

ANTI-HALAL CAMPAIGNS IN AUSTRALIA

IMPACT: Anti-Halal campaigns in Australia have sought to remove or restrict Halal certification of food products in Australia, leading to public boycotting of Halal-certified brands and even a Senate Inquiry into third party food certification. Opponents of Halal certification claim that certification fees fund terrorism and supports the “Islamization” of Australia.

- According to the *Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC)*, **anti-Halal campaigns in Australia “gain[ed] momentum” in 2014 when a “loose collection of affiliated anti-halal, anti-Islam and nationalistic groups” established a movement to boycott Halal-certified products in Australia.** Popular online groups and individuals have included ***Boycott Halal in Australia***, ***Halal Choices***, ***Non Halal***, as well as ***Q Society of Australia***, activist Kirralie Smith, and several Members of Parliament.
- According to her 2015 Senate Inquiry submission, Kirralie Smith **began** researching Halal certification in Australia in 2010. **Smith created an anti-Halal website called *Halal Choices*, which she now hosts on her website *kirraliesmith.org*, as well as a “phone app, shopping guide and social media awareness campaign.”** Described in *The Guardian* as “the face” of the anti-Halal movement in Australia, Smith **argues** that Australian consumers should have the choice about whether to “support and fund halal practices.” She also **claims** that there are “most definitely indirect links between some halal certifiers and charities when it comes to funding extremist activity.”
- Other websites designed to deter companies from seeking Halal certification and consumers from purchasing Halal-certified products include ***Non Halal*** and ***Boycott Halal in Australia***. ***Non Halal* provides a list of brands and products that are not Halal-certified with the aim of “supporting businesses that choose not to support halal certification.”** ***Boycott Halal in Australia*** is an Australian anti-Halal Facebook group that has over 100,000 followers as of September 2019. The group **aims** to lobby those in power to stop the “over-production of halal meat and poultry and halal certified products” and to “**stop funding the imposition of halal products, halal finance, Islamic Law & Islamic Rule on Australians!**”
- **The anti-Halal movement generated targeted boycotting campaigns online and by phone against Australian companies with Halal certification.** Byron Bay Cookie Company, which at the time of reporting had already been Halal-certified for ten years, stated in response to the campaigns, “We’ve had a lot of calls and emails that have been quite aggressive where we have had to ask the police to step in.” **Due to the campaign’s pressure, several companies withdrew their Halal certification, despite the fact that certification helps businesses sell their products to Muslim-majority markets overseas.** In November 2014, South Australian company Fleurieu Milk & Yoghurt **decided to cancel their Halal accreditation**, which jeopardized a \$50,000-per-year export deal with the Dubai-based Emirates Airlines. However, in May 2015, Fleurieu **backtracked**, announcing it had reinstated its Halal certification. According to reporting in July 2017 by *Australian Food News*, cereal companies Kellogg’s and Sanitarium **did not renew** their Halal certification. In December 2015, yoghurt brand Jalna **dropped** all of its religious certifications, allegedly as a result of negative campaigns against the third party religious certification for its products. Following complaints, Jalna **renewed** its Kosher certification in July 2016.
- An Australian far-right organization, ***Q Society of Australia***, whose membership includes Kirralie Smith, **also participated** in anti-Halal campaigns. An organization whose **stated mission is to “inform Australians about Islam,”** ***Q Society of Australia* claims that by purchasing Halal-certified products, consumers are “financially supporting the Islamisation of Australia, including the implementation of barbaric sharia law.”** ***Q Society of Australia* has also provided a petition form** on its website to draw “the attention of the House to a business model developed by Islamic organisation to impose ‘Halal Certification Schemes’ on all Australians.”
- Politicians have criticized Halal certification in Australia, including South Australian Senator ***Cory Bernardi* (who has described Kirralie Smith as a “personal friend”);** Senator for Queensland and founder of the far-right ***One Nation Party*** ***Pauline Hanson* (who in April 2017 called for a boycott of Halal-certified Cadbury chocolate eggs for Easter);** former Senator for Tasmania ***Jacqui Lambie* (who implied that Halal certification fees in Australia were funding Daesh);** and Member of Parliament for Dawson ***George Christensen* (who has stated, “Are groceries in Australian trolleys funding a push for Sharia law, supporting jihad groups or even backing terrorist activity?”).**
- **In May 2015, Senator Bernardi successfully proposed a Senate motion to launch the “inquiry into third party certification of food.”** While both the Australian ***Labor Party*** and ***The Greens*** **opposed**, the motion was passed with a Senate vote of 34–30. Subsequently, the Senate referred this matter to the Economics References Committee for a six-month parliamentary inquiry and a report by November 2015.

