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Subject: Pre-Assessment Request for Food Standard Code change

Executive summary

This Application by Virgin Australia seeks changes to the Food Standard Code Australia (the **Code**) in relation to “companion animals” (dogs and cats not classified as ‘assistance animals’ for people with a disability). The change would permit such companion animals to accompany their owners in aircraft cabins under very tightly controlled conditions, while maintaining the high food safety standards required by the Code.

The proposed change to the Code is expected to bring about a significant benefit to members of the community who rely on their pet animals for support, beyond that provided by assistance animals to people with disability. The proposed change seeks to maintain the high food safety standards currently in place.

The need for the Application is based on Virgin Australia’s understanding that aircraft cabins constitute “enclosed areas” under the Code, when food and drink is served within the aircraft cabin. Animals (other than assistance animals) are currently not permitted in areas with this classification, which restricts an airline’s ability to permit animals in aircraft cabins.

Virgin Australia seeks to amend the Code to permit companion animals in aircraft cabins, in a more controlled way than assistance animals are permitted to date. Virgin Australia strongly believes that allowing companion animals in aircraft cabins is in the best interests of the wider community.

The Application outlines details of the fulsome risk assessments conducted by Virgin Australia, supported by expert advice from the veterinary, food safety, and aviation sectors. As a result of these assessments, Virgin Australia has designed several controls to alleviate the introduction of any new food safety hazards, while allowing the Code to reflect community demands in the same fashion as previous changes to the Code mentioned above.

Ian Anderson
Program Manager