

Senate Standing Committees on Economics
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

I respectfully make this submission to the Senate Standing Committee on Economics enquiry into food certification schemes in Australia. My focus will be on the Halal certification of foods, goods and services in Australia, although I will at times discuss other food certification schemes.

A. the extent of food certification schemes and certifiers in Australia including, but not limited to, schemes related to organic, kosher, halal and genetically-modified food and general food safety certification schemes;

Halal Certification.

In 1983 legislation was enacted in the Export Control (Meat and Meat Products) Orders 2005, for the export of halal slaughtered meat in accordance with Islamic Sharia law practices. The term halal meaning permissible and the slaughter of meat according to Islamic custom was to slit the throat of a live animal by a Sharia law compliant Muslim whilst facing Mecca.

Since then there has been a progressive drift from just the Islamic ritual slaughter of beef for export markets to the current situation where almost all of the beef, lamb, chicken sold in Coles, Woolworths and IGA supermarkets is halal slaughtered, although not sold as such and halal certification of most essential groceries on our supermarket shelves.

There is a higher cost associated with a halal certified slaughter house and meat works due to certification of the premises, employment of Sharia compliant Muslim slaughtermen and meat workers, time off for 5 times a day prayers etc.

An important question to be asked is why is the Australian domestic meat now halal slaughtered and not sold accordingly in Australia's major supermarkets? The boxes sent to

the supermarkets state “Halal” and “Not sold as halal? This is a matter for this committee to determine.

The Islamic word halal means “permissible” and the word “haram” means forbidden. The only foods haram under Islamic law are pork products and alcohol. Up until the 1980’s Muslims had no problems with any foods in western countries and avoided alcohol, pork, ham & bacon accordingly.

Since then, Islamic councils in Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, Malaysia and now Australia have effectively turned this definition on its head and deemed all food haram, unless it is halal certified. This now requires the food producer to obtain a halal certificate from an Islamic halal certification company.

There are approximately 33 halal certification companies in Australia, most of which are authorities for the issuing of halal certification of food for export to Islamic countries such as Saudi Arabia, Indonesia and Malaysia.

Whilst some of these organisations certify export meat, a far more entrepreneurial exercise has taken place without the knowledge of the Australian government or people, until now.

As previously mentioned, the Islamic councils altered the definition of permissible food to that which was halal certified instead of natural halal and place Australia non-meat exporters in a dilemma. The choice being to either not export their product to these countries or obtain a halal certification for their product which enabled them to export the product. What does the certification mean?

From a manufacturer’s point of view, when dealing with contracts that may be worth millions of dollars, certification is purely a part of doing business. From the Halal certification companies perspective, this is easy money. By tightening the thumbscrews, halal certifiers in conjunction with Islamic councils have turned this into a very lucrative money making scheme.

For example a loaf of bread which was once naturally halal is not so unless the flour is certified halal, the salt is certified halal, the yeast is certified halal, the milk is certified halal, the butter or margarine is certified halal and last of all the manufacturing premises is certified halal. Lucrative to say the least given the millions of loaves of halal certified bread produced each week in Australia and for sale on our supermarket shelves (albeit not displaying a halal symbol).

Halal certification companies have devised a business model where the entire supply chain from farm through production to retail sale and transport can be certified.

For a retail premises to be certified halal it must not use or sell alcohol or pork products, the food it sells must be halal certified etc. For the local kebab shop or halal butcher this is not a problem.

The issue arises when we come to mainstream supermarkets that cater for the 98% of the Australian population who are not Muslims. Approximately 70% of all goods sold in Coles, Woolworths & IGA supermarkets are now halal certified whether they carry a halal symbol or not.

Almost all bread, milk, butter, cheese, yoghurt and margarine are halal certified. All of these products are naturally halal, but are now certified. Many Coles and Woolworths home branded products are also halal certified. Kellogs cereals and other products are halal certified. Sanitarium Wheat-Bix are also halal certified, even though Sanitarium is own by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. This is an obvious religious conflict, but apparently money rules.

All Cadbury's chocolates are halal certified (including Christmas and Easter product ranges even though Muslims do not celebrate either of these Christian events). Cadbury's do not place a symbol on the packaging but have a webpage listing these and their other confectionary brands that are halal certified. All Nestle products including chocolates including chocolates, coffee's and condensed Milks are halal certified. Carnation condensed milk displays the halal symbol, whilst coffee and chocolates do not to my knowledge. All Mars confectionary are halal certified with most not displaying the halal symbol. An exception is Mars pods which do carry the symbol (albeit quiet small).

