

Food Authority Presents Award for Industry Excellence



George Davey presents the Excellence in Seafood award to the Pier Restaurant. Awards honoured excellence across a number of areas, including promotion and sustainability.



NSW Primary Industries Minister Ian Macdonald discusses the seafood industry's future potential and opportunities.




NSW Food Authority Director-General George Davey presented a key award at the recent National Seafood Industry Awards held at Luna Park in Sydney. About 600 people attended the gala evening, and watched George present the best seafood award to the Pier Restaurant located at Rose Bay, Sydney. George said the NSW Authority's prime objective was food safety, adding it also "worked hard to foster excellence across all areas of the food chain, and was therefore delighted to present an award recognising excellence in seafood". Organised by the [Sydney Fish Market](#), the event recognised industry excellence across a range of areas including environment, marketing and seafood promotion. The NSW Minister for Primary Industries, Ian Macdonald, spoke about future directions of the industry, while his namesake, Federal Fisheries Minister Senator Ian Macdonald, discussed challenges facing the Australian seafood sector. The Authority's Mercury in Fish education campaign, which was launched in May, was a finalist in the awards.

Authority to Boost Anaphylaxis Awareness

The Food Authority is exploring a number of ways to improve public awareness and safety about the risk of anaphylaxis following the NSW Coroner's findings into the death of a sixteen-year-old boy who consumed peanut paste during a school excursion. The Coroner examined the death of Hamidur Rahman in 2002, and made seventeen recommendations that included introducing anaphylaxis awareness programs in schools and childcare centres and for parents and the community in general. The Food Authority has begun discussions with [NSW Health](#) and the [Department of Education and Training](#) on school and community initiatives. Separately, the Food Authority has been preparing a business case since early 2005 seeking Government funding for increased Consumer Education and Communication to increase public awareness about allergens in food. The Authority has also produced a comprehensive fact sheet on food allergies and intolerances across a number of languages. The Authority is continuing to work with the [Office of Fair Trading](#), [Restaurant and Catering Association](#), [Australian Hoteliers Association](#) and [Clubs NSW](#) on an initiative to improve the awareness of allergies in the food handling sector.

Pilot Schemes Set to Improve Industry Evaluation



The Food Authority is running two pilot schemes as part of plans to introduce a formal process to better assess food safety risks and issues across entire industries. It is hoped the pilots will pave the way to a system that prompts or schedules a review of a specific industry. "Scheme Review and Evaluation" aims to report on the effectiveness of a particular food safety scheme and measures management of food safety risks in three areas; industry performance; Food Authority performance and the appropriateness of the regulatory framework. Two pilots have been assessing how best to introduce a Scheme Review and Evaluation system for the NSW Food Authority. A "high priority plant product review" is well advanced, while a review of red meat abattoirs is in the early stages. The system is an independent mechanism for assessing food safety risks and will likely rely on desktop "fact finding", industry intelligence, industry performance assessment through "gold standard auditing", consultation and overall auditor performance assessment. Information garnered from the new system would help the Food Authority compare cross-sector industry performance to better target interventions, help design auditor/industry training programs and compare industry performance with national benchmark data. It is likely that the framework for a Scheme Review and Evaluation system will be jointly developed by the Authority's Operations and Policy & Science Branches.





OUTCOMES/PROJECTS

Mars Recall Review



Staff from the Authority's Strategic Issues Management Group (SIM) met in September to assess the Authority's response to the recent **Masterfoods** extortion threat that saw the company remove Mars and Snickers bars from sale across NSW. While no major problems or oversights from the Authority's perspective were identified, SIM agreed there had been confusion among the public, media and retailers about use of the word "voluntary" during the recall. The Authority issued a release at the height of the crisis explaining that "voluntary" meant **Masterfoods** took the responsible decision to protect public health by recalling Mars and Snickers bars - it did not mean it was "voluntary whether retailers can take them off the shelves". It doesn't matter if a recall is voluntary or mandatory; once the recall is underway retailers are legally obligated to take product off the shelf as soon as possible to protect public health and safety. SIM agreed misunderstanding could be avoided during future recalls if the word "voluntary" was not used during consumer-level recalls. SIM also agreed key elements of the Authority's **Internal Protocol - Intentional Interference with Food** should be provided to appropriate external agencies, including **NSW Health** and local government. The policy outlines how Food Authority staff should handle cases where food has been deliberately contaminated.

