



Speech by

Miss FIONA SIMPSON

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

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GENETICALLY MODIFIED FOOD

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore—NPA) (6.59 p.m.): The safety of the food chain is one of the hottest topics politicians will face in the new millennium. However, the fact that Australia is lagging behind in the world debate on genetically modified food is itself dangerously unhealthy for both consumers and industry. Today I am announcing a coalition initiative to involve the public in policy formation on this issue.

A seminar titled Genetically Modified Food—Miracle or Curse to be held on 27 August at Parliament House will be open to the public and will host expert speakers from industry, consumer organisations and Government. The seminar is designed to give people information from a range of viewpoints, although there will also be a panel session allowing for questions and answers. The coalition will be circulating a discussion paper, based on the seminar, for public feedback in the months after the seminar.

I believe that we must empower the public with accurate information about genetically modified food. Governments most definitely have a role to play in appropriate regulation and in tackling the question of labelling, but the issue goes much further than that. This is a complex issue which will involve constantly changing parameters as the world reaches new frontiers in biotechnology. It is critical that Governments not hand their policy down from on high but that the public are properly informed and have the opportunity to be involved in creating policy that protects and promotes their interests.

I emphasise again: the public must be involved in owning this policy. I commend the 27 August seminar to the House, and I am happy to distribute registration forms to all interested groups.