Last but not forgotten is the Kraft owned Vegemite which is halal certified. I doubt that any Muslim would buy Vegemite as it is very much an acquired taste. Cadbury's, Mars, Nestle, Nescafe, Kellogs all have their halal certification information listed on their respective websites. These are just some examples, but what I have listed amount to many of the staples that fill a typical Australian supermarket shopping trolley.

Most meat pies sold in supermarkets and convenience stores are halal certified. 7Eleven recently introduced a "100% Aussie Beef" pie with the word "Halal" in large print featured prominently. I find this a complete contradiction of values and cultures. However, I am led to believe that the owner of 7Eleven is a Muslim himself, this does not come as a surprise. Krispy Kreme doughnuts which are sold through 7Eleven stores are also halal certified and once again owned by a Muslim.

Fast food business including. McDonalds, KFC, Hungry Jacks, Red Rooster, Subway, Domino's all use halal certified chicken and cheese, even though the majority of stores are not halal certified. McDonalds and KFC having the majority of their foods certified, but not sold as such. McDonalds in a halal certified store sells even halal certified bottled water. Yes, the bottled water contains no traces of pork or alcohol. If this is not a scam, what is?

A number of Australian hospitals have also gone Halal in their food services to accommodate Muslims. However, in doing so they are discriminating against the 98% of the Australian population who are not Muslims. I personally enjoy a sandwich with my meal on when in hospital.

Because Islam bans the use of what is the financial lending with interest in Australia, Muslims have been pushing for Sharia finance in Australia. Whilst Muslims have had their own bank, the MCCA, recently the National Australia bank and Westpac bank have begun offering Sharia financing. The long tentacles of halal certification have not bound with halal certified real estate, non-food businesses. Halal certification companies have no ethical or moral boundaries along with the companies they certify.

Halal food certification in Australia is part of a strategy to spread halal certified foods throughout the world. This is at the behest of Saudi Arabia who is seeking to establish a fund to promote Islamic in countries who are signatories, including Australia.

“Dr Turki had brought the figures, including embattled Australian Federation of Islamic Councils president Hafez Kassem and “Mr Saudi” in Australia, Shafiq Khan, to Mecca to conquer and divide the multi-million-dollar halal certification market.” (Source: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/in-depth/community-under-siege/halal-certification-charter-signed-in-secret-in-mecca/story-fnubfp6c-1227367563146>)

When reading this article, the agreement is not about Halal certification to make foods clearly identifiable to Muslims, but an outright money making scheme perpetrated on businesses that seek to trade with Islamic countries. When there is an international pool of funds available for division amongst member signatories for the establishment of new mosques and the expansion of Islam, Australia has a serious problem with its sovereignty and maintaining its secular society.

Halal certification is little more than a monumental money making scheme instigated by Saudi Arabia on its trading partners with a view to not just the spread of halal certified food throughout the entire food chain, but also Sharia Law, as halal does not exist without Sharia Law.

To make matters worse, all the money paid to these Halal certification companies is deemed religious, not-for-profit and tax free. No GST is collected and no tax records are known by the ATO to truly assess this.

B. current labelling requirements of food certification schemes;

From personal observation, Vegan, Heart Tick and Kosher products display the symbol on their products and are easily identifiable. In respect to Halal certified products of which there are some 31 halal certification companies with great variation on the symbols and wording. Some contain the word “Halal” in the symbol, whilst others use the word halal in the name of their company. For others there is Arabic writing in part or with English wording or in total with no English wording.

The Halal symbols are what would colloquially terms a “dog breakfast” in Australia. This highlights the free for all being played out by halal certification companies in this country vying for their share of certifying every aspect of the Australian food supply chain from farm gate to processor, packaging, transport and retail premises.

What I have discovered from my own experiential research, albeit preliminary in terms of a full research project, is that many products sold locally such as milk, yoghurt, cheese, bare halal certification symbols. Bread although halal certified in many cases, does not bare the halal certification symbol.

Most Nestle and no Cadbury products do not bare any symbols. Why? The answer is because the export markets such as Saudi Arabia and Malaysia do not require them as they have seen the annual halal certificates.

Many halal symbols and kosher symbols appear small on packaging, ten millimetres or less and are easy to miss. In the case of Coon cheese, the halal symbol is on the back of the package, hidden under the folded seam.

Inspecting a packet of M&M's the halal symbol was approximately 7mm in diameter, in fine print and on the back of the bag. Had I been not specifically been looking for the symbol, I would not have noticed it. The symbol on the bag of Mars Pods was only faintly more legible. Obviously Mars also have something to hide from Australian consumers.

