

Director-General awarded for outstanding service to Australian standards



Mr John Castles, Chair of Standards Australia presents Mr George Davey, Director-General, NSW Food Authority with an Outstanding Service Award

NSW Food Authority Director-General George Davey was presented with the Outstanding Service Award - Standards Australia Board 2004 on 10 November. Mr Davey started as a committee member developing methods for the dairy industry in 1972 and is responsible for many of Standards Australia's publications on food microbiology. He is a member of the Food Products working group and chairs the working group on Food Safety. The working group is helping prepare the ISO/DIS 22000 Food Safety Management Draft Standard. Mr Davey was appointed to the Health and Food Standards Sector Board in January 2002, becoming Acting Chair in December 2002. He was appointed to the Chair in April 2003. He was also appointed to the Standards Development Board in 2003 and the Australian New Zealand Joint Standards Development Board in May 2004.

(More more from <https://committees.standards.com.au/INFO/S9999/INFORMATION-S9999.HTM>)

Praise for seafood industry on food safety

The NSW Food Authority praised the local seafood industry for its work in managing food safety. Authority Director-General George Davey said the NSW seafood industry was leading Australia in setting and following standards to keep seafood safe. In 2001, NSW was the first state in Australia to introduce specific seafood safety laws. The Food Production (Seafood Safety Scheme) Regulation is being used as a benchmark by other states as they develop their own seafood safety laws and is an important contribution to the development of a national seafood standard by Food Standards Australia New Zealand. As well, the Authority's work to introduce food safety programs in stages across the seafood industry is nearly complete. Commercial fishers, oyster farmers, oyster openers and fishers' cooperatives in NSW now all operate food safety programs. Seafood stores and processors and non-shellfish aquaculture will join this group in early 2005. The Authority will continue to work closely with industry groups, including NSW Seafood Industry Council, Master Fish Merchants Association, Sydney Fish Market, Profish, Seafood Importers Association of Australasia, NSW Silver Perch Growers Association and NSW Aquaculture Association.

Food Authority hosts Chinese Olympic delegation

The successful Sydney Olympics and its blemish free food safety record was recently examined by a visiting Chinese Olympic delegation. The Food Authority hosted the fact-finding mission by members of the Beijing Agriculture Bureau on Food Supply During Olympic Games. The visit strengthened an already strong working relationship between the NSW Food Authority and Beijing Olympic Officials. The Food Authority's Director-General, George Davey, was in Beijing in November to address the first ICMSF China Food Safety International Conference and Food Technology for the Beijing Olympics Seminar. There were no reported cases of food-borne illness during the Sydney Games - something the Chinese are keen to repeat during the 2008 Games. Mr Davey said the trip was a "wonderful example" of international agencies cooperating together to share information on food safety.



Members of the high-level Chinese Olympic delegation visit the NSW Food Authority.



State and local government working together on food safety

The Food Regulation Partnership is working to define and resource the role of local government in food regulation. Comprising representatives from the Local Government and Shires Associations of NSW, Australian Institute of Environmental Health (NSW Division), Development and Environmental Professionals Association, NSW Department of Local Government, NSW Food Authority and NSW Health, the Partnership has published a paper *NSW Food Regulation Partnership - Issues and Options* and has held thirteen workshops throughout the State to consult directly with stakeholders on food regulation in NSW. Feedback will be used to help create a model for the future role of local government in food regulation, which will be presented to stakeholders and the NSW Government for consideration as a way forward. Copies of the paper can be viewed at www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au or by email from lgmodel@foodauthority.nsw.gov.au. Stakeholders have until December 24 to provide feedback.

NSW Food Authority food safety activities for October

The following statistics indicate food safety activity by the NSW Food Authority for October:

- 303 audits were conducted
- 678 inspections were conducted
- Six investigations of unlicensed businesses were conducted
- 11 investigations of other breaches were conducted
- There were 75 investigations of foodborne disease incidents, of which 22 were outbreaks (involving two or more people with the illness)
- 36 improvement notices were issued
- One prohibition order was issued
- There were three occasions of product seizure
- Two show cause notices were issued
- 65 warning letters were issued
- There were no licences cancelled
- There were no convictions recorded
- There were no mandatory recalls, one voluntary recall and no trade retrievals
- There were 156 shellfish harvest area closures and 92 shellfish harvest area openings
- There were 38 microbiological samples were taken and no sample failures