Info Roadshows hit the road

As reported in last month's **Food Chain**, a series of "information Roadshows" have rolled out across NSW to provide important details about the new Hospital and Aged Care Facility Food Safety Scheme. Patients/residents in hospitals and aged care facilities are potentially more vulnerable to food poisoning because their immune systems have been compromised either by illness or age. As a result, the Authority will introduce a comprehensive new food safety scheme as part of a national approach at the end of the year. The Roadshows have shown hospital and aged care facility staff how the new scheme will affect them, and how to introduce specialised food safety programs to keep patients free from foodborne illness. The Roadshows will run to the end of October, and will visit Sydney, Wollongong, Newcastle, Port Macquarie, Coffs Harbour, Ballina, Orange, Dubbo, Wagga Wagga and Batemans Bay.

Highway One Survey



Authority food safety officers are working closely with takeaways in the far west of NSW to lift hygiene standards after the inaugural "Highway One" survey found lower compliance rates in the region. Known as the "Unincorporated Area", this region is not totally covered by local government food officers. Despite this, the Highway One survey found high levels of compliance with food safety and hygiene across most parts of NSW. Food Authority officers found 87% of 117 businesses premises passed inspection along major highways including the Pacific, Hume, New England, Mitchell, Newell, Princes, Sturt, Silver City, Snowy Mountains and Great Western. Food officers have worked closely with the 13% that failed to pass muster, although none represented immediate threats to public health or safety.

Country of Origin Labelling

Food Authority officers recently randomly sampled 91 retailers across NSW that sell seafood to assess compliance with Country of Origin Labelling requirements over a three day weekend. Officers checked to make sure imported prawns, squid, scallops and fish were correctly labelled. Nine on the spot fines were issued for breaches. Compliance has improved considerably since a similar survey in May 2004.

Consolidated Regulations to cut red tape

The Food Authority has eliminated duplication and unnecessary red tape by consolidating four food safety scheme regulations into just one. Previously, there were four regulations in operation which administered food safety schemes in NSW for the dairy, meat, seafood and plant industries. They were; **Food Production (Dairy Food Safety Scheme) Regulation 1999; Food Production (Meat Food Safety Scheme) Regulation 2000; Food Production (Seafood Safety Scheme) Regulation 2001, and Food Production (Plant Products Food Safety Scheme) Regulation 2005.** The new amended Food Regulation 2004 sets out uniform administrative arrangements across the various food sectors where food safety schemes have been established for issuing/renewal of licences, the imposition and variation of terms and conditions on licences, the suspension or cancellation of licences, certification of food safety programs and review of Food Authority decisions. This will significantly streamline administrative work, allowing the Authority to concentrate on developing new food safety scheme provisions for various high priority sectors without having to develop a new set of administrative arrangements each and every time. Importantly, this will ensure the Authority delivers services to industry in a more timely and cost-efficient manner.

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



INTERNATIONAL / NATIONAL

Hong Kong Delegation



Executive Director of Policy & Science Craig Sahlin with Hong Kong's Secretary of Health, Welfare and Food, Dr York Chow.

A high-level delegation headed by Hong Kong's Secretary of Health, Welfare and Food visited the Food Authority recently to view how the Authority regulates food safety across NSW. The delegation, headed by Dr York Chow, was interested in learning about Authority activities and programs including operations, laboratory work, food-borne illness investigations, enforcement activities as well as consumer education. Executive Director of Policy & Science Craig Sahlin (Craig was acting Director-General) provided an overview before Authority staff briefed the delegation on specific work areas. The trip was particularly important as the Hong Kong Government is seriously considering establishing a single food agency to oversee food regulation for the territory's six million inhabitants. The Food Authority is Australia's first and only fully integrated, stand alone food regulatory agency.

Media Round Up

The media reported favourably on a number of Food Authority activities over the past month. The Authority's inaugural "Highway One" survey received strong coverage across NSW in print, radio and television. Likewise the crackdown on Country of Origin Labelling for seafood was strongly reported.

Odd Spot - not quite a tiger in the tank!