C. the need for labelling on products produced by companies that pay certification fees;

From anecdotal evidence, it would appear that there is no compulsion for a food manufacturer or business to display a food certification symbol.

Kosher, Heart Tick, Vegan symbols appear on a limited number of products in the major supermarkets. The food manufacturers display the symbols as a marketing tool so that their niche consumers can identify the product.

The same cannot be said for Halal Certified products which vary considerably. For example Cadbury's, Nestle chocolates do not display halal symbols. Of the many supermarket products that are certified such as milk, cheese, yoghurt, those that do have halal symbol, it will normally be small and on the back or side of the packaging

Certification symbols should appear on the front of a product in a size no less than 25 mm and in legible print on a contrasting background.

D. whether current schemes provide enough information for Australian consumers to make informed purchasing decisions;

The one question that needs to be asked is why Australian consumers being flooded with religiously certified food for Muslims to eat when they are approximately 2% of the Australian population.

I personally am of Spiritual beliefs and find this breadth of food certified to Islamic beliefs offensive. Consequently, I refuse to buy halal certified products at any and every opportunity. Instead I choose to purchase Australian made non-religiously certified food manufactured by companies such as Dick Smiths brands, Arnotts biscuits and Allens confectionary. I along with many Australians will now buy any imported non-halal certified product in preference to an Australian made halal certified product. Halal certification invalidates Australian made in the eyes of many Australians. How can an Australian made products for sale in Australia be religiously certified by Muslims when we are not a Muslim nation. What a contradiction!

Those Australians who are aware of the halal certification of our supermarket foods have mounted a significant boycott to halal certified brands. Cadburys for example are now laying

off 80 workers due to a downturn in Australian sales. I can only imagine that our local Islamic population did not buy big on halal certified chocolates over Christmas and Easter to offset those Australians who choose non-certified chocolate brands such as Lindt and Aldi brands.

I would believe that if the majority of Australians were aware of the extent of the halal certification of naturally halal food products and the fees paid to Islamic halal certifiers, there would be a massive backlash against our meat industry and major supermarket lines.

E. details regarding certification fees paid by food producers and/or manufacturers, and the potential for these to impact on prices for consumers;

Kosher certification details and costs are available online.

Vegan certification is run by the UK vegan society.

Heart Tick involves a royalty fee of not less than \$2000 with information available online.

Halal fees are subject to non-disclosure clauses. However, information I was provided from a person claiming to work at an abattoir stated that a meatworks paid \$27,000 per month based on a figure of fifty cents per head. This was in addition to the annual fee and the employment of Muslim slaughter men and meat workers who were paid at higher rates than non-Muslims. In addition these workers stopped five times a day for prayers, in their specially constructed prayer room. He also stated a number of these workers were on 457 visa's which excludes non-Muslim meat workers from employment.

If this meat was destined solely to the export meat market in an Islamic country, this would not be an issue. However, some issues do arise. Firstly, a significant proportion of halal slaughtered meat is supplied to non-Islamic countries such as China, would this country have an issue with ritually slaughtered meat if it was disclosed as such? This could impact our export meat trade if truthfully disclosed.

Secondly, all Coles meat products, excluding pork, is halal slaughtered including beef, lamb and chicken. This is similar for IGA and a slightly lesser degree Woolworths as they sell an organic roast chicken that is not halal slaughtered. Since when did Australian consumers turn Muslim? They did not. And yet they are expected to pay extra for the certification and ritual slaughter of these animals.

If the Australian consumer was made aware they were buying beef, lamb or chicken that was ritually slaughtered with its throat cut while an Islamic prayer was being said, I suspect there would be serious questions asked of the supermarket employees and management. More so, there is an additional cost involved and the 98% of the Australian population who are non-Muslims are paying an additional fee for this. Whilst it may only be a few cents per steak, lamb or chicken, multiplied millions of times, this adds up to be millions of dollars in halal certification fees per year on meat alone.

In the news recently has been the Fleurieu Milk and Yoghurt Company who to secure a \$50,000 contract to supply yoghurt to the Emirates airline were required to pay a \$1,000

halal certification fee. This equates to 2% of the gross value of the contract and if this is an indicator of what a small business is charged on a product that is naturally halal, the mind boggles if similar fees are levied on small and medium businesses throughout Australia.

The question then needs to be asked as to how much do businesses such as Cadbury's, Mars, Nestle, Kellogs pay in annual certification fees and inspections? I suspect the combined fees would run into millions of dollars per annum.

F. the importance of food certification schemes in relation to export market access and returns to producers;

In 1983 the Islamic ritual slaughter of beef etc was enacted into Australian legislation for export purposes. This has been of benefit to Australian livestock producers and remains so.