Food agency and hospitality association work together on innovative products

The NSW Food Authority and Restaurant and Catering NSW & ACT have worked together to develop two innovative products to help consumers and industry handle food safely. The two organisations have produced a sticker that restaurants and takeaway businesses can place on “doggy bags” which reminds customers of simple food handling tips to follow to keep food safe. Around 150,000 stickers will be distributed for free initially to members of Restaurant and Catering NSW & ACT. Future production runs of the stickers will be covered by a small cost charged to industry members. The two organisations have also developed a poster for businesses to display in food preparation areas to remind food handlers to follow food safety practices such as washing hands and avoiding food handling when sick. The posters will be distributed to RCNSW members initially. Queries should be directed to Restaurant and Catering NSW & ACT on telephone 02 9211 3500, tollfree 1300 650 646 or email rcnsw@rcnsw.asn.au.

Food Authority's tips for safe festive feasting heard across NSW

The Food Authority mounted a successful Christmas media campaign to heighten awareness of the seasonal risk of food-borne illness. The Authority's food scientists were interviewed on metropolitan and regional radio, and the story was run in major metropolitan papers. The message was simple - the weather is hot and we are cooking for more friends and family this time of year. All are factors that can increase the risk of food poisoning, with 5.4 million cases of food-borne illness in Australia every year. In NSW alone, foodborne illness costs the community more than \$765 million annually in lost income and productivity. The NSW Food Authority urges people to follow some simple food safety practices to ensure this Christmas is one to remember for the right reasons. Keep cold food cold (below 5 degrees C) and hot food



hot (above 65 degrees C). Cook food thoroughly, separate raw and ready to eat food and keep hands, kitchen and utensils clean. For information on how to handle, prepare, store and transport food safely, visit www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au.

FSANZ issues new advice for preparation of raw cassava and bamboo shoots

Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) issued new advice for the preparation of raw cassava and fresh bamboo shoots prior to consumption. Australians and New Zealanders are eating more exotic foods and need to be aware that some must be carefully prepared before use. Cassava is safe to eat providing that the raw cassava is properly prepared by first peeling and slicing the cassava and then cooking it by baking, boiling or roasting. The correct preparation of fresh bamboo shoots involves cutting the shoots lengthways, removing any outer leaves and fibrous tissue at the base, then thinly slicing the shoots into strips and boiling them for eight to ten minutes in lightly salted water. There are many species of bamboo, of which only a small number are viable as food. Presently, only low cyanide varieties are available in Australia and New Zealand (more from www.foodstandards.gov.au)

Australian consumers advised to avoid hijiki seaweed

Food Standards Australia New Zealand has urged people to avoid eating a type of seaweed called hijiki, which may contain high levels of naturally occurring arsenic. This advice does not apply to other varieties of edible seaweed, such as arame, nori, kombu and wakame. FSANZ, together with State and Territory health departments and food regulators, is asking suppliers and retailers – including restaurants – to voluntarily withdraw hijiki seaweed from the marketplace. Hijiki is an uncommon seaweed variety that is not harvested in Australia or New Zealand and grows in the seas mainly off Japan and Korea. It is almost black and comes in a shredded form and is used mostly as an appetiser or starter in some Japanese restaurants. Dried hijiki seaweed is also sold for addition to soups, salads and other dishes, but it is not the seaweed used to wrap sushi or to make rice crackers. Further information on quarantine and food safety requirements for private importations can be found on the website of the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) www.aqis.gov.au or by emailing foodimp@aqis.gov.au or by phoning 02 6272 4934.

Preventing foodborne diseases: poster and manual available

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has developed an educational poster which explains in five key points how food hygiene can prevent the transmission of pathogens responsible for many foodborne diseases. The poster is available in English, French, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish and Slovak. WHO has also prepared the first version of Bring food safety home, a basic training manual for training food handlers and consumers including school children (more from http://www.euro.who.int/foodsafety/Otherissues/20041019_3)

FDA issues final rule on records to enhance US food supply security

The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has issued final regulations on the establishment and maintenance of records to protect the US human food and animal feed supply in the event of credible threats of serious adverse health consequences or death to humans or animals. The FDA also issued draft guidance to FDA staff and industry, which details the internal procedures the agency will follow before requesting access to records. The Secretary of Health and Human Services, Tommy G Thompson proclaimed publication of the record keeping rule a milestone in US food safety and security (more from <http://www.fda.gov/bbs/topics/news/2004/NEW01143.html>)