The China Daily recently reported how a restaurant in north-eastern China was caught illegally advertising tiger meat dishes. Tigers are endangered and Chinese authorities are keen to protect the rapidly dwindling wild population. While many people would rightly frown upon eating an endangered species, further tests revealed the restaurant was actually selling donkey flesh—marinated in tiger urine. The story failed to explain how restaurant staff harvested such a delicacy! (Source: FSNET)

Minister visits DAL



Primary Industries Minister Ian Macdonald inspects equipment used to detect sulphur dioxide in fresh mince at DAL.

NSW Primary Industries Minister Ian Macdonald visited the Division of Analytical Laboratories (DAL) in August. Director-General George Davey and senior staff accompanied Mr Macdonald around DAL to highlight the scope of analytical and science-based work. Mr Macdonald was particularly interested in the Authority's continuing work to ensure butchers do not illegally use the preservative sulphur dioxide in fresh mince. DAL staff showed Mr Macdonald how samples were tested and showcased on-going work in the areas of food labelling and food borne pathogens. Mr Macdonald recently reiterated the NSW Government's commitment to food safety. The Food Authority directly funds a number of DAL staff to perform food testing and analysis.

New Industry Communications Coordinator joins Food Authority



Anita Ray - our new Industry Communications Coordinator

The Food Authority has appointed a key staff member to improve communications with industry partners. The Authority has been keen to enhance the flow of information to industry for some time, and Anita Ray will assess how best to achieve this. Anita will spend the next few months meeting industry stakeholders to assess their needs before producing dedicated materials for our industry partners. Anita has extensive experience in devising communications strategies for industry stakeholders, and has recently worked at Attorney-Generals and the Guardianship Tribunal. Anita can be contacted on 02-9741-4813.

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Authority Staff

Farewell Helen Moir and Jim Forsyth!



Primary Industries Minister Ian Macdonald (left) and George Davey present Helen Moir with a lovely bouquet of flowers.



Former SafeFood staff members Ray Hickey and Doriel Waites with Ian Moir and Helen Moir. Ian is Helen's brother.



Jim Forsyth and wife Betty Forsyth are presented with going away presents by George Davey in recognition of Jim's lifelong and distinguished service to the dairy industry.

The Authority's much-loved Senior Executive Assistant, Helen Moir, retired in August. Helen was the chief holder of corporate knowledge for the Authority and a font of knowledge about the dairy industry. Helen worked closely with George Davey for many years, and was awarded a Public Service Medal in the Queen's 2002 Honours list. A joint farewell dinner was held for Helen and Jim Forsyth at the Carnarvon Golf Club, Lidcombe. Jim is a legend in the dairy industry and is retiring to live in Queensland. Jim held numerous committee and industry positions, and was past chairman of the [NSW Dairy Industry Conference](#), Director of [Milk Marketing \(NSW\) Pty Limited](#) and a former Managing Director of [United Dairies Limited](#).

Injuries Mar Netball Conquest



Craig Shadbolt and Rod McCarthy prepare to serve up a goal.



The team in action!

The form of the all-conquering Food Authority netballers has inexplicably hit a slump lately, with the team's unblemished record slipping to two wins and two defeats. Undeterred, the team is still enjoying the lunchtime competition and having fun, although some players have been warned for engaging in rough and tumble with elbows! (no names Samara!) Not so fortunate was Catherine Bass, who took a tumble and injured her ankle, before being carted off court on a stretcher. Catherine will likely be off her feet for six weeks. Everyone at the Food Authority wishes Catherine a speedy recovery, although it's unclear whether she will return to the netball court next season!

Executive Development Program

Congratulations to Samara Kitchener for being accepted into the 2006 NSW Government Executive Development Course. The course will help Samara build close relationships with other executives across NSW Government. It will focus on communication and interpersonal effectiveness; facilitating workforce effectiveness; achieving results; managing customer and stakeholder relationships; leadership; strategic thinking & planning as well as change management.

New Faces - Farewells

Helen Hughes has been appointed Senior Executive Assistant. Helen's previous position was Personal Assistant to the Lord Mayor at [Parramatta City Council](#). She has considerable experience in executive support, and a good understanding of the Food Authority and food regulatory issues.

Farewell to Jo-Anne Carroll, who left the Shellfish Program recently for a career in travel. Jo-Anne started with SafeFood in late 2001, and was the voice of the Shellfish Program as the first point of contact for the shellfish industry.

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