

To the Senate Inquiry:

Third party certification of food.

Dear Sir / Madam

I wish to express my opposition to the certification of food and non-consumable products. The broad coverage of Halal Certification has rendered consumers with little to no option but to purchase Halal Certified products.

Whilst I understand, and respect, that Halal is a requirement of Muslim practices, it remains unclear to me why the certification has emerged, and now deemed a necessity, to meet those requirements. As we understand it, Halal refers to foods permissible to Muslims. The citings of the Qu'ran clearly state that which is Halal and that which is Haram (not permissible).

[The Quran 2:173] He only prohibits for you the eating of animals that die of themselves (without human interference), blood, the Meat of pigs, and animals dedicated to other than GOD. If one is forced (to eat these), without being malicious or deliberate, he incurs no sin. GOD is Forgiver, Most Merciful.

[The Quran 5:5] Today, all good food is made lawful for you. The food of the people of the scripture (Jews & Christians) is lawful (halal) for you.....

There is nothing in the Qu'ran about non-consumables or to suggest that a certification is necessary for any food products. This brings into question the fees attached to such certification. Halal certifiers insist that Halal Certification provides opportunities for companies to expand profit margins in the export market. Whilst many foods are naturally Halal, and practising Muslims are aware of what is what is permissible and not permissible, how is such a claim supported? This suggests that practising Muslims did not eat prior to the alleged certification requirement. Given that Halal refers to foods that are permissible, how have Halal Certifiers supported the need for non-consumables to be certified?

The Halal Certification is not only unnecessary, but also negates the spiritual or religious requirements of the broader population. Halal Certified products are imposed on everyone. This suggests that everyone should forgo their own religious or spiritual beliefs to cater to those of Muslims. This is not indicative of a country that embraces multiculturalism and freedom of choice. Non-Muslims who choose to exercise their rights are being labelled bigots. Who are the real bigots here?

The labelling of Halal Certification is not consistent which also prevents consumers from making an informed choice about their purchasing. Labels are either too small, inside the packaging, or non-existent. All consumers deserve the right to make informed choices about personal expenditure. The current labelling doesn't afford this right.

Whilst this certification is imposed on the broader Australia, it only serves to benefit a minority group in what is suggested to meet a religious requirement. The profits from such certification are also only of benefit to them. Non-Muslims are not only expected to forgo their own beliefs, but are basically forced to support a scheme which has neither a religious or financial benefit.

Freedom of choice applies to all and it appears that the non-Muslim population are to sacrifice individual beliefs and choices to appease the Muslim population.

Under the Commonwealth of Australia, *“Australian citizenship is a great privilege requiring a continuing commitment to Australia. When you become an Australian citizen, you pledge to share Australia’s democratic beliefs, freedoms, and equalities and respect the rights and liberties of the Australian people”*.

I believe that there is more evidence to question the legitimacy of food certification than there is to support its validity. This warrants a thorough investigation with consideration to the freedoms of all Australians.

Regards