

# SUMMARY OF OUTCOMES FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

## From the Australia and New Zealand Implementation Subcommittee for Food Regulation (ISFR)

ISFR21, 9-10 March 2022

### The Implementation Subcommittee for Food Regulation

Food regulation authorities in Australia and New Zealand work together to ensure food regulations are implemented and enforced consistently. This work is done through the Implementation Subcommittee for Food Regulation (ISFR), through face-to-face meetings (and/or virtual videoconferencing where required), out-of-session business and separate collaborations.

ISFR was set up by the Food Regulation Standing Committee (FRSC) to foster a consistent approach across jurisdictions to implementing, monitoring and enforcing food regulation. ISFR's role applies equally to imported, exported and domestically produced food.

[ISFR members](#) are either heads of agencies or senior operational experts who can make and implement decisions about compliance and enforcement issues in their jurisdictions.

ISFR is not an enforcement authority in its own right. It allows Australian and New Zealand food regulators to discuss common approaches to implementation and develop agreed strategies to achieve a consistent approach to the way food regulations are implemented, interpreted and enforced across jurisdictions.

While all jurisdictions involved in food regulation work together on implementing and enforcing food regulation, there are sometimes differences in the way jurisdictions administer food law. Due to ISFR's consultative nature, it helps jurisdictions to minimise the impact of these differences as much as possible.

### Summary of key matters of interest to local government discussed at ISFR21

ISFR21 was held via videoconference on 9-10 March 2022. A summary of key items of interest is provided.

#### COVID-19

The Food Standards Australia New Zealand website ([FSANZ website](#)) continues to be used as the central COVID-19 communications hub for food regulation matters. Technical and communications experts, drawn from the Food Regulation System membership, contribute to identifying and developing advice to stakeholders on matters relating to food and COVID-19. The website acts as a gateway to more specific information available from the Australian and New Zealand Governments and state and territory websites.

#### Australia's Foodborne Illness Reduction Strategy (the Strategy)

There remains a strong desire across the Food Regulation System to continue implementing a coordinated approach to reducing foodborne illness nationally, particularly related to *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter*. The focus continues to be on food safety, and safe food handling practices, within the most relevant parts of the food supply chain.

## Local Government activities and Jurisdiction Reports

Key matters which may be of interest to local government:

### Australian Capital Territory (ACT)

Regulatory and policy resources were predominantly focused on the ACT COVID-19 response during the reporting period. Routine food safety inspections on priority medium and high-risk food businesses have recently resumed. Significant non-compliance is being observed, requiring frequent enforcement action. A significant Norovirus outbreak was investigated at a bakery-type food premises with 215 identified cases. The suspected cause was food contamination by an unwell food handler. A new sampling survey project is proposed to commence within the next reporting period focusing on prewashed and prepacked leafy greens.

### New South Wales (NSW)

The NSW Food Authority continues to work with local councils to deliver a high standard of food surveillance activities. The current initiatives of the food notification project, investigation training and food safety culture/allergen management reflect the needs of Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) and focus on the retail food safety issues in NSW.

The NSW Food Authority continues to explore all avenues to deliver a shared food inspection data platform.

The NSW Scores on Doors food safety ratings program is being further promoted in an attempt to increase participations rates among NSW local councils. Currently 48% of local councils reported participation, which captures around 63% of eligible retail food businesses. A renewed communication strategy coupled with a refresh of the current web-based resources will attempt to broaden the program's reach.

### South Australia (SA)

The South Australian Productivity Commission (SAPC) publicly released its [final report on tourism regulation](#) in October 2021. The SA Government had asked the SAPC to undertake a review into tourism regulation, focusing on nature-based tourism and agritourism. Recommendation 5.1 is specific to SA Health, asking that the SA Health food safety regulation function be expanded to:

- Establish a central and independent process for receiving and evaluating feedback on the application of food safety regulations by local government; and
- Provide advice and training to local government on improving their regulatory practice, based on the analysis of the feedback.

The SA Government published its [response to the report](#) in January 2022 and committed to review the existing systems in place, to receive feedback from tourism business about inconsistency at the local level, and consider if there is a more appropriate mechanism to address these concerns. This will include consultation with the Department of Primary Industries and Regions, the Local Government Association and tourism businesses.

