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IPhone application to scan for food allergens

Allergy sufferers will soon be able to use their iPhone to scan a food's barcode at the supermarket to determine whether it's safe to eat.

The application being developed by Deakin University, GS1 Australia and Nestlé, will allow consumers to instantly access detailed product information including allergens such as wheat, egg, peanuts and shellfish directly from their iPhone.

Deakin University's Associate Professor Caroline Chan said the application would help consumers make quick yet informed choices about their health.

"When you read a label the product information is so small you can barely read it, nor understand it," she said.

"In Australia all packaged food products carry a barcode but its use is limited to inventory control and to settle purchases at the cash register."

Associate Professor Chan, an information expert said the barcoding system administered by the not-for-profit organisation, GS1 Australia, had 'unlimited potential' as it contained valuable product data such as weights, volumes packaging material and price.

"We wanted to really harness all this information on the bar-coding system and team it up with detailed product information provided by Nestlé to give consumers a tool that had the potential to improve their health and raise public awareness," she said.

Associate Professor Chan said initial testing of the application had been encouraging and the next step was to seek funding for a consumer trial.

She was confident the application would be expanded to appeal to people on special diets or those with specific nutritional needs.

GS1 Australia Chief Executive Officer, Maria Palazzolo said: "The exploration of mobile technology using the ubiquitous barcode is the next frontier for GS1 Australia. "There is a tremendous opportunity for GS1 to provide business-to-business applications to engage consumers with business-to-consumer tools".

*For further information and interviews, please contact Mary Riekert at GS1 Australia on **1300 366 033 or 0418313478***

Background –

GS1 Australia delivers services supported by global and local numbering standards to deliver uniquely identified products in the supply chain. At the forefront of eCommerce and Supply Chain Management initiatives, GS1 Australia is a not-for-profit organisation that services 18 industry sectors and supports over 16,000 members nationally.

www.gs1au.org