

Question on Notice

No. 749

Asked on 13 June 2018

MR S KNUTH asked the Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services (HON DR S MILES)—

QUESTION

With reference to the potential growth of the cocoa bean growing industry in the Far North region and the Food Act defining cocoa processing as a licensing food business by default—

Will the Minister commit to reviewing the Act to grant cocoa processing an exemption to help stimulate the industry in the Far North?

ANSWER

The *Food Act 2006* (the Food Act) regulates based on risk and currently exempts some low risk food businesses from requiring a licence due to the minimal risk posed to the community. The sale of packaged foods, unpackaged coffee, cocoa and chocolate are assessed as posing minimal risk and are exempt from licensing.

The processing and manufacture of both coffee and chocolate, however, poses a greater risk to the community due to the potential for contamination at various complex process steps, and therefore has a subsequent need to ensure appropriate food safety control steps are implemented.

Under the provisions of the Food Act, the processing and manufacture of these products is considered a medium risk food business and requires regulatory oversight via obtaining a license with their relevant local government.

There are several cocoa manufacturers in far north Queensland that are licensed under the Food Act and have appropriate regulatory oversight with their local government, who are producing safe and suitable food.

In 2016 Queensland Health undertook a risk assessment of licensable activities which resulted in additional low risk activities becoming exempt from licensing requirements. Cocoa processing was not identified as low risk for the reasons noted above, and based on this no review of the Food Act is proposed in relation to this activity.