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National Competition Policy review of the Food Standards Code: The Government's Response

The Government has considered the National Competition Policy review of the old Australian *Food Standards Code*.

The Government appreciates the efforts of the review committee, comprising the Australia New Zealand Food Authority (chair), and the Departments of Health and Ageing, Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry, The Treasury, and Industry Tourism and Resources (including the Office of Small Business).

The review committee found that the *Food Standards Code* did act to restrict competition. While the *Code* achieved its objectives, particularly the protection of public health and safety, it also imposed substantial and increasing costs on industry and government. The review committee undertook an analysis of the regulatory options, as required by National Competition Policy, and recommended a more cost-effective means to achieve these objectives, through a new code based on minimum effective regulation principles.

The review committee also noted that the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Council - comprising health Ministers of the Commonwealth, New Zealand, State and Territory governments - adopted a new joint Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code in November 2000. The new code was the outcome of a standard-by-standard review of the old *Food Standards Code*. That review was based on minimum effective regulation principles and undertaken by the Australia New Zealand Food Authority since 1994.

Given that Ministers from all Australian Governments, and from the New Zealand Government, have decided to replace the old *Food Standards Code* with a new Code based on minimum effective regulation principles, and that the old *Food Standards Code* will be abolished from December 2002, the Government considers that that no further action is warranted.

A copy of the review committee's report is available on this website.

Senator Kay Patterson
Minister for Health and Ageing

19 April 2002

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