



MEDIA RELEASE

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Health leaders push for mandatory Health Star Ratings to protect Australians' health

Leading health organisations have written to Australia's food ministers, urging them to make Health Star Ratings mandatory on all packaged foods.

They say the move would give Australians clear, independent nutrition information about the food they buy for themselves and their families.

Health Star Ratings are a government-regulated system that turns complex nutrition information into a simple star rating from half a star to five stars, helping shoppers quickly see which packaged foods are healthier within a category.

More than a decade after the voluntary system was introduced, the labels still appear on only just over a third of products, falling well short of the government's target of 70 per cent uptake by November 2025.

The Australian Medical Association, VicHealth and The George Institute for Global Health are among a broad coalition of signatories who say this week's Food Ministers' Meeting is a key opportunity to strengthen Australia's food labelling system and improve community health.

Australian Medical Association President Dr Danielle McMullen said mandatory Health Star Ratings would be a major win for Australians' health.

"Clear, front-of-pack labelling like Health Star Ratings allows busy Australians to see how healthy a product is at a glance," Dr McMullen said.

"With diet-related diseases placing growing pressure on our health system, mandating Health Star Ratings is a simple, evidence-based step that will support better nutrition across the community."

VicHealth CEO Professor Anna Peeters AM said mandatory Health Star Ratings are an essential part of a healthier and fairer food system.

"Right now, it's almost impossible for many families to see how healthy packaged foods really are. Mandatory Health Star Ratings will provide simple, trustworthy information, so people aren't left guessing about the healthiness of what's in their trolley," Professor Peeters said.

"By making Health Star Ratings mandatory, we can shift our food supply in a healthier direction, improve people's nutrition and help reduce the burden of diet-related chronic diseases over time."



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Associate Professor Alexandra Jones, Program Lead Food Governance at The George Institute for Global Health, said the current voluntary scheme has reached its limits.

“We’ve seen slow and selective adoption of Health Star Ratings by food manufacturers, with companies often using the ratings on higher-scoring products while leaving low-scoring products unlabelled,” Associate Professor Jones said.

“Mandatory labelling would close that loophole and ensure Australians get the same easy-to-understand information on every product, not just the ones companies choose to highlight.”

Research shows Australians strongly back making the scheme mandatory, with 82 per cent supporting Health Star Ratings on all packaged foods, and 66 per cent agreeing that mandating the ratings would make them more useful.

Public health organisations are calling on Food Ministers to make Health Star Ratings mandatory on all eligible packaged foods without further delay and to set a timeline for implementation so Australians can start seeing the health benefits as soon as possible.

Background

In 2019, food ministers agreed to consider mandating Health Star Ratings if an uptake target of 70% of products by 14 November 2025 was not met.

The packaged food industry failed to meet this target, with only just over a third (around 36-37 per cent) of packaged foods displaying Health Star Ratings.

The next Food Ministers’ Meeting will be held this week.

Available for interview:

- Dr Danielle McMullen, President, Australian Medical Association
- Professor Anna Peeters AM, CEO, VicHealth
- Associate Professor Alexandra Jones, Program Lead, Food Governance, The George Institute for Global Health

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