However, any religiously certified meat should be limited for exported to Islamic countries as per the intention of the original legislation in 1983.

Halal slaughtered meat should not be finding its way to non-Islamic countries, even if it is not packaged or sold as halal.

There is a double dip within Islamic slaughter and certification in that if they do not say it is halal certified on the packaging, then who is to know? I am sure China, Japan, Korea & North America would be most upset to know that its beef shipments from Australia are likely to be halal ritually slaughtered.

There has been a rush by many Australian meatworks to adopt halal slaughter and certification well in excess of both export demand from Islamic countries and any demand from Muslims in Australia. All other meat slaughtered outside specific demand should be slaughtered according to Australian standards which are less cruel and not religiously offensive to the majority of the Australian population.

G. the extent and adequacy of information available to the public about certifiers including, but not limited to, certification processes, fees and financial records; and any related matters.

In respect to aspect of the inquiry, there is less information available to the Australian public than there is about the inner workings of ASIO.

What do we know about the certifiers?

AFIC or the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils has a subsidiary company that provides halal certification services. AFIC of course are one of the signatories to the halal certification charter signed in Saudi Arabia. AFIC has had its bank accounts frozen over a number of financial irregularities and its state based affiliates.

It is the controlling body of six Islamic schools, of which several are in trouble with relevant government authorities. One last year was ordered to repay \$9 million in government funding after it was discovered that the money have been transferred to AFIC over several years.

The leadership of AFIC are currently is disarray rocked drug an increasingly hard line approach in its Islamic schools, questionable accounting practices and drug arrests and has lost the trust of state Islamic councils and many Muslims in general. There are currently calls for this 60 year old Islamic peak organisation to end.

(Source: <http://m.theaustralian.com.au/in-depth/community-under-siege/peak-islamic-group-missing-and-beyond-saving/story-fnubfp6c-1227368999404>)

Parents of students at the Islamic College of South Australia are currently calling for the AFIC appointed school board to be sacked over the board taking the school in a hard line Islamic direction. (Source: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-05-07/protest-outside-an-islamic-school-in-south-australia/6453574>)

Halal Australia lists on its website that it is affiliated at a national level with Muslim Aid Limited and Human Aid Appeal. Both agencies are believed to fund terrorist operations with the cover of humanitarian aid. (Source: <http://www.halal-australia.com.au/recognition-and-affiliation/>)

The president of the WA Islamic Council Dr Rateb Jneid, 43, faces charges over a \$8 million methamphetamine trafficking syndicate and firearms charges.

(Source: <http://www.watoday.com.au/wa-news/wa-police-crack-perth-methylamphetamine-supply-chain-20140529-zrrg8.html>)

Last but not least is Mohammad El-Mouehly who is the Chairman and sole employee of the Halal Certification Authority. Unlike other Halal certification companies he does not employ a food scientist to test products, but has openly stated on A Current Affair that halal certification has made him a millionaire and keeps his wife in shoes. He is currently suing the QSociety and Ms Kirralie Smith of halal choices for defamation in the State Supreme Court of NSW. El-Mouehly has no affiliation with AFIC or international Islamic councils. He is a lone wolf in the halal certification industry and his certificates are questionable at best. And yet he managed to issue halal certificates to the McDonalds store in Lidcome NSW and Hungry Jacks in Roxburgh Victoria. He even managed to certify the water halal at the McDonalds store. His company also issued a certificate to Goodman Fielder halal certifying their products including Crisco oils, Eta branded products, Meadow Lea spreads. Given that he is the sole employee and does not employ a food scientist for testing, is this man a scam and his certificate not worth the paper it is printed on? Maybe he merely highlights that the halal certification business of naturally halal products is a scam on the Australian public?

What information that is available, is that halal certified premises must pay an annual fee and the cost of inspection. There is no standard schedule of fees, nothing is published and effectively all details are kept secret by way of non-disclosure agreements.

I wish the committee good luck in obtaining the financial records of these Islamic certification companies given the material I have listed above.

In closing

In the 1980's there was a report that warned the government of the time of this very situation where halal certification would get out of hand and was ignored. This is the "I told you so" moment for the author.

The massive extent of the halal certification scheme begs the question is the religious certification of foods specifically for Muslims or is this something else? I believe it is for a far greater reason.

There is a worldwide Islamic aggression taking place for Muslims to exert more and more Islamic dominance over non-Muslim countries such as the UK, France, Germany etc. Expanding halal certification, is not just a money making scheme, but is a means to making non-Islamic countries Sharia Law compliant.

