



National Retail Council Report

By Kerry Melrose

The Meat Industry Strategic Plan (MISP) is the blueprint for the future directions of the red meat industry. Originally written in 1997 it is the document which determines the issues to be addressed and level of funding which is required. The MISP is currently being rewritten to reflect the issues which are relevant to the period 2010 – 2015 and the National Retail Council has taken a lead in ensuring that the retail issues are represented.

The MISP will be published in June 2009 and will be the platform for the Domestic Task Force programs and promotional activity in 2010 – 2011. Council has worked closely with MLA in the promotional plan for the coming year to achieve three Beef Promotions and three Lamb Promotions. The Council recommendation that there should be a “face of beef promotion” has also been adopted with Laurie Lawrence now under contract to MLA. Funded to \$25.4m the Domestic Marketing Plan for 2009 – 2010 should deliver improved sales to independent butchers.

The National Retail Council has a concern about the flow of levy funding. There are two levies, the so called “Grower Levy” and the “Processor Levy.” Council is well satisfied with the flow of the grower levy and it is from this that most of the promotional funding comes. The processor levy is intended to fund the post farm gate matters in the MISP. In fact the retail sector, which accounts for 30% of domestic sales, sees very little of the funding it requires to deliver on

the MISP. There is a body of opinion which considers that, because the collection point is at slaughter, the levy is paid by the processors. In fact it is passed on through the system and it is the customer who ultimately pays the levy. This matter, it is hoped, will be addressed in the new Meat Industry Strategic Plan.

Changes in regulations which will increase the operating costs of Independent Local Butchers are a major area of concern for the Retail Council. In 2009 there are several “good ideas” frequently proposed by Government in the name of “food safety” or “health and wellbeing” which will add costs to our operations with little chance of delivering the stated outcome.

One of these issues is legislation which would require all meat sold by retailers to carry AUS-MEAT Language descriptors in the name of “improving eating quality.” Effectively this would require all processors and all retailers to be AUS-MEAT accredited and undergo AUS-MEAT audits. Council has rejected the proposal because it will increase costs and do absolutely nothing for “improving eating quality”. The proponents obviously do not understand the AUS-MEAT language and have never heard of MSA guaranteed eating quality. The build their case around the assumption that most of the meat retailed in Australia is cow beef!

Another proposal is to reduce or eliminate the use of preservative in sausages. It is argued

that some consumers have an allergic reaction to preservatives and therefore it should be removed from sausages. Council did not take long to come to the conclusion that, unless Government changes the attitude of consumers and in particular teaches them how to properly store fresh meat, the removal of preservative will lead to a major food safety problem in very short time. Of course it was argued by Government that we could use other chemicals to replace the preservative. There appears to be a breakdown on logic with some of our regulators.

Listeria in ready-to-eat meats is the third area we are addressing. We are reliably informed that listeria monocytogenes is very dangerous and we must have a zero tolerance. However, if the product will not support the growth of listeria, the same regulator will permit a low level to be detected without a product recall. Why the difference? Council is addressing this issue through an Expert Panel but you can be sure that it will take time to get a reasonable answer.

The National Retail Council represents your best interests through butchers who are in shops dealing with the same issues which confront you in your business. We invite you to attend a Retail Council meeting in your state and have your input to the various matters which are addresses. Alternatively, if you would like to be on a consultation panel on particular issues this can be arranged simply by contacting your local AMIC Office.

New Federal IR/Workplace Laws – A New System

With this Newsletter comes a comprehensive summary of the new laws. The summary has been prepared by AMIC. Some changes apply from 1 July 2009 and some from 1 January 2010. They are far reaching.

At the moment the changes only apply to national employers (Pty Ltd entities). They do not apply to entities operating as sole traders or partnerships – except for sole

traders or partnerships in the state of Victoria and the ACT and NT. For the laws to apply to all other sole traders or partnerships across Australia, the remaining states need to hand their IR powers over to Canberra as Victoria did some 18 years ago

If the new laws apply to you, please read the document carefully. **If in any doubt about any of the subject matter please contact AMIC.**

HOW DOES THE NEW BUDGET IMPACT YOUR SUPER FUND?

See page 3 for the three key areas you should be concerned about from AMIST Superannuation.

EMISSIONS TRADING SCHEME DELAYED

With the Global financial crisis impacting our economy, the government will delay the Emissions Trading Scheme until 2011 with some changes. However, some report data is still required commencing July 1 2009. Find out if this applies to you on page 2.

STANDING UP FOR YOUR RIGHTS

AMIC is continuously working with the government for positive outcomes on issues that affect your livelihood and the way you do business. For a behind-the-scenes account of how AMIC influences legislative changes, turn to page 3.