

### **Frozen Berry Scare Highlights Need for Food Labelling Standards**

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The Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union (AMWU), which represents food manufacturing workers around Australia, has said that the current frozen berry health scandal highlights the need for legislation which clears up Australia's food labeling system.

"There are lots of issues at stake here, not least the health of Australian consumers, and the security of Australian food jobs," said AMWU National Secretary Paul Bastian.

"Our union has long called for clarity and consistency with regards to packaged food health standards, and packaged food labeling."

"The current system is a disgrace. Lack of labeling standards and lax checks on imported food risks Australian health, and puts pressure on the local industry as well.

"The local industry is subject to world-leading quality and safety checks – why aren't we demanding that imported products are as well?"

"This is an issue of consumer health, and of the security of the local job market – from the farm to the factory to the table."

It is almost impossible to tell whether a product has been grown in Australia, packaged in Australia or manufactured in Australia. And most consumers aren't even aware of the difference between these terms.

The union has pointed out that Australian grown and manufactured food is subject to rigorous, independent health and quality checks, and that Australian consumers can be confident on its safety.

These checks, however, are not conducted to the same standard on imported food.

"This is a problem with three key parts: one, consumers have no idea where the food they are eating with comes from. This is a clarity of labeling issue," said Mr Bastian.

"The second issue is one of health and safety checks. There is no onus on the supply chain – which in Australia is predominantly Coles and Woolworths – to ensure the products they are importing meet Australian standards.

"This is a regulatory issue for both the big importers and for Government.

"The third issue is the stability and security of our local industry – from farmers to factories to consumers. We can't compete on the supermarket shelf against imported products with such lax safety and quality checks. And we shouldn't be trying to," said Mr Bastian.

# Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union



## MEDIA RELEASE

“Australians want to buy local – they trust the product and they want to support Australian jobs and Australian farmers.

“We need to make sure imported products have to compete at Australian standards so our products are competitive.

“Government and the supply chain both need to act now,” said Mr Bastian.

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