, a private Senator's Bill, was introduced into the Senate on 15 May 2008 by Senator Fielding. On 17 June 2008 the Senate referred the Bill to the Senate Standing Committee on Economics for inquiry and report by 2 September 2008.

1.2 The objective of the Bill is to require retailers selling grocery products to display unit prices for grocery products sold by measure, weight or volume. To this end, the Bill amends the *National Measurements Act 1960* and sets out a detailed national unit pricing scheme.

Conduct of the inquiry

1.3 The committee advertised the inquiry in the *Australian* and on the committee's website, inviting written submissions by Monday 7 July 2008. In addition, the committee contacted some relevant organisations, including industry and consumer groups, inviting written submissions. The twelve submissions received, which are listed at Appendix 1, are available on the committee's website at: http://www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/economics_ctte/unit_pricing_08/.

1.4 In addition, the committee held two hearings: one in Melbourne on Wednesday 6 August 2008 and a second in Canberra on Monday 11 August 2008. A list of the witnesses who appeared at the hearings is at Appendix 2.

1.5 The committee thanks all those who contributed to the inquiry.

Structure of the report

1.6 Chapter 2 provides background information on unit pricing, including its current status in Australia and perceived benefits and draw backs. Chapter 3 examines the specific features of the Unit Pricing (Easy comparison of grocery prices) Bill 2008. The Committee's conclusions are presented in Chapter 4.