"The Grand Mufti of Bosnia Herzegovina declared at a world halal conference in Karachi in 2010 that the halal industry was all about dominating the world economy ."

(Source: <http://australianchristians.com.au/is-promoting-halal-really-promoting-tolerance-vickie-janson/>)

Halal does not exist except under Sharia law. The current halal certification of foods that were naturally halal or permissible was everything except pork or alcohol. Australian food standards would require that naturally halal products were in fact free of any pork or alcohol. If a processed food contained pork or alcohol they would be included on the ingredients list. Now everything haram (forbidden) unless halal certified. Our international Islamic trading partners have held us to ransom by saying our businesses must pay a fee to sell them meat and non-meat product that are of the highest food standards and quality in the world. Some may call this the cost of doing business, other would call it a form of extortion. Personally, I believe the Calabrian Mafia would be in awe at this scheme.

I contend that the Halal certification scheme is out of control and costing Australian consumers tens of millions of dollars in unnecessary certification fees every year. Our food is of the highest standards and quality and maintains that reputation. Over the past three decades this would be many hundreds of millions of dollars in unnecessary certification fees that have gone untaxed and a significant portion overseas to the Halal council in Saudi Arabia and halal certification authorities in Indonesia and Malaysia.

Halal certification schemes, either for ritual meat slaughter and non-meat halal certification are not driven by local consumers, but by Saudi Arabia government officials in cooperation with AFIC to place a premium on any food exported to them, in addition to spreading the Islamic influence throughout Australia. This is no conspiracy. This is fact. The current halal

certification of Australia's food chain is extensive and unnecessary impost on Australian food producers, manufacturers and general public.

In the Koran, there is a term for the fee's non-Muslims are paying for certification of our foods. It is called the Jizya or Islamic tax on non-Muslims. We in Australia, a secular nation are paying what is effectively a Jizya to halal certification companies for foods, including water that are naturally halal to Muslims in Islamic nations. Halal certification does not exist in Islamic nations; it only exists in non-Muslim nations seeking to export foods to Islamic nations.

The hypocrisy of the halal certification scheme is that if a Muslims are required to say prayers over their meals with the word *bismillah*. This blessing makes all food halal, even non-ritually slaughtered meats.

My request to the committee is to bring an end to the Halal certification scam being perpetrated on Australian food manufacturers and the Australian population. Not to take corrective action now will have dire consequences for the social fabric of our society. A religious population of less than 3% of the total Australian population should not be permitted to religiously certify our domestic food supply and export food product.

I believe there is an way of removing the control by Islamic officials overseas and locally on our food supply by making changes to Australian legislation. These are as follows:

Recommendations.

- *That an Australian Food Standard is created to meet the current halal certification on products. I.e. "Free from alcohol or pork products or contamination".*
- *This Standard can be tiered to apply to food manufacturing, transport and retail premises selling such food products. (Shopkeepers, transport businesses can claim to be halal compliant and subject to inspection by local councils etc.)*
- *A similar Standard could be introduced for Kosher certification so to not to show bias.*
- *In fairness to Vegans there should be an Australian food standard to ensure they are not misled by food manufacturers.*
- *The Australian Government sets up a Food (Ritual Slaughter) Certification Authority within the relevant government to take control of the oversight of ritual slaughter of livestock, sheep & chickens for export and domestic consumption by Muslims and Jews. All other meat and poultry slaughtered for domestic consumption is to be according to (non-ritual) Australian Standards.*
- *An Australian Food Standard be introduced that ensures that meat ritually slaughtered meat must be sold as ritually certified meat as applicable. It is to be an offence to sell ritually slaughtered meat unlabelled to persons of other faiths or beliefs.*
- *That all halal certification services conducted by the various Islamic councils and independent certifiers be terminated under the new Australian Food Standards.*
- *The similar termination of any religious kosher certification authority if it exists.*

- *Advisory boards of the relevant religious faith be established to be consulted with when required by the Food (ritual slaughter) Certification Authority.*

Whilst there will be quite a bit of division amongst the community, mainly from a minority of Muslims, AFIC and other Islamic councils, this is expected. There will also be considerable posturing from Indonesia, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia etc., but then this is really calling their bluff. The European Union is also seeking to create a non-religious food certification scheme to the angst of Islamic groups in the EU and the Middle East.

Australia is a sovereign nation. We are a secular nation and halal certification is changing this country to rule under an aspect of Sharia law. This was not unintentional. This is how Islam works.

Australia needs to return to being secular and allowing all Australians the freedom to purchase foods that are not certified by a single minority religion in this country.

Thank you for considering this submission.