



Food is life. Food is you.

Leanne Linard MP
The Chair
Health and Ambulance Services Committee
Parliament House, George Street
Brisbane Qld 4000.

10 December 2015

Dear Ms Linard

Re: Health Legislation Amendment Bill 2015

Proposed amendment: "the Food Act 2006 to require fast-food chains, snack-food and drinks chains, bakery chains, café chains, and supermarkets to display nutritional information, and to authorise disclosure of confidential information for limited public health and safety reasons."

Thank you for providing NAQ Nutrition with the opportunity to respond to the proposed introduction of legislation requiring fast food chains, snack-food and drinks chains, bakery chains, café chains , and supermarkets to display the kilojoule content of their food and drinks to help Queenslanders use the kilojoule information to make healthier choices when eating 'fast food' and snack food choices purchased at quick food service outlets .

NAQ Nutrition is Queensland most experienced community nutrition organisation, delivering services across the state. We help address a wide range of nutritional needs, to find solutions and deliver outcomes for the community through quality work, by highly qualified staff. We recognise eating is about food – not just the nutrients. Our vision is to see all Queenslanders choosing the foods that will ensure they enjoy healthy good health and achieve and maintain a healthy weight - Food is life; food is you.

Please find attached our submission in response to the proposed amendment to the Health Legislation Bill.

Yours sincerely

[Redacted signature]

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Encs.



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NAQ Nutrition submission to the inquiry by the Health and Ambulance Services Committee

Re: Health Legislation Amendment Bill 2015

In this submission our organisation, is providing evidence for the proposed amendment:

“the *Food Act 2006* to require fast-food chains, snack-food and drinks chains, bakery chains, café chains, and supermarkets to display nutritional information, and to authorise disclosure of confidential information for limited public health and safety reasons.”

Date submitted: 10 December, 2015

Contact: Aloysa Hourigan, Nutrition Program Manager



1.0 Rationale:

Queenslanders may be living longer, smoking less and some have very good health, but overall, Queenslanders are:

- gaining weight
- being diagnosed with diabetes more often
- making poor food choices,.

Additionally, there are inequalities in health across the state amongst certain groups, such as those with socioeconomic disadvantage and in Indigenous communities (1).

Ensuring there is a food and health system in Queensland that makes it possible for every Queenslander to be able to access and choose the food choices that promote health and well being and minimise risk of overweight and obesity and chronic disease, is vital in ensuring improved and sustained health and wellbeing of all Queenslanders. We need to put in place strategies that support making healthy food choices the easy choices.

1.1 About NAQ Nutrition

The Australian Nutrition Foundation (Qld Div) Inc trading as **NAQ Nutrition** (www.naqlld.org) is Queensland's most experienced community nutrition organisation, having delivered services across the state for over 20 years. We help address a wide range of nutritional needs, to find solutions and deliver outcomes for the community through quality work, by highly qualified staff. We recognise eating is about food – not just the nutrients. Our mission is ***'to provide the tools and resources people need to make better food choices the easy choices'***. NAQ Nutrition is part of the national organisation, the Australian Nutrition Foundation, which trades as Nutrition Australia (www.nutritionaustralia.org).

NAQ Nutrition sees its role as empowering Queenslanders with skills and knowledge so they are better able to access and prepare healthy food, no matter where and in what social circumstances people live. Strengthening the connectedness of our audiences, including remote and regional communities, culturally and linguistically diverse groups, and the local community is key to ensuring skills and knowledge gained through NAQs work are embedded to build and achieve successful long-term community outcomes e.g. healthier, vibrant and inclusive communities.

NAQ Nutrition works across Queensland through its core programs, which are sustained through a diverse funding base including: government, philanthropic and corporate organisations and user pays services. Our work addresses the needs of all ages across the lifecycle, from pregnancy and newborns through to the elderly.

1.2 Recent achievements by NAQ Nutrition:

- ❖ Effective engagement of the community in the 'Try for 5' Challenge, part of Nutrition Australia's 2015 National Nutrition Week campaign, which aligned effectively with the Queensland

government's Healthier.Happier – Give Colour a Spin campaign. Both campaigns aimed to increase vegetable and fruit intake for Queenslanders.

- ❖ School Tuckshop Support Program implementation for 50 schools across Queensland (6 month project with funding from Education Queensland, 2015-2016)
- ❖ Involvement in the development and then implementation of Smart Choices Food and Drink Strategy for Queensland schools (from 2005- 2015)
- ❖ Major partner with the Australian Drug Foundation – Good Sports Program in the implementation of the Qld Government's Food for Sport Guidelines in sporting clubs across Queensland
- ❖ Development and delivery of LEAPS (Learning. Eating. Active Play. Sleep) project for early childhood settings (2013 -2016) in partnership with the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) (lead agency) and Australian Council for Health and Physical Education and Recreation (ACHPER).

