



MEDIA RELEASE

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Ian Macdonald

Minister for Primary Industries, Minister for Energy,
Minister for Mineral Resources, Minister for State Development

One in 10 businesses fail food safety inspections

One in 10 food retail and food service businesses in NSW failed food safety inspections conducted by local councils, a new report has revealed, Minister for Primary Industries Ian Macdonald said today.

The NSW Government introduced new laws last year where councils are obliged to report half-yearly to the NSW Food Authority on their food regulatory activities, such as inspections, complaints investigated and enforcement action.

"The first report of the State's 152 councils has shown that 10% of all food businesses failed food safety inspections," Mr Macdonald said.

"This is not good enough - more work needs to be done by food premises to make sure they comply with critical food handling practices.

"More than 23,000 inspections were carried out by local council food inspectors and this snapshot reveals there is clearly a knowledge gap in some businesses of what is required.

"Food safety must be the number one priority of all food businesses and consumers should not have to take a risk when dining out.

"The Government is tackling this issue with targeted interventions, including the name and shame initiative.

"We also have been working with industry to introduce a mandatory food handler training program, we aim to have in place next year.

"This training will ensure each hospitality business in NSW has a designated food safety supervisor responsible for safe food handling.

"Councils are also conducting food safety training programs and providing technical advice and information to food businesses."

Highlights of the first report by councils include:

- 23,326 inspections of food businesses conducted
- 1,933 food complaints received; 1886 investigated (98%)
- 3,444 warning letters issued
- 834 improvement notices issued
- 729 fines issued
- 31 prosecutions

Mr Macdonald said the first six-monthly snapshot of the new Food Regulation Partnership was the first step in establishing benchmarks for councils' food regulatory activities.

"Most councils are very thorough in ensuring food businesses are abiding by health regulations and they should be congratulated," Mr Macdonald said.

"Later this year we will have a full year of data, so we will be able to see the complete picture of how councils are performing their responsibilities."

If a business fails to comply with food safety requirements under the Food Standards Code, inspectors have available a number of compliance and enforcement options.

"We won't hesitate to take action if consumers' health is compromised - written warnings, improvement notices, or prosecutions will be issued," Mr Macdonald said.

Since last July penalty notices and prosecutions are now listed on the NSW Food Authority's name and shame website, which is updated each week.

The *Summary report of NSW enforcement agencies activities* for the period 1 July to 31 December, 2008 is available on the Food Authority website at: www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/localgovernment