

12 February 2026

NEW DATA: Four in five Australians support a mandatory Health Star Rating, as Food Ministers meet today

The ultra-processed food industry misses its target

As food ministers meet on Friday, Cancer Council is joining calls for a mandated Health Star Rating (HSR) food labelling system, with new YouGov research showing 80% of Australians in support of a mandatory system.

Additionally, the research shows that Australians are actively trying to assess the healthiness of the food they buy. While nearly three quarters (70%) say they usually read food labels, about 65% of those surveyed find current labels too confusing to navigate.

These results come as new research conducted by The George Institute shows the voluntary scheme has been used on just 37% of food products, despite a 2025 target set by the Australian Government that Health Star Ratings should appear on 70% of products.

Clare Hughes, Chair of Cancer Council's Nutrition, Alcohol and Physical Activity Committee, highlights inconsistent labelling is making it harder for Australians to compare products accurately.

"Australians should not have to guess whether a product is healthy or not. Front of pack nutrition labelling needs to be mandatory, clear and standardised to ensure that Health Star Ratings are easy to interpret and cut through the marketing hype that also appears on food labels. We want everyone to feel confident in identifying healthy options.

"Cancer Council is calling on food ministers to mandate Health Star Ratings, as food companies have failed after more than a decade to voluntarily adopt the scheme to meet community expectations. Australians want governments to step in and mandate a system that they can trust to help them achieve a healthy, balanced diet and reduce their cancer risk," says Hughes.





MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

“Avoiding excess weight gain and eating plenty of vegetables, fruit and fibre help to reduce cancer risk.”

Having excess bodyweight significantly increases the risk of 13 different types of cancer and causes more than 5,200 cancer cases in Australia each year. These figures highlight the urgent need for a simple, consistent and mandatory labelling system on all eligible products to make it easier for Australians to make informed choices, support healthier lifestyles and reduce their cancer risk.

Evidence shows that Health Star Rating food labelling systems help consumers select healthier food products and encourage the food industry to produce healthier foods, but only if such labels are clear, transparent and consistently applied.

A mandatory Health Star Rating system will need to be monitored independently and reviewed to allow for improvements that align with emerging evidence and changes in the Australian Dietary Guidelines.

“Like more than 80% of Australians, Cancer Council wants to see a mandatory system that is supported by transparent governance structures, free from commercial conflict and aligns with best practice dietary advice. Food Ministers today have the power to hold the food industry to account and ask Food Standards Australia New Zealand to proceed with a proposal to make the Health Star Rating System mandatory,” says Hughes.

-ENDS-

About the survey

This study was conducted by independent market research firm YouGov between 2nd and 9th April 2025. The survey was carried out online, and the sample comprised of 1,596 Australian citizens aged 18 years and older. The data has been weighted and is representative of all Australian voters 18+ by age, gender, location, education, income and past Federal election vote.

Contact details





MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

For all media enquiries and interview opportunities, please contact:
Cancer Council Australia, media@cancer.org.au
02 8256 4109 (redirects to mobile outside of business hours)

About Cancer Council Australia

Cancer Council Australia is Australia's leading cancer charity, working to reduce the impact of cancer for all Australians. Cancer Council Australia works with its members, the eight state and territory Cancer Councils to:

- Undertake and fund cancer research
- Prevent and control cancer
- Provide information and support for people affected by cancer
- Shape and influence policy and practice

Find out more at cancer.org.au, or visit our [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#) or [LinkedIn](#)