Hepatitis E virus fatal - Japan

Six people who ate pork liver at a barbecue restaurant in Kitami, Hokkaido, contracted hepatitis E virus infection and one of them died of fulminant hepatitis. The Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare reportedly said one of the six also donated blood prior to confirmation of infection and was responsible for transmission of the virus to transfusion recipients. This was the first reported case in Japan of the hepatitis E virus being transmitted to people via ordinary food. The hepatitis E virus-contaminated meat did not originate from wildlife but was identified as liver tissue originating from farmed pigs (More from http://www.promedmail.org/pls/promed/www_flow.accept)

Recall: Peppercorns for *Salmonella*

Gourmet Organic Herbs of Chatswood, NSW conducted a voluntary recall on its whole white peppercorns product packed in 60g sachets and 60g glass jars with best before dates between 06/06 and 26/10/06 distributed in NSW, Victoria, Queensland



and SA. The peppercorns used in these products were recalled overseas when overseas testing indicated that they may be contaminated with *Salmonella*. Although the peppercorns used in above batches tested negative for *Salmonella* when they were imported into Australia, the company is recalling the above products as a precaution.

Recall: Mackerel for histamine

Safcol Australia Pty Ltd and Woolworth Ltd conducted a voluntary recall of Homebrand Mackerel in Natural Oil products packed in 425g cans with lot code MCNOPFMA0824 distributed in Queensland, NSW, ACT, Victoria and Tasmania. Testing has shown higher than acceptable levels of histamine in some cans.

Recall: Cheesy macaroni for plastic contamination

Nestle Australia conducted a voluntary recall on its Maggi Cheesy Macaroni product packed in cardboard packets with best before date 18 Feb 2006 distributed nationally because of the possibility that some packs may contain pieces of clear hard plastic believed to have originated in the production process.

Recall: Vege chips for undeclared allergen

The Vege Chip Company Pty Ltd of Currumbin Qld conducted a voluntary recall on various vege chips products distributed in Queensland, NSW, SA, Victoria and ACT due to an incorrect gluten free claim (more from <http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/recallsurveillance/foodrecalls/currentconsumerlevelrecalls/index.cfm>)

Recall: Chocolate for undeclared allergen

Nestle Australia Ltd conducted a voluntary recall on its Choc bits Dark Chocolate product packed in 100g, 250g and 375g flow packs with all batch codes distributed nationally and in New Zealand due to an undeclared amount of milk protein on some labels. Consumers who suffer from a milk protein allergy or intolerance should not consume this product.

Recall: Soy flour for undeclared allergen

Lowan Whole Foods Pty Ltd conducted a voluntary recall on its Lowan Whole Foods Soy Flour - Gluten Free product packed in 500g polypropylene bags with use by date or lot code N 25 10 05 0D distributed in Victoria, NSW, ACT and SA due to an incorrect gluten free claim. Consumers who suffer from a gluten allergy or intolerance should not consume this product.

Recall: Ice confection for undeclared allergen

Unilever Australasia of Epping, NSW conducted a voluntary recall on all batch codes of Streets Cyclone Ice Confection single units and multi packs and Summer Trio multi pack products distributed nationally and in New Zealand, Fiji and Pago Pago because of an undeclared amount of milk protein on labels. Consumers who suffer from a milk protein allergy or intolerance should not consume these products.

Recall: Breakfast cereal for undeclared allergen

Kellogg (Aust) Pty Ltd conducted a voluntary recall on its Just Right Just Grain product packed in 510g cardboard packets with all use by dates up to and including Sep 05 16 distributed nationally and in New Zealand because some packs may contain small amounts of almonds, soy and sulphite not stated on the packs. Consumers with an allergy or intolerance to these ingredients should not consume the product.

Recall: Alcoholic drink for faulty can lining

Diageo Australia is conducting a voluntary recall of 375ml cans of pre-mixed Gordon's Gin and Tonic following the reported discovery of food-grade lining particles in the drink. Other Gordon's Gin and Tonic products are not affected. Consumers are asked to return the product to the point of sale for refund.

Recall: Health food bar for incorrect dairy claim

Govinda's are conducting a voluntary recall of its 55g plastic-wrapped "Yummy Bars" due to an incorrect dairy-free claim. Consumers who suffer lactose intolerance or milk protein allergies should not consume this product.

