

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2013-14, 20 November 2013

Question: E13-170

OUTCOME: 1 – Population Health

Topic: Front-of-Pack Labelling

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Senator: McKenzie

Question:

- a) Response was given by Professor Halton during estimates that the star system was voluntary, subject to there being consistent and widespread uptake of the system. Can you please define "consistent and widespread uptake" and what percentage of industry that would need to adopt the system for it to remain voluntary?
- b) If the system is voluntary, what is the purpose of the scheme if there is no research to suggest that the system influences or changes behaviour?
- c) In the event that the new system is not adopted by industry and triggers a mandatory approach, what is the scheduled timeframe for it to take effect?

Answer:

- a) This will be determined by the Front-of-Pack Labelling (FoPL) Oversight Committee upon its establishment in 2014, and informed by current consultations with industry being undertaken by the FoPL Secretariat regarding industry plans for roll out.
- b) The objective of the Health Star Rating (HSR) System is to provide convenient, relevant and readily understood nutrition information and/or guidance on food packs to assist consumers to make informed food purchases and healthier eating choices.

Qualitative and quantitative market research was conducted to inform the development of the HSR system, and is available at <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/foodsecretariat-front-of-pack-labelling-1>. The research found that "[t]he overall FoPL design tested in this research (based on recommendations from the qualitative research) was shown to have a significantly higher potential to influence food purchase decisions than either a) current information available on food packs, or b) the existing Daily Intake Guide". A further piece of research to assess the likely impact of the HSR system on consumer purchase choice, using real product information and images is currently in progress and the results of this research will be made available on the above website in due course.

- c) It is anticipated that an independent review of the voluntary implementation approach for the HSR system would commence at the end of the voluntary implementation period. Following this, the Legislative and Governance Forum on Food Regulation would consider the review findings to determine whether a mandatory approach would be required. Food Standards Australia New Zealand would need to develop a food standard as part of the Australia and New Zealand Food Standards Code, which would take a minimum of twelve months, and include preparation of a Regulatory Impact Statement.