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- **The Committee aimed to collect information on all types of food certification, including but not limited to schemes related to organic, Kosher, Halal, and genetically-modified food.** The committee also aimed to collect general food safety certification schemes, product labelling requirements, certification cost, the impact of the food certification including Halal certification on both domestic and export market, and the “extent and adequacy” of information on food certification available to the public. **The Senate Committee held three public hearings:** in August 2015 in Canberra, Australian Capital Territory (ACT), which included testimony by Kosher and organic experts; in September 2015 in Sydney, New South Wales (NSW), which **included testimony by Kirralie Smith and anti-Muslim and anti-LGBTQIA+ activist Bernard Gaynor;** and in November 2015 in Parramatta, NSW, which included testimony by Halal experts.
- **The Committee received 1,490 submissions from the Australian public.** According to an academic analysis of the inquiry submissions, **one in four of the respondents “believed halal certification funds terrorism,” 35.2% “demanded to know where the money from certification fees is channeled,”** 35.2% expressed concern about “animal abuse and the suffering of animals during the slaughter process,” **25.9% “were threatened by the ‘creeping’ Islamisation of Australia or enforcement of sharia law in the country,”** and 26.3% “considered halal certification to be a form of discrimination.” In chapter three of the inquiry’s final report, under a section titled “Anti-halal campaigns,” the Senate Committee acknowledged that it had **“heard disturbing suggestions that some companies have had to remove the halal logo from their products fearing violent attacks.”**
- Many respondents to the inquiry stated their belief that Halal certification fees contribute to ‘terrorism’ and were increasing food price costs. However, in her Senate inquiry testimony in September 2015, a representative of the Australian Crime Commission and Australian Transaction Reports and Analysis Centre (AUSTRAC), Australia’s regulator and specialist financial intelligence unit with responsibility for monitoring anti-money laundering and counterterrorism financing, stated, **“Of the information identified from this monitoring of reported financial transactions, none of these have been assessed as related to funding of terrorism with regard to halal certification fees.”** Regarding concerns of increased food prices, the government report resulting from the Senate inquiry concluded, **“Evidence received by the committee overwhelmingly suggests that halal certification does not result in increased food prices. This view was shared by government departments and other submitters.”**
- In early 2015, **Mohamed El-Mouelhy, chairman of the Halal Certification Authority, one of the many recognized bodies for Halal certification in Australia, brought a supreme court defamation action against Kirralie Smith and the Q Society** over “the publication of two videos posted on Facebook” on the topic of Halal certification. El-Mouelhy alleged the videos portrayed him as “part of a conspiracy to destroy Western civilisation from within” and “involved in a push for instituting repressive sharia law in Australia,” among other imputations. In February 2017, the parties decided to settle the matter out of court. **In the settlement, the Q Society, its board members, and Kirralie Smith apologized to El-Mouelhy for the “hurt caused to him” as a result of the videos.**
- At a Melbourne-based fundraiser in February 2017 hosted by the Q Society of Australia to raise money for the defamation case, **Q Society president Debbie Robinson stated**, **“Islam is anathema to everything Western civilization stands for. It is not compatible with freedom, democracy, or the rule of law.”** Senator Bernardi and MP Chistensen also spoke at the fundraiser in support of Q Society and Smith.
- In April 2018, Senator Bernardi renewed his public opposition to Halal certification in Australia, describing it as an “extortion” and “a racket and a scam” filled with “rogues,” “crooks,” and “shysters.” He **depicted Halal certifiers during the time of the Senate inquiry as “[running] like cockroaches under the fridge when the light comes on.”** In November 2018, Bernardi introduced the Halal Certification Transitional Authority Bill 2018. The bill sought to target Recommendation 6 of the 2015 Senate Inquiry report, which stated, “The committee recommends that the halal certification industry consider establishing a single halal certification authority and a single national registered certified trademark.” **Bernardi argued that the bill was necessary due to “the rorts, fraud, dishonesty and deception within the halal certification industry.”** The bill lapsed without being passed in July 2019.

This factsheet is published in collaboration between the Bridge Initiative and researchers at the Challenging Racism Project at Western Sydney University. More information about this project can be found [here](#).