This project includes the end milestone of delivery of 225 professional development sessions to support implementation of the 'Healthy Eating and Physical Activity Guidelines for Early Childhood settings - Get Up & Grow' and to help early childhood educators communicate these messages effectively to parents. Initial evaluation (not yet published) has identified increased knowledge of educators as a result of the PD program and translation of this increased knowledge into practice is currently being evaluated.

- ❖ Development of 2 health promoting storybooks ("*I'm having a rainbow for dinner*" & "*We're growing a rainbow*") which provide parents with a fun and innovative way to engage in conversations with their young children to encourage vegetable and fruit intake.
- ❖ Development and delivery of 20 Food and Behaviour workshops for educators and parents (for Early Childhood Settings) and 'I'm having a Rainbow for Dinner' storytime sessions for children attending long day care across Queensland (recurrent funding since 2006, from Education Queensland – Office for Early Childhood Education & Care)
- ❖ Development and delivery of the 7 week 'Your Healthy Life' program for new arrivals and refugee families already living in Australia.
- ❖ Cook and Eat sessions and workshops (funded by local governments including Brisbane City Council & Moreton Bay Regional council, and corporate organisations)
- ❖ Active participation as a major collaborative partner in the Qld Government funded Qld NGO Swap It! PR campaign along with Diabetes Queensland (lead agency), Heart Foundation and others.
- ❖ Development of the *Healthy Food; Healthy Planet menu planning tool* and the *Healthy at Home* and *Healthy at Work* section of the NAQ Nutrition website, with access available to all Queenslanders

1.3 The Potential Benefits of the proposed amendment to the Health Legislation Bill relating to kilojoule labelling for quick food service & snack food outlets.

While we know food choices are ultimately a personal responsibility, because of the social determinants of health, not all Queenslanders are equally empowered in their understanding of better food choices, their access to healthy food at affordable prices, nor the socio-economic circumstances in which they live - which means it is not equally easy for everyone to always make

the best food choices for their health and wellbeing. If governments can put in place legislation, such as the proposed amendment to the Health Legislation Bill which supports a healthier food supply and makes it easier for individuals to make the better food choices then this can go a long way to supporting better health outcomes for the community and diminishing the health burden for Queensland.

2.0 Potential issues to consider with respect to the implementation of the amendment supporting the introduction of a menu labelling scheme in Queensland.

NAQ Nutrition supports the introduction of a menu labelling scheme in Queensland.

NAQ Nutrition's primary focus is on community education to raise awareness of and promote behaviour change to achieve good food and nutrition for Queenslanders. We believe that the 'community and industry awareness campaign' is a vital component of the scheme and should be implemented immediately or prior to businesses being mandated to display the nutrition information. The 'community and industry awareness campaign' needs to consider what 'the average adult daily energy intake is 8,700KJ' means e.g. 'what does this mean for people in their daily lives' and how it relates to individuals in different age groups (including children) as well as the impact of consuming excesses of the macronutrients and energy. There is a need for supporting consumer information to help ensure people/the community understand the 8700 KJ message – which was the case with the implementation of a similar program in NSW, where it proved to be successful. The campaign should utilise existing nutrition education and health promotion services, organisations and programs already implemented across the state to ensure efficiency and effectiveness.

2.1 Challenges and opportunities of this proposed capture of food service outlets under the proposed amendment

2.1.1 Challenges:

- 1) Ensuring access to the campaign for rural and remote areas of Queensland
 - Lack of information for consumers to access when using fast food/quick food service outlets with less than 20 outlets. This is particularly important in rural/remote areas where the majority of outlets selling food will be independently-run. Consumers may feel more empowered to visit the outlets displaying KJ or nutrient contents of menu items to help them make the 'healthy' choice, which could have a negative impact on smaller businesses. Providing some supporting resources and materials these smaller businesses for whom it is not mandatory would increase the impact of the strategy and help support small business in regional and rural Qld.
 - Where would the spread of outlets which are part of the '20 outlets' be? Will certain regions miss out on this scheme and the awareness campaign would not therefore be relevant to these regions. The question is raised : What additional support through resources and training will extend the impact of this legislative change so that it equally supports the health needs of regional and rural Queenslanders, who we know already have poorer health outcomes?

- 2) Ensuring accuracy, currency and readability of information in outlets
 - Ensuring nutrition information is accurate and reflective of the food product being sold.
 - Information will need to be kept up-to-date to reflect changes in ingredients or menu items available over time.
 - All products need to be included to enable consumers to compare nutritional content across the menu.
 - Lack of space on menus to display appropriate information, which should be readable to the consumer and help consumers compare one food item with another (or many). Information should be available prior to the consumer making a purchase, not just on the product packaging.
- 3) Ensuring consistency of campaign messages – staff training
 - Staff training by appropriately qualified nutrition/dietetic/health promotion professionals would be required to enable staff working in outlets to answer questions relating to the information displayed and being ordered by consumers and/or where to find further information. This would encourage good customer service.

