



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



THE SENATE

**AUSTRALIA NEW ZEALAND
FOOD AUTHORITY
AMENDMENT BILL 1999 [NO. 2]**

In Committee

SPEECH

Wednesday, 8 December 1999

BY AUTHORITY OF THE SENATE

SPEECH

Date Wednesday, 8 December 1999	Source Senate
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Questioner	Responder
Speaker Stott Despoja, Sen Natasha	Question No.

Senator STOTT DESPOJA (SA) (9.48 am)—I thank both Senator Brown and the opposition for their support. I refute any suggestion from the government that this is an unnecessary amendment. It was pretty much the same argument provided by the government for a number of the amendments we have put forward, especially the first two, for which we did receive majority support in the Senate. I thank the Senate for that.

The theme of a lot of this discussion has been the issue of wider public participation in the ANZFA. I hope that the government will take it on board. As I said yesterday, unless consumers and the public feel that they have access to information and education about food, including foods that may be genetically modified, et cetera, there will be scare campaigns and fear in the community. Perhaps we will have a community that does not make best use of technological advancements that could have potential benefits.

We believe that the bill grants the authority the ability to determine itself in a manner in which the public is provided notice. Currently, if an application is accepted by the authority, it must publicly invite submissions. It is determined that this practice will continue under the bill being considered. Again, this amendment is just elaborating on some of the public processes available.

On behalf of the Democrats, I argue that public consultation and involvement is fundamental to maintaining ANZFA's amended objective to ensure a high degree of consumer confidence in the quality and safety of food produced, processed, sold or exported from Australia and New Zealand. That is why we have done our best during this committee stage to enhance the bill to at least achieve some of those objectives as outlined in the legislation. Again, I thank the other senators for their support. I urge the government to perhaps reconsider.

Amendment agreed to.

Bill, as amended, agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments; report adopted.