

# Peace of mind

NSW Food Authority Annual Report 2007-08



NSW Food Authority

safer food, clearer choices



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## **Part 2: Subsidiary Entities of the NSW Food Authority (separate report)**

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## Our Minister

The NSW Food Authority continued to break new ground this year, leading the way with a range of new food safety and public information initiatives.

These included Name and Shame, the Food Regulation Partnership and a series of new food safety schemes. These programs and initiatives aim to reduce foodborne illness and help the Authority better serve the community.

**Name and Shame** was passed by NSW Parliament on 8 April 2008. It gives consumers access to information about successful prosecutions and penalty notices through the Authority's website. The first of its type in Australia, Name and Shame serves as a powerful incentive for the food industry to boost its performance.

The **Food Regulation Partnership** (FRP) is the culmination of three years' work between the Authority, councils and various NSW Government agencies. It makes councils' involvement in food regulation mandatory and more clearly defines their role as food regulators. The NSW Government allocated \$1.58 million to this project, and we are delighted to see it reach fruition.

During the year the Authority began, or continued, work on a range of new **Food Safety Schemes**. The food industry is bound to comply with these regulatory schemes, which ensure food is manufactured, handled and stored safely.

Of note this year was the continuation of work on a new Egg Food Safety Scheme which aims to address increases in egg-related illness (including *Salmonella*). A Food Safety Scheme was also developed for the newly identified food sector of 'vulnerable population' (eg aged care facilities, hospices) and work commenced on a 'childcare' Food Safety Scheme (covering venues serving food to children).

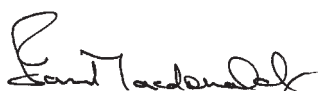
In addition, the Authority maintained a compliance and enforcement focus through its strong on-the-ground presence across the New South Wales food supply chain. Food safety outcomes continued to be reinforced through audits, inspections, investigations and enforcement.

I am proud to say that the Authority is now recognised at both a national and international level. During the year this was best demonstrated through its involvement as food safety advisors to such major events as World Youth Day and the 2008 Beijing Olympics.



The NSW Food Authority remains Australia's only through-chain regulator – ensuring food safety from 'paddock to plate'. Since its inception in 2004, it has continued to protect the interests of industry and consumers alike.

I applaud the efforts of the Authority and its dedicated team, and invite you to learn more about its achievements in this 2007-08 Annual Report.



**The Hon. Ian Macdonald MLC**  
NSW Minister for Primary Industries

## Letter of submission



31 October 2008

The Hon. Ian Macdonald MLC  
NSW Minister for Primary Industries  
Level 33  
Governor Macquarie Tower  
1 Farrer Place  
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Minister

I am pleased to submit the Annual Report and consolidated financial statements of the NSW Food Authority and its private subsidiary corporations, Milk Marketing (NSW) Pty Limited and Pacific Industry Services Corporation Pty Limited for the year ended 30 June 2008.

The Report was prepared under the provisions of the *NSW Food Act 2003* and the *Annual Reports (Statutory Bodies) Act 1984*.

Yours sincerely



George Davey  
Director-General

## Our Director-General

It was an eventful year for the NSW Food Authority and one featuring several major milestones.

It was the year we finalised preparations for our Name and Shame website, signed off the Food Regulation Partnership with local councils, launched a range of new food safety schemes and increased visits to our website by almost 90 percent.

The Authority continued to be actively involved in food regulation at a number of strategic levels as we delivered on our mission to provide 'safer food' and 'clearer choices' for the community.

We achieved this by:

- continuing to develop and implement strategies aimed at reducing foodborne illness
- developing new partnerships with local government
- working together with industry
- protecting the community
- informing and educating consumers
- taking a leadership role.

Our aim, as always, was to stay ahead of the game and remain proactive, supportive and vigilant in all aspects of food safety.



## Reducing foodborne illness

Foodborne illness costs the Australian economy more than \$1.2 billion a year and affects more than five million people.

A key part of our role is identifying and managing food safety issues and encouraging food businesses to constantly improve the hygienic production and handling of food – through better technology, more efficient techniques and better education.

Helping us to achieve this is the Authority's team of 117 dedicated professionals, which includes scientists, food safety and policy experts, field staff, compliance officers, administrative staff and communicators.

Our team works in close partnership with NSW Health, the NSW Department of Primary Industries, councils and food industry bodies to help reduce foodborne illness.

While the agency as a whole is focussed on reducing foodborne illness, we also have a specialist team to investigate suspected outbreaks of foodborne illness – the Foodborne Illness (FBI) Unit. This unit continued to explore new technologies during the year, identifying some important new ways to detect and manage potential foodborne illnesses.

The most exciting of these was the MLVA fingerprinting tool. Developed in partnership with NSW Health and the Institute of Clinical Pathology and Medical Research at Westmead Hospital, the tool allows for the detection and identification of *Salmonella* clusters using a DNA-based fingerprinting tool – MLVA typing.

Since our inception in 2004, the Authority has grown to become a strong proponent of national food policy and legislation.

In 2007-08 we continued work on the Egg Food Safety Scheme and also took responsibility for two new areas of food safety – vulnerable persons and childcare. Safety schemes in these key areas are due to commence later in 2008.