2.1.2 Opportunities & Recommendations:

- NAQ Nutrition welcomes the need to have a scheme that is applicable across Australia
- Timely evaluation would identify where further support, information and services are required for consumers and businesses.
- There is an opportunity for the government to support positive outcomes of this strategy by providing funding to skilled and professional preventive health, community nutrition education organisations, such as NAQ Nutrition to develop and deliver staff training for staff in these quick food service outlets.
- Ongoing upskilling of staff on nutritional content of products is needed to ensure they are providing up-to-date food/nutrition information to consumers to enable them use the displayed information to their own benefit e.g. reduce total kilojoule (KJ) intake
- Introduction of this legislation and the health promotion initiative it underpins will have increased impact on the health of Queenslanders if there is also timely ongoing support for and links to other Queensland Department of Health initiatives e.g. Healthier.Happier campaign and proposed Health for Life! strategy.
- Other preventive health non-government organisations, including NAQ Nutrition can work collaboratively to promote and ensure consistency around the '8700 KJ' message

3.0 Other considerations:

3.1 Should the Queensland legislation include exemptions for certain businesses or product types?

If certain businesses or product types are to be considered for exemption, this needs to occur only following close consultation with both nutrition and health promotion professionals and industry.

3.2 What nutrition information should be displayed at the point of sale?

As proposed, NAQ Nutrition believes the display of KJ content of a food item is important for consumers. However consumers need to be aware what this means in relation to their daily intake and their energy needs e.g. If someone is trying to lose weight, they may need less than 8700 KJ per day. Information needs to be provided in a simple and highly visual representation which allows consumers to clearly see what proportion of the recommended 8700KJ per day is being provided by the food choice they are purchasing.

It would help consumers to make healthy choices if the nutrition information at point of sale also identified if food items are excessively high in saturated fat, salt/sodium or sugar. Consumers need to be informed and have a sound understanding of why excess consumption of these components of food is an important issue.

Many of the consumers may not be 'adults' but children – and the 8700KJ recommendation then would often not apply. This needs to be considered either through the additional information provided by the businesses, through the accompanying campaign and/or displays and data collected during evaluation. The campaign needs to clearly identify what changes occur with age and physical activity e.g. energy requirement per day. Supporting information could also include statistics around how much physical activity an individual has to do to burn off an extra 400KJ etc.

Recommendation:

The government invests in supporting consumer education and social marketing to support this initiative.

3.3 What format for interpretive information such as colour-coding, star ratings, walking index, would be best received and accepted by consumers to help them understand kilojoules and the impact on overall health?

NAQ Nutrition understands the need to provide information for consumers to utilise the displayed information appropriately – for immediate use and for their future benefit. However, consumers should not be overburdened with excess symbols, colour-coding or scaling etc.

The accompanying 'awareness' campaign should highlight where additional information can be found either through non-government organisations and services; local government; government departments or programs and appropriate websites or internet pages. This will also ensure links are made with other 'awareness' campaigns in relation to health and food/nutrition. This is relevant in NSW with their '8700KJ' campaign and may be an important reason why they have had positive results from their scheme compared to the initial introduction of the scheme in South Australia without the consumer information, which had limited success in its outcomes.

3.4 Using different approached to provide information and communication methods help various population groups, in the community to understand this initiative

NAQ Nutrition believes online/website information should not be relied upon as the only channel to provide consumer information. Many consumers, especially those living in disadvantaged

circumstance, and those in rural and remote areas may not have easy/readily-available internet access. Other forms of information sources also need to be available and where applicable, mobile phone friendly information would be an channel through which many consumers can access information and support. Resources need to be simple and highly visual, with support through television, billboard and other media as well as a social media marketing campaign.

NAQ Nutrition believes that care should be taken to ensure all information is provided to meet the needs of the consumers using the outlets e.g. those from disadvantaged groups; Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities; different age groups; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders; those with lower level literacy and numeracy and lower level English.

Mapping the distribution/location of the outlets that will have to display the nutritional information will enable information to be developed in accordance with the literacy and numeracy needs of the population groups in those locations. To enhance effectiveness of outcomes, consumers need to be able to understand and accurately interpret the information and know how they will use the information.

