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**From:**  
**Sent:** Sunday, 16 February 2020 8:48 AM  
**To:** submissions  
**Subject:** Call to Change Food Labelling

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing in regards to the current Inquiry into Allergies and Anaphylaxis.

Allergic reactions are a huge problem in Australia and the number of children and families impacted by allergies is rising. A study done in 2013, revealed 4.1 million people (19.6%) suffer from allergies, with 10% of infants being formally diagnosed with an allergy. Australia has one for the largest prevalence of allergies and allergic conditions in the developed world.

Allergies are life threatening and currently the labelling laws in our country make it very difficult for people to navigate the food allergy maze, with many foods being hidden in numbers and incorrect labelling.

Our son suffers from FPIES. FPIES is a rare gastrointestinal allergy, meaning once food hits his small intestines he vomits violently into shock. It is a very serious, yet little known allergy. There are however, an increasingly large number of diagnoses this condition year, where children were previously misdiagnosed or even just unheard.

In our case, we gave our son a hot cross bun, after checking the ingredients, only for him to have an allergic reaction to soy which was hidden in Emulsifier 471. This particular emulsifier is sometimes derived from soy and sometimes not.

Dairy is another example of inaccurate labelling. This (top 8) allergen can be written in any numbers of ways, including natural flavours, vegetable oils, and even a variety of numbers, leaving families little to no way to decipher where the potential allergens are hiding.

All food should be clearly labelled and allergens should be correctly listed and not hidden behind a variety of numbers. Top 8 allergens in particular need to be disclosed and not referred to as numbers or code names.

'May contain' warnings need to be improved so they are reliable and reflect honestly what is in foods and not just used as a way for companies to cover themselves "just in case".

Allergies now affect 20% of the Australian population with the prevalence of allergies rising at a rapid rate. According to ASCIA, hospital admissions have increased 4 fold in the last 20 years.

We are asking the government to crack down on this industry and calling for a change to Australian food labelling, ensuring accuracy and transparency.

FPIES is not as well known as Anaphylaxis, but still as critical.

When Max was born, we were thrown into the medical field at super speed. Max finally got his diagnosis at 9 months, we were grateful we had an answer, but we were overwhelmed with all that we had to learn and how we now had to approach life with a child who had a rare and very unknown condition.

Max's rare food allergy condition (FPIES) means that when Max ingests one of his triggers and it hits his small intestine (2-3 hours later) he has a reaction. Some of these reactions result in Max vomiting into shock, and others will cause severe stomach cramping, acidic diarrhoea, and screaming for hours.

It means there are no tests that accurately diagnose Max and identify his triggers, so foods have to be ingested before we know he is allergic.

It means we have had to fight and have to continue fighting for Max when it comes to reactions and diagnosis.

It means Max does not see food the same way everyone else does. He knows the pain of food and has a very cautious relationship with anything he puts in his mouth. This has resulted in his being tube fed since he was 12 months old, and receives most of his nutrition through his 'Mickey button'.

It means we spend lots of time in hospitals and traveling to appointments just so Max has the best specialists and doctors working for him and we have people on our team who understand the complexity of Max's condition.

It means I appreciate the health care system we have in Australia and have a huge respect those who spend their days going above and beyond for us and fighting for our boy.

It means I overanalyze everything and am constantly on guard for a change in Max and have to assume everything is a reaction before anything else.

It means we have a dedicated bag to Max's supplies and a folder with all his medical information which has to be with us at all times.

It means we can not leave the house without multiple Epipens and Hydrocortisone injections.

It means most of his food is prepared at home before we leave and we very rarely can just "live in the moment" and head out without any planning.

It means I don't ever stop thinking about Max's condition. I wake up thinking about it. I go to sleep thinking about it. I wake up through the night thinking about it.

It means I am constantly on edge and can't take my eyes off Max in case he gets into something that could trigger a reaction.

It means I have read every medical journal and study published about his condition and could recite what the textbooks say and how to treat his condition.

It means I have learnt to fight for what I believe, and what is best for my kids. It has made me a stronger, braver, more educated mother.

It has made me laugh, cry, scream, given me empathy, sympathy and humility when dealing with other parents.

It makes me appreciate what life is and makes me grateful for every day we make it through as a family and all get to sleep under the one roof.

It has made me realise people are fighting battles sometimes we have no idea about.

FPIES means I will never stop fighting for my boy and I will travel to the ends of the earth to get the help we need.

Thank you for your support and would be happy to discuss this further should you require anything.

Regards,