

Matthew Bengier

Hon. Members of Parliament,

Senate Inquiry into Halal

I have many concerns about Halal certification in Australia. From a personal point of view I am a devoted Christian. Whilst I am accepting of other religions and I accept Australians' freedom of religion I am uncomfortable with having other religions imposing their beliefs on my food and household consumables. Acts 15:20 "To abstain from foods polluted by idols" thus if "Bismillah" is said over my food I will not eat it. Halal is also prejudicial to Sikhs and means they are unable to consume products.

I believe Halal certification is against Section 116 of the Australian constitution as it imposes religious observance. Halal and the blessing of Allah over all our food has imposed the Muslim faith upon every single Australian consumer. I also believe it is against Article 2 of the UN Human Rights as this imposition of Halal means that I will consume Allah blessed food. Blessings and prayers for food and meals should be said at the home, not at the factory and make food permissible for all rather than taking away that freedom of religion (APH, 2015)

I am also concerned about the lack of accurate labelling when it comes to Halal. Some companies choose not to display a Halal logo at all whilst others hide it on the back of the packaging even behind folds in the packaging. If companies are paying money for Halal certification why hide it? And if people like myself want to avoid Halal foods it is very hard.

Halal slaughter is animal cruelty as many studies have shown that reversible stunning affects wear off prior or during the slitting of the animal's throat. In some instances the animal has taken over ten minutes to die. It is my understanding that the RSPCA is happy to allow Halal slaughter as they receive many significant donations from Halal Certifiers. I believe this is a conflict of interest and highly unethical on their behalf. I would like this investigated.

Finally I am concerned of the depth and breadth of the products that are Halal Certified. I can understand meat being Halal certified and would be happy with a Halal / Non-Halal choice at the supermarket. However, I cannot understand why products such as tampons require Halal Certification. "The following products are already halal; milk, honey, fish, frozen vegetables, legumes, nuts, dried fruits and grains such as wheat, rice, rye, barley and oats" (Pickeringpost 2015). So why do certifiers insist Halal Certification is required?

To conclude Australia pays more in Halal Certification than many Muslim countries and has seen a rapid exploitation of consumers over the past decade. Halal Certification is nothing more than a religious tax aimed at exploiting Australians. I would feel a lot more comfortable with an Australian Government label on the front of packaging saying in Halal "food is permissible to eat" without "Bismillah" said over the food. Meat should be the only exception and there should be consumer choices available.

Reference List:

APH, 2015, viewed 29/07/2015

http://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Senate/Powers_practice_n_procedures/~link.aspx?id=6ED2CAE61E7742A1B2C42F95D4C05252&z=z

Pickering Post, 2015, viewed 28/07/2015 <http://pickeringpost.com/story/the-truth-about-halal-certification/4559>