



THE GEORGE INSTITUTE  
for Global Health

## Food industry juggernaut jumps red light on labelling

**Media Release – Immediate release**

Traffic Light Labelling to help consumers identify healthier food products was one of the key recommendations of the Blewett committee report published last week.<sup>(1)</sup> Many public health groups welcome this recommendation. However, in a direct attempt to subvert the process, the Australian Food and Grocery Council (AFGC) yesterday launched a new campaign <sup>(2)</sup> promoting its controversial Daily Intake Guide labelling scheme - widely criticized by public interest groups as not adequately protecting consumers health.

Said Professor Bruce Neal at the George Institute for Global Health. “It’s very disappointing to see the food industry act in this way. The Blewett report clearly recommends some form of interpretive front of pack labelling highlighting whether foods have high or low levels of salt, fat and other key nutrients.”

“Government is going to have to take a much stronger role in policing the food industry if it ignores the consensus and tries to steamroller its way through.” He noted.

Professor Neal added “Diseases caused by poor diet are the leading causes of premature death in Australia and the production and promotion of unhealthy foods is a key factor. The industry’s Daily Intake Guide labelling is complex, difficult to understand and there is no evidence that it helps consumers make quick decisions about which is the healthiest product to buy.”

“Easy-to-understand front of pack labelling would help consumers make the right choices. It would also encourage food companies to reformulate their products so they don’t have to show red warning labels - something that the Daily Intake Guide is unlikely to achieve.”

Proposals for the adoption of Traffic Light Labelling in Europe were recently overturned by a massive industry lobbying campaign, despite being identified as the best option for helping consumers make healthier choices. ‘The absolute determination of the Australian food industry to avoid Traffic Lights is probably the surest indicator of their potential impact’ said Professor Neal. “This AFGC campaign flouting the Blewett Report shows the lengths that industry is prepared to go to.”

The George Institute for Global Health is today establishing a global food composition monitoring group to ensure that companies are held to account on nutrient levels in foods.

**###ENDS###**

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**Notes:**

1. The Blewett report makes the following recommendations:

**Recommendation 50:** That an interpretative front-of-pack labelling system be developed that is reflective of a comprehensive Nutrition Policy and agreed public health priorities.

**Recommendation 51:** That a multiple traffic lights front-of-pack labelling system be introduced. Such a system to be voluntary in the first instance, except where general or high level health claims are made or equivalent endorsements/trade names/marks appear on the label, in which case it should be mandatory.

It can be accessed online at:

[http://www.foodlabellingreview.gov.au/internet/foodlabelling/publishing.nsf/content/48C0548D80E715BCCA257825001E5DC0/\\$File/Labelling%20Logic\\_2011.pdf](http://www.foodlabellingreview.gov.au/internet/foodlabelling/publishing.nsf/content/48C0548D80E715BCCA257825001E5DC0/$File/Labelling%20Logic_2011.pdf)

2. Information about The Australian Food and Grocery Council campaign can be found on its website at <http://www.afgc.org.au/media-releases.html>