The accompanying campaign would benefit and maximise efficiencies and effectiveness if it utilises the existing services, programs and organisations already working with those consumers in need of the information, in the regions of need, and those consumers with limited literacy and numeracy. The health and nutrition education professionals who are appropriately skilled in providing the appropriate information e.g. NAQ Nutrition (www.naqlid.org) need to be consulted in the development of such support materials. Consumers can be directed to sources for additional background information e.g. internet; preventive health organisations, where more comprehensive and supportive information would be available.

This focus aligns with the governments Priority Action Areas under the new Preventive Health Branch Health and Wellbeing Strategy, especially under the Sector Development and Personal Skills Development Priority Action Areas.

4.0 Maximising outcomes of the KJ labelling initiative by supporting the food industry to implement the menu labelling requirements and introduce healthier choices

NAQ Nutrition suggests that the scheme is supported by professional development sessions such as ‘train the trainer’ workshops or online training delivered by skilled and professional nutrition education and health promotion organisations, eg NAQ Nutrition . This includes training management in fast food outlets to support their staff as well as simple online learning sessions being available. These could be hosted by Government and/or Non-government organisations/websites. There needs to be a point of contact or Hub where fast food outlet staff and consumers can go for more information.

4.1 Maximising the broader impacts of this initiative on the food industry and the public

NAQ Nutrition delivers services in Queensland, helping to address a wide range of nutritional needs for the whole community – from children through to the elderly. We can support this scheme through our work and conversely, this scheme can support our work, by helping highlight to our

audiences the need to monitor and limit total energy intake as well as key macronutrients that have been shown to be detrimental to our overall and future health. Also it will show that fast food choices provide excessive amounts of KJs and other macronutrients each day, thus contributing to overconsumption of energy and some macronutrients and increasing risk of overweight, obesity and chronic disease.

Through the implementation of a wide range of services and programs, NAQ Nutrition understands that consumers need to interpret a wealth of information, available from a huge range of services, organisations and sources (internet, professionals, non-professionals, companies etc).

Consumers need to feel empowered with the scheme and that this information will help them make appropriate food choices.

Businesses will need to see what they will gain out of the scheme too, in terms of consumer satisfaction and financial benefits.

Recommendations:

- To enhance effectiveness of the outcomes of this initiative NAQ Nutrition recommends that:
- this scheme is considered in conjunction with other food environment issues such as discouraging location of fast food outlets close to early childhood services and schools (especially high schools); regulation around fast food and junk food advertising (NAQ Nutrition supports no junk food advertising to children).
- food/nutrition education be simultaneously provided as an integral part of the scheme, to community consumers, primary health care and public health workforce, thus providing appropriate skills, knowledge and support to enable them to support community members and themselves to utilise this scheme.
- The opportunity is embraced to link with other key nutrition campaigns and/or messages e.g. eat more vegetables; incorporate physical activity every day. For example, potential linkage with the Australian Government Health Star rating should also be considered.

The KJ labelling scheme in alone will not solve the obesity and chronic disease wicked problem for Queenslanders. It has an important role as an already demonstrated effective strategy in a suite of public health measures that together can direct consumers/the community to a better choice.

4.2 Evaluating effectiveness and outcomes of the scheme

NAQ Nutrition recommends the following should be considered for the evaluation:

- Value identified by the consumer
- Identifying how consumers are using the information
- Is the information accessible and identifiable during point-of-sale (can you see it on the menu board)?
- Does it make consumers consider what they are buying?
- Is the scheme changing fast food purchasing behaviour?

- What is the age of the consumer?
- Location of outlets participating in the menu labelling scheme
- What other information does the consumer use/access to help them use the menu nutrient information?

5.0 In conclusion:

NAQ Nutrition supports the amendment of the Health Legislation Bill to enable the introduction of a Kilojoule menu labelling scheme in Queensland, which is consistent nationally. NAQ Nutrition believes the scheme should be supported by a consumer education program and complement existing campaigns, programs and services delivered by Government and non-government organisations across the state.

NAQ Nutrition recommends:

- The 'community and industry awareness campaign' is a vital component to the scheme and should be implemented prior to outlets having to display the nutritional information.
- Messages and nutritional information need to be simple, clear, visual and easy-to-understand and focus group tested with the target audience.
- There is a need for supporting information around the '8700KJ' message, as was the case in NSW, so consumers are aware of what it means in their daily lives. Consumers should also have access to what certain macronutrients that food items is excessive in.
- Organisations, services and programs already in existence should be utilised to spread the messages of the scheme and help in professional development activities of staff of outlets or in the development of online learning sessions.
- Mapping the location of the outlets who will need to display the nutritional information is important to ensure education and training can be tailored to those outlets and the demographics of their consumers/customers in those locations.
- Linkage between this scheme and other awareness campaigns and food and nutrition messages is recommended e.g. promotion of vegetables and fruit; promotion of physical activity.

Thank you to the Queensland government for the opportunity for our organisation to submit to this inquiry.

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References:

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