The Food Safety and Regulation Branch at SA Health has updated its [Food Recall Plan Guidance](#). This was to support a request from local government EHOs that small food businesses needed access to simplified information. Whilst other comprehensive guidance has been available, it was considered difficult to understand in some circumstances.

### Queensland

It is proposed to amend to the *Food Act 2006 (QLD)* (the Act) to address operational issues associated with unmanaged risks, clarify certain provisions, and ensure minimum effective regulation.

A discussion paper is proposed to be released later in the year, with commencement of the Act proposed early in 2023.

In addition, the following documents are currently released for public consultation - a draft FSANZ Standard, Food Safety Management Tools, and supporting guidelines (Proposal [P1053](#)).

## **Tasmania**

Version 2.0 of the Tasmanian Food Business Risk Classification System (RCS) came into effect in Tasmania during February 2022. It is important to ensure that the current version of the RCS is utilised when classifying a business as part of the formal registration process.

The 'enquiry' phase of [PlanBuild Tasmania](#), an online property information and application service, is now live. The 'application' phase will be available later in 2022 and will provide an online portal for food business registration processes (as well as building, planning, plumbing and Public Health Act applications).

## **Victoria**

Implementation of the FoodTrader platform (online food business registration/notification portal and backend database) has commenced with early adopter councils for fixed premises likely to start in June 2022. All Victorian councils will use the platform for the regulatory management of temporary and mobile food premises from 1 July 2022 as [Streatrader](#) will be decommissioned on 30 June 2022.

Due to demands from local government the FoodTrader system has been expanded to include the regulation of tobacco premises, all 14,000 premises regulated under the *Public Health & Wellbeing Act 2008*, and more recently wastewater (septic tanks) and caravan parks.

## **Northern Territory (NT)**

NT Health recently met with the primary industry teams at Department of Industry Tourism and Trade to discuss broad food standards matters including Proposal [P1052](#), Primary Production and Processing Requirements for Horticulture (Berries, Leafy Vegetables and Melons).

Proposal [P1053](#) has been shared with the Environmental Health workforce and NT Health will coordinate a submission as required.

## **Western Australia (WA)**

The WA Department of Health is currently conducting a review of the *Food Act 2008* (the Act). Local Governments and other interested stakeholders have been encouraged to make a submission to strengthen the Act and promote greater regulatory effectiveness. At the close of the consultation in May 2022 submissions will be analysed and a report prepared for the Minister.

The WA Across-Government Advisory Group comprising WA Department of Health, Local Government and the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development have been drafting the State's Foodborne Illness Reduction Strategy 2022-2025. Following the success of the 2018-2021 strategy the focus of the new strategy to be launched in the second half of 2022 will be on the reduction of foodborne illness due to *Campylobacter*.

A successful trial of the mobile food business centralised online register in several local governments has paved the way for a statewide launch in the middle of 2022. Currently local governments use separate and individual registers to manage administrative and food safety compliance information of food businesses. With the large increase in mobile food businesses in WA the centralised register will support greater collaboration and efficient use of resources across Local Government to manage mobile food businesses.

## **New Zealand**

The Ministry for Primary Industries' (MPI) New Zealand Food Safety continues to provide assessment service for verification agencies who have opted to have their Quality

Management System (QMS) assessed against the requirements of the *Food Act 2014*. Opting for this service enables councils to provide verification services to food businesses operating under Template Food Control Plans/FCPs (outside council exclusivity) and National Programmes. Currently two companies (IANZ and JAS-ANZ) are contracted to perform QMS assessment activities on behalf of MPI.

The QMS assessments have had to adjust to remote assessment during the COVID-19 response period. The process for assessments is similar to an on-site assessment with minor adjustments. Remote assessments may take more or less time, depending on what needs to be covered. For longer assessments several sessions may be needed to ensure everything is covered.

Two recognised agencies have now had their QMS assessed following the remote assessment process and feedback from assessors indicate that it worked well.

## **FSANZ**

FSANZ reported it continues to support the Food Regulation System priorities through its work on data sharing & data analytics; Proposals [P1052](#) – Primary Production and Processing Standard for Horticulture & [P1053](#) – Food Safety Management; the review of the Egg Primary Production and Processing Standard; Health Star Rating system, Branded Food Database as well as its work on FSANZ modernisation.

FSANZ also reported on its continuing work on Health Claims and updates to the COVID-19 information hub on the FSANZ website.