Foodborne illness is an ongoing concern, but I am pleased to say we have the people, systems and partnerships in place to ensure it can be monitored, managed and, ultimately, reduced.

## Developing new partnerships with local government

The finalisation of the Food Regulation Partnership (FRP) was a major milestone for the Authority this year. Although we have always enjoyed a close relationship with local councils, the FRP broke new ground – marking a new era of cooperation between councils and the NSW Food Authority.

For the first time there is consistency of approach in how food safety is monitored and enforced across New South Wales.

Significantly, all of the 152 councils we approached agreed to participate in all, or part of, the scheme which sees councils take on a more defined role in inspections, investigating food complaints and responding to food-related emergencies.

The FRP will enable more effective deployment of the Authority's resources, allowing us to work more proactively with high-risk industries and tackle food issues that have a state-wide impact.

This is a fantastic achievement, which we hope will increase confidence in food safety across the community.

# The finalisation of the Food Regulation Partnership was a major milestone for the Authority this year.



## Working together with industry

Working closely with our industry partners helps the Authority maintain a consistent approach to food safety and to plan effectively for the future.

A key milestone during the year was the establishment of strategic business plans for the dairy, meat, poultry and egg, and seafood industries.

We worked proactively with the consultative committees from these sectors to create detailed plans which promote a more cohesive approach to decision making.

Our aim was to encourage these groups to prioritise their needs – strengthening their relationship with the Authority, government, their peers, the media and consumers.

Our relationship with industry continues to be a two-way street. We learn from each other and work together to improve food safety. This includes sharing valuable food safety information.

One of the ways we do this is through Food Safety Summits and conferences.

This year we held a series of summits on issues that have an impact on the wider community including egg safety and climate change in the dairy industry. The summit on egg safety was the first held in Australia and addressed increases in egg-related foodborne illness and how to manage it.

We also instigated and project managed the National Food Safety Conference in September 2007 and the Issues & Crisis Management in the Food Industry Conference in June 2008. The two-day 'Issues' conference focussed on how to prepare for, respond to, and recover from, a food-related crisis.

In the coming years we aim to work with industry and educators to address a shortage of trained staff in the food industry.

## Protecting the community

Protecting the community from foodborne illness and misleading labelling is a role the Authority takes very seriously.

We do this in part by ensuring that the 55,000 food businesses across New South Wales store and handle food correctly, comply with the *NSW Food Act 2003* and take corrective action when breaches are found.

A key milestone during the year was the establishment of strategic business plans for the dairy, meat, poultry and egg, and seafood industries.



Food businesses are regularly inspected (by the Authority and local councils) to ensure they are complying with regulations and adhering to standards. If a breach is found, the business is given time to correct it. If nothing is done, further action is taken.

This graduated and targeted approach to enforcement ensures that only serious offenders are prosecuted. The Authority is vigilant, but fair.

During 2007-08 prosecutions were down 17 percent (compared to the previous year), but the seriousness of the offences increased – attracting fines of more than \$183,000 in total. Significantly, our prosecution success rate remained at 100 percent.

It is important to note that of all food businesses in New South Wales less than 0.1 percent were prosecuted this year. Food businesses and industry are to be congratulated for this effort. It shows that the vast majority of them are doing the right thing and that our compliance and inspection program is working.

The Authority continues to monitor high-risk food groups through licensing and auditing, and takes action when breaches occur. During the year we conducted investigations into oyster farmers and raw milk manufacturers, resulting in penalty notices and some product seizures.

We also worked closely with the meat and poultry sectors, conducting regular audits and investigations. During the year we seized more than 14 tonnes of poultry from a processing facility which continued to operate after its licence was cancelled.

While prosecution levels remain extremely low, prosecution is always our last resort and our goal is to continue to reduce this through ongoing education and enforcement.



## Informing and educating consumers

Informing and educating consumers is a vital part of what we do.

Providing accurate and credible information on food safety in a timely way is a key step in helping to reduce foodborne illness. With the right information, consumers are able to make informed decisions about the food they eat and any threats it may pose.

We disseminate food safety information through a variety of communication channels including our website, brochures, newsletters, targeted education programs and regular media coverage.

A major milestone for us this year was the finalisation of the Name and Shame program.

The first of its type in Australia, it allows consumers to access information on our website about successful food prosecutions and penalty notices. It achieves a balance between the public's right to know and the rights of food businesses to their good reputation.

To make sure we got it right, we held a stakeholder forum (in August 2007) with consumers, industry and local government. We used the results of this forum, and other consultation programs, to develop the Name and Shame initiative which was passed by NSW Parliament in April 2008.



The Authority's aim is to be the primary information source on all issues of food safety. Judging by the 89 percent increase in visits to our website during the year, we have come a long way in achieving that.

We are confident the information and education programs we introduced this year will translate into increased consumer awareness of food safety.

## Taking a leadership role

The Authority has grown to become a credible national and international advisor on food safety matters.

This was further reinforced during 2007-08 by our involvement in more than 70 conferences and presentations in Australia and around the world.

We also shared knowledge with the organisers of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games and World Youth Day in Sydney.

In May 2008 I was a member of a world expert panel at the International Forum on Food Safety for World Expo 2010 Shanghai. The Forum helped set the ground rules for improved safety control and assurance systems in the lead up to the World Expo, which is expected to be attended by more than 70 million people.

Over the years, the Authority has been involved (directly or indirectly) as food safety advisors on major events such as the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games, the Rugby World Cup and APEC.

We intend to continue building on our international reputation and leading the way in food policy and food standards development.

The Authority has grown to become a credible national and international advisor on food safety matters.

## Realigning our structure

In addition to the milestone events which have left their stamp this year, 2007-08 was also the year that saw the Authority undergo a major realignment of our organisational structure.

We moved from what was essentially a 'siloed' environment to a balanced structure that more clearly links our roles and responsibilities with the NSW Government's State Plan.

With the support of staff, the unions and stakeholders, a better balanced branch structure emerged in which all existing functions were retained and no positions were lost. This gave us the opportunity to focus on addressing larger strategic goals and to improve communications with our stakeholders.

The resulting new branches are:

- Science and Policy
- Compliance, Investigation and Enforcement
- Communication and Corporate Resources.

This new structure will also allow us to enhance development opportunities for our staff.

The Authority is now well placed for the challenges we will face in the years to come.

The Authority would not have been able to achieve what we have this year without the tremendous efforts of our staff and partners.

Our partners include NSW Health, the NSW Department of Primary Industries, local councils, industry groups, the media and of course the ongoing support and encouragement of our Minister, The Hon. Ian Macdonald MLC.

Working together we are building a food safety system in New South Wales that is recognised internationally as innovative, forward thinking and collaborative.



**George Davey**  
Director-General

# Year in review 2007-08

## Foodborne Illness

- Continued to monitor and investigate food safety practices
- New sushi guidelines distributed
- National gastroenteritis survey begins

## Name and Shame

- Stakeholder consultation
- Legislation passed
- Website finalised

## Food Regulation Partnership

- Three year consultation process completed
- Legislation passed
- Council participation secured

## New Industry Business Plans

- Strategic plans established for dairy, meat, poultry & egg and seafood sectors

## Food Safety Schemes

- Work commenced on new Childcare Food Safety Scheme
- Work continued on new schemes for eggs and vulnerable population

## New Technologies

- New DNA fingerprinting tool trialled
- Temperature logging devices introduced

## Shellfish Program

- Tillerger Creek re-opened (after two years)
- Classification upgrades for six harvest areas
- 844 temporary harvest area closures and 816 re-openings

## Enforcement

- 100% success rate for prosecutions
- 118% increase in food seizures
- Covert operations conducted in dairy and shellfish industries

## Evaluation

Evaluations completed in three key sectors:

- Domestic red meat abattoirs
- Sprout growers
- Childcare

## Food Safety Summits

- Australia's first national Egg Safety Summit held
- Food Crisis Management conference
- Food Safety conference

## Communication

- Website visits up 89%
- 80%+ placement rate in media
- Inbound Helpline contact up 3%

## Leadership

- Proactive role in national forums
- 50+ presentations delivered
- Food safety advisors for World Youth Day and the 2008 Beijing Olympics

# About us

The NSW Food Authority is the government agency that works to ensure food sold in the state is safe and correctly labelled.

The Authority was established on 5 April 2004 by merging SafeFood NSW with the food regulatory activities of NSW Health.

We are Australia's first and only through-chain food regulatory agency, regulating and monitoring food safety across New South Wales – from primary production through to point-of-sale.

Responsible to the Minister for Primary Industries, the Authority offers a single point of contact on food safety for industry, local government and consumers.

## What we do

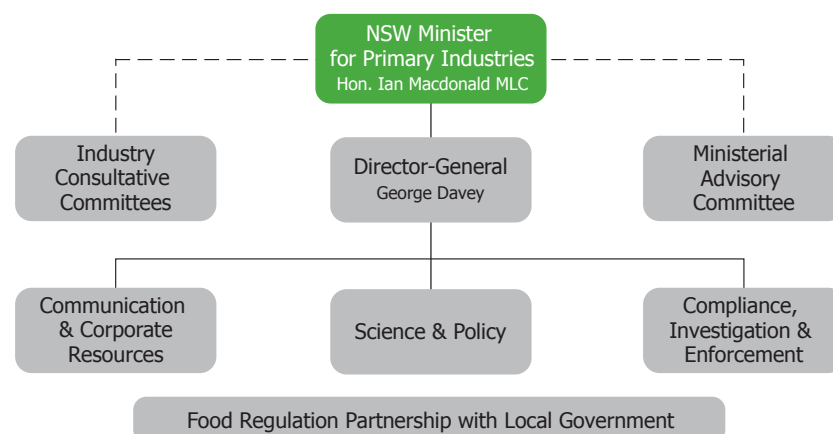
The Authority provides the regulatory framework for the food industry in New South Wales by administering and enforcing state and national food legislation.

This includes the national *Food Standards Code* and the *NSW Food Act 2003*, as well as a range of food safety schemes which regulate key industry sectors of the food industry.

