

Comments from the Victorian Departments of Health, Business & Innovation and Environment & Primary Industries

Due date of submission: 24 December 2014

The Victorian Departments of Health, Business and Innovation, and Environment and Primary Industries (the Departments) welcome the opportunity to comment on Proposal P1035 released for public comment by Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ).

The Proposal seeks to amend Standard 1.2.7 of the Food Standards Code to allow food and beverages containing more than 1.15% alcohol to continue to carry gluten content claims (usually appearing as gluten-free or low gluten claims). When Standard 1.2.7 – Nutrition, Health and Related Claims becomes mandatory in January 2016 it will prohibit nutrition content claims on alcohol-containing foods and beverages (with the exception of content claims for energy and carbohydrate). This will not only prevent gluten claims on alcoholic beverages but also on some marinades, essences and soy sauces. Before Standard 1.2.7 was gazetted, content claims about gluten were permitted on alcohol-containing foods and beverages.

The Departments support amending Standard 1.2.7 to permit gluten content claims on alcohol-containing foods and beverages, to provide consumers with coeliac disease (and those providing food for consumers with coeliac disease) adequate information to avoid gluten. This is consistent with the approach taken internationally.

However, the Departments would like to emphasize the importance of ensuring that the use of nutrient content claims on alcohol does not confer an implied health benefit, given the health risks associated with excessive alcohol consumption. We suggest that FSANZ conducts consumer research to determine whether the existing content claims, including energy, carbohydrate and gluten-free, and the explicit usage of the word 'free', confer an implied health benefit to the consumption of alcohol.