Tuesday 18 March 2014

Dear Ann,   
  
From a spokesperson for Sen Nash:   
  
The Australian Government does not oppose a voluntary Front of Pack Health Star Rating system.   
  
The process to develop a front of pack star rating system is continuing and  
has not been delayed by the taking down of the website.  
  
The Minister was not aware that the website was going live. When she became  
aware of this the Minister immediately directed it to be taken down due to  
the following considerations:  
  
1.  The posting was premature as the Health Star Rating system has not yet  
been implemented.  This could mislead consumers.  
2.  There could be significant misunderstanding of the system because the  
 information campaign was not ready to communicate the details of the  
system.  
3.  An expanded cost-benefit analysis is being conducted and has not yet  
 been completed.  
  
 An education campaign is also still to be completed to support the system.  
The Forum is due to meet next in June. The education campaign and  
 re-instatement of the website are expected to be discussed at the June meeting.

The Front of Pack Labelling Oversight Advisory Committee is currently  
developing a mechanism to deal with anomalies in the health star rating  
system. That advice will be given to the Forum in June.  
  
There are issues still to be addressed, such as:

Low fat yoghurt scores 5 stars and full cream yoghurt gets 2 stars. This could be confusing for parents of under 2-year-olds who should  
have full cream products as stated in NMHRC guidelines.  
  
 Another example is orange juice – this rates 5 stars. There is  
 nothing currently in the Health Star Rating system explaining quantities –  
we would not want to mislead shoppers that drinking a litre of orange juice  
a day is healthy.  
  
An education strategy is still being developed to support the system to  
assist parents to understand how the Health Star System works.  
  
 And The Front of Pack Labelling Oversight Advisory Committee is currently  
 developing a mechanism to deal with anomalies in the Health Star Rating  
 System.  
  
It was issues like this Minister Nash wanted addressed before the site went  
live, and believed a communications plan must be ready to accompany the  
 strategy when it was launched.   
  
Regards  
  
**Carolyn Martin** | Media Adviser   
Office of Sen the Hon Fiona Nash   
Assistant Minister for Health