



To ensure that food in NSW is safe and correctly labelled and that NSW consumers are able to make informed choices about the food they eat

Introduction from the D-G



The Food Authority is counting down its third year, and once again we can look back and be pleased with what we've achieved over the past 12 months. As always, the Authority's core business is to make sure NSW consumers continue to get access to safe and correctly labelled food. We have introduced a number of important initiatives over the year, and continued to enhance our international profile as Australia's first fully integrated food agency. *Year in Review 2006/07* documents some of the highlights from our third year.

NSW & China Sign Historic Food Safety Agreement



Zhang Zhikua, Director Beijing Food Safety Administration (BFA), Mr Wang Jianhua, Deputy Director BFA with Minister Macdonald and George Davey.

Primary Industries Minister Ian Macdonald and the NSW Food Authority signed a historic food safety agreement between NSW and China in November that will benefit consumers through increased cooperation and sharing of scientific expertise. Minister Macdonald was present at the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between the NSW Food Authority and the Beijing Food Safety Administration (BFA) in Beijing in early November. Minister Macdonald said the MoU formalised an already close working relationship between the Food Authority and Beijing food safety officials. "We've had a strong working relationship with China for a number of years, notably through the Food Authority's involvement in advising Beijing Olympic organisers on how to prevent food-borne illness during the 2008 Olympic and Paralympic Games," Minister Macdonald said.

New Local Government Food Safety Partnership



Minister Macdonald and Cowra Mayor Cr Bruce Miller unveil the new logo.

A new Food Regulation Partnership between the Food Authority and local government will further boost consumer food safety and enable authorities to respond more quickly to food emergencies and recalls. Local councils have made an important contribution to food safety in NSW for many years. The new partnership model is the result of nearly 18 months consultation with local government across NSW. The role of local councils will be better defined to dismantle duplication and make sure resources are allocated where they need to go in the fight against unsafe and incorrectly labelled food. George Davey said the Food Authority and councils already enjoyed a strong working relationship, and the new partnership will strengthen that even further. Greater coordination also means the Food Authority and councils can respond even faster to food emergencies.

Food Authority Helps Raise Awareness of Serious Food Allergies

The Food Authority joined Anaphylaxis Australia, the Australian Medical Association and other industry and community groups to help raise awareness of serious allergies during Allergy Awareness Week.

The Food Authority jointly produced an educational poster with Anaphylaxis Australia on the theme of "Support Allergic Friends Everywhere (SAFE).



George Davey with Maria Said from Anaphylaxis Australia and Australian Medical Association Federal President Dr Mukesh Haikerwal at the launch of the SAFE poster.



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MoU with NZ



George Davey and Andrew McKenzie sign the new Memorandum of Understanding in Wellington

The Food Authority and New Zealand Food Safety Agency signed a new agreement to boost cooperation on a range of food safety issues that will benefit consumers and industry. The Memorandum of Understanding is an important step to improve cooperation between the two agencies on a broad range of food safety and regulatory matters.

International FBI Fact Finding Trip



Dr Scott Crerar from the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, Hong Kong with Dr Craig Shadbolt at the joint EU/US conference on Priority Setting of Food borne and Zoonotic Pathogens held in Berlin.

The Food Authority is constantly looking to test and adopt the latest cutting edge food safety technologies. The Manager of the Authority's Foodborne Illness Investigation Unit, Dr Craig Shadbolt visited government agencies in five countries across North America and Europe to make sure NSW remains at the forefront of foodborne illness investigation best practice. Craig examined best international practice models at the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention; Minnesota State Health and Agriculture; Food Safety Authority of Ireland and the United Kingdom Health Protection Agency.

Authority Checks Egg Substitution Claims

The Authority was asked by the State Government to examine claims of misleading labelling in the egg industry. Minister Macdonald was concerned about media reports suggesting consumers were being charged premium prices for normal eggs labelled as free range. The Authority investigation is on-going.

New Guidelines Cut Red Tape and Boost Safety

The Authority released a set of new guidelines to improve the safety of temporary food events and reduce red tape. "Food Handling Guidelines for Temporary Events" will reduce duplication by having one set of uniform regulations covering markets and special food events across NSW. The guidelines address food safety issues, including hygiene, disposal of waste, food handling, and include a checklist so vendors are aware of everything they need to do to comply with safe food laws.



New guidelines help improve the safety of temporary food events, while also cutting red tape.

Authority Protects Consumers From Rip Offs and Unsafe Food

The Authority continued to enforce the State Government's policy of making sure NSW consumers are not misled about their food or sold potentially dangerous products. A number of businesses were prosecuted by the Authority for a raft of offences, including fish and meat substitution, breaches of country of origin labelling laws, illegal use of the preservative sulphur dioxide in fresh mince and operating unhygienic

businesses that represent a risk to public health. In addition, the Authority participated with the Department of Primary Industries in a joint operation that checked



The Food Authority enforced the Government's "Zero Tolerance" approach to consumer rip offs and unsafe food.

293 restaurants, seafood retailers, wholesalers, processors and commercial fishers between Tweed Heads and Eden over several months. Evidence was taken for three prosecutions for substitution and labelling offences, including labelling imported Vannamei prawns as King Prawns and selling imported Basa fillet, or catfish, as Perch Evidence was also taken for 39 penalty notices including advertising Basa fillets as Jew Fish and labelling Chinese Scallops as Tasmanian Scallops. 213 warning letters were also issued for substitution, labelling, temperature control and hygiene offences

Salmonella in Rock Melons

Most people wouldn't expect to find *Salmonella* in rock melons, but the Authority was heavily involved in a national response to just such an outbreak. During

October 2006, 133 patients who had been infected with *Salmonella Saintpaul* were reported to the National Notifiable



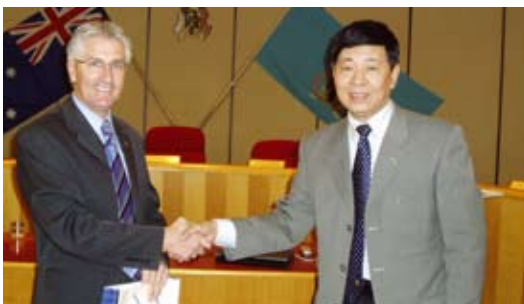
Diseases Surveillance System (NNDSS). Of these, 54 were from NSW, representing a significant increase in usual case numbers - approximately 36 annually in NSW). Cases of *Salmonella Saintpaul* were also reported in Victoria, Australian Capital Territory, Tasmania and South Australia. The outbreak was attributed to contaminated water.

Chinese Delegations

A large number of overseas delegations, predominately from China, visited the Authority over the year. Some high level visitors included Mr Jianhua Wang, Deputy Director of the Beijing Food Administration (BFA) and Deputy Director of the Beijing Administration of Industry and Commerce (BAIC). His visit was part of a series of measures identified in an MOU signed between the Authority and the BFA in Beijing. Other high level visitors included members of the Beijing Municipal Health Bureau, who wanted to learn more about food safety plans during the Sydney 2000 Olympics.



Jianhua Wang, Deputy Director of Beijing Food Administration (BFA) and Deputy Director of the Beijing Administration of Industry and Commerce (BAIC), presents George Davey with a commemorative plaque.



Director Food Safety Programs Peter Sutherland with Zhu Xiaowan, Director of Beijing Municipal Health Bureau's Policies and Legislation Division.

Export Tick of Approval For Shellfish Program

The NSW Shellfish Program, which is administered by the Food Authority, passed the Australian Quarantine Inspection Services' rigorous "Export Quality" inspection. The Shellfish audit, which passed with distinction, means farmers in approved areas can export their oysters direct to overseas markets. This is the third time the Program has passed the demanding AQIS export audit. The Program manages oyster production across the state by closely working with industry to monitor water quality and the safety of oysters.



NSW Shellfish Program passes AQIS "Export Quality" inspection for the third time.

Risk Training For Hong Kong Food Safety Regulator

Authority staff conducted two workshops on risk communication and risk management in November with Hong Kong's Food and Environment Hygiene Department (FEHD). Catrin May and Adrian Bradley demonstrated how risk communication is critical to keeping consumers informed about various food issues and during a crisis. The four day workshops were won by the Authority as part of an international tender.



The Controller of the Centre for Food Safety Dr Mak Sin-ping welcomes Catrin May and Adrian Bradley at the start of the four day risk communication workshops in Hong Kong.

Industry Consultation

Industry consultation is critical to how the Authority works. The Minister in April 2006 announced the formation of the Poultry & Egg Industries Advisory Committee (PEICC). The PEICC is the latest industry committee and joins others representing the meat, seafood, shellfish and dairy industries. All the industry committees enjoy strong ongoing consultation between industry sectors, the Food Authority and Minister Macdonald's office.



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Lunch Box Campaign



Top: Minister Macdonald promotes the Food Authority's cooler bags during this year's cook off - Marlene Vaughan looks on.

Bottom: Marlene Vaughan, Minister Macdonald and celebrity chef Lindy Milan.



Minister Macdonald launched the Food Authority's Safe Kids' Lunch Boxes campaign during a "cook off" at last year's Easter Show. Minister Macdonald joined high-profile food personality Lindy Milan preparing a meal from a bag of surprise ingredients while highlighting common hygiene mistakes people make in the kitchen. The theme at the Authority's stand was time and temperature control, and Mr Macdonald promoted a series of Food Authority cooler bags that keep perishable foods cool to prevent the growth of potentially dangerous bacteria. The Kids' Lunches campaign promotes the use of ice blocks and frozen popper drinks in kids lunches to help keep food safe. The US Army's Environmental Health unit spotted the Kids' Lunch Box initiative on the Authority's web site and asked for permission to use it as the basis for its own education initiative. Research by the Authority's science team found up to 40 per cent of children aged under 12 risked food poisoning.

Allergy Resource

A "post card" brochure on food allergies was produced in 2006 as part of the Authority's on going commitment to consumer education. The card was distributed at the Allergy Expo and Gluten Free Food Show in Sydney.



Clean Bill of Health for Fresh Cut Vegies

Authority research gave fresh cut spinach and vegies sold in NSW a clean bill of health following a fatal E.coli outbreak in the United States. The Authority conducted a review of the microbiological quality of fresh cut green leaf vegetables sold in NSW. Food Authority scientists took 119 samples of packaged and loose leaf green vegetables for Salmonella, Listeria and E. coli, including lettuce, baby spinach, rocket and water cress. All were negative for pathogens.

Hong Kong Visit



International Engagement Controller of the Centre for Food Safety Dr Mak Sin-ping, with Dr York Chow, Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food, Hong Kong Special Administrative Area with Primary Industries Minister Ian Macdonald and George Davey. Minister Macdonald met Dr Chow to discuss improving relations between NSW and Hong Kong on food safety issues.

Singapore Presentation



Chief Scientist Dr Lisa Szabo was invited to speak at celebrations marking Singapore's 40th anniversary as a state. Other agencies invited to deliver presentations

included the World Trade Organisation, the European Commission, and China's Certification and Accreditation Administration. Lisa spoke about "the impact of food safety standards and the new ISO22000 on global trade" at a plenary conference about food standards.

Consumer Focus

The Authority spent a considerable part the past 12 months actively canvassing opinions from a range of stakeholders in a bid to better understand how the agency is perceived. This was part of a strategic project within the Authority's overall strategic plan. The opinion of consumers, industry sectors as well as a broad cross section of Authority staff was gathered. Separately, a staff workshop was held to consider the agency's external profile. The workshop, which also considered the results of the consumer and industry surveys, agreed the Authority should become more consumer focussed in its external profile. A range of campaigns and new web site will reflect this shift.

