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INFORMATION ANALYSIS ADVICE

CLIENT ADVICE

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Halal certification

You have asked for information about the following:

- whether the Government provides funding directed towards Halal certification
- if so, who pays the funds, to whom are they paid and how much is paid
- whether there is a reporting/auditing process for the money to ensure the funds are not misused for terrorist activities and
- the types of products that require Halal certification.

What is 'halal'

'Halal' is an Arabic word meaning 'lawful' or 'permitted'. The opposite of halal is 'haram' which means 'unlawful' or 'prohibited'. While many things are clearly halal or haram, there are some things which are not clear. Such items are often referred to as mashbooh, which means 'doubtful' or 'questionable'. **All foods are considered halal except the following** (which are haram):

- swine/pork and its by-products
- animals improperly slaughtered or dead before slaughtering
- alcoholic drinks and intoxicants
- carnivorous animals, birds of prey and certain other animals, and
- foods contaminated with any of the above products.

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Foods containing ingredients such as gelatine, enzymes, emulsifiers, and flavours are questionable (mashbooh), because the origin of these ingredients is not known.¹

That being the case, a statement that food is 'halal' is not merely a statement about the manner in which it may have been slaughtered. Rather, it is also about its content.

Halal slaughtering

According to the RSPCA:

The standard for meat production in Australia is that all animals must be effectively stunned (unconscious) prior to slaughter. The vast majority of halal slaughter in Australia complies with this standard. The only difference with halal slaughter is that it uses a reversible stunning method, while conventional humane slaughter uses an irreversible stunning method.

All commercial chicken abattoirs in Australia stun chickens prior to slaughter, including for halal chicken.

Halal slaughter in overseas abattoirs often does not include stunning - this is the key difference between halal slaughter in Australia and many other countries ...

For cattle and sheep, the requirements for religious slaughter without prior stunning [in Australia] are set out in a nationally adopted guideline *Ritual Slaughter for Ovine (Sheep) and Bovine (Cattle)*:

For cattle, this means the animal must remain in an upright position with the head and body restrained. The animal must be stunned with a captive-bolt pistol immediately **after** the throat is cut (known as 'sticking'). Two separate people must perform the sticking and stunning. If there are any problems restraining the animal while attempting to stick it, then it must be stunned immediately.

For religious slaughter of sheep, the guideline requires cutting both the carotid arteries and the jugular veins. This must be confirmed—if they are not completely severed, then the animal must be immediately stunned.

Cattle and sheep requirements are different because cattle have an extra blood supply to the brain through the back of the neck. Therefore, cutting cattle's throats results in less rapid loss of consciousness.²

There are instances where the relevant Australian state or territory meat-inspection authority can approve an abattoir for ritual slaughter without prior stunning—either halal or kosher (Jewish slaughter)—for the domestic market. These are effectively exemptions to standard Australian slaughter practice. The Department of Agriculture website maintains a list of Islamic organisations which have an Approved Arrangement with the Department of Agriculture for the certification of red halal meat and red meat products for export.³

Granting halal certification

For a business or producer to be able to claim a food as being 'halal', it must be certified by a recognized body. There are a number of organisations in Australia that can certify a business (or product) as being 'halal',⁴ including:

- Halal Certification Authority Australia
- Australian Halal Food Services Trust
- Islamic Co-ordinating Council of Victoria Inc., and
- Australian Federation of Islamic Councils Inc.

Process of certification

The basic certification process has five steps, depending upon the certifying body:⁵

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1. Islamic Food and Nutrition Council of America website, [What is halal?](#), accessed 25 September 2014.
 2. RSPCA, [What is halal slaughter in Australia](#), accessed 25 September 2014.
 3. Department of Agriculture website, [List of Islamic organisations](#), accessed 25 September 2014.
 4. Halal Australia website, [Recognition and affiliation](#), accessed 25 September 2014.
 5. See Muslims Australia, [Halal accreditation](#); Department of Agriculture, [Australian government authorised halal programme](#), accessed 25 September 2014.

- Step 1: *Application must be* filled out by the business and include examples of reports, procedures, schedules and other supporting documents
- Step 2: Submission to the Committee of the certifying body which reviews the application and supporting documentation
- Step 3: *Processing the application including* an on-site audit to determine if all halal requirements are being met consistently. Approval or disapproval of the application is based on the results.
 - all ingredients must be halal
 - the processing equipment must be free from all non-halal contamination
 - there must be separation of halal and non-halal ingredients and finished product
 - halal processing must be done as required, and must meet all current food safety and hygiene requirements.
- Step 4: *Certification by* the certifying body which issues a halal certificate to the business.⁶ The certificate is usually valid for one to two years. The certificate and use of the approved logo and/or symbol demonstrates that the food and/or service is suitable for Muslims.
- Step 5: *Post certification*—any changes to the business’s processes and ingredients must be advised to the certifying body. The renewal application must be sent to the body at least two or three months before the certificate expiry to ensure that it can continue.

There is a growing database which identifies products which are halal.⁷

Fees for halal certification

According to the Islamic Council of Queensland (ICQ):

The annual fee charged for halal certification is decided by the Executive Committee of ICQ. For most small businesses the fee is \$250 + GST per annum. This fee is used to offset the cost of running the program and the balance, if any, is used towards other services ICQ provides to the community. Being a not for profit organisation no part of its income is distributed to any individual.⁸

Importantly, it is for each certifying organisation to set the amount of its fees. Some certifying organisations publish the relevant fee on their website.⁹ Others do not. There is no legal requirement that these fees are to be disclosed.

Government financing of halal products

Government does not provide funding to assist in halal certification.

However, it would appear that if product packaging includes a logo indicating that the contents are halal, it is likely that the manufacturer has paid a license fee for the right to use the logo. This is certainly the case with, for example, a product which displays the [Australian Made](#) logo.

As halal certification is undertaken on a purely commercial basis, there is no formal reporting or auditing mechanism to ascertain whether monies paid for certification are misused.

As there is no government funding of halal certification, this memorandum does not address your second question.

I hope this information has been helpful. Please do not hesitate to contact me for further assistance if the above does not meet your needs, or you require clarification.

6. For example, Islamic Co-ordinating Council of Victoria, [Halal certificates](#), accessed 25 September 2014.

7. [Halal Square groceries data base](#), accessed 14 April 2014.

8. Islamic Council of Queensland website, [Guidelines for halal certification](#), accessed 25 September 2014.

9. See also Halal Australia website, [Fees and charges](#), accessed 25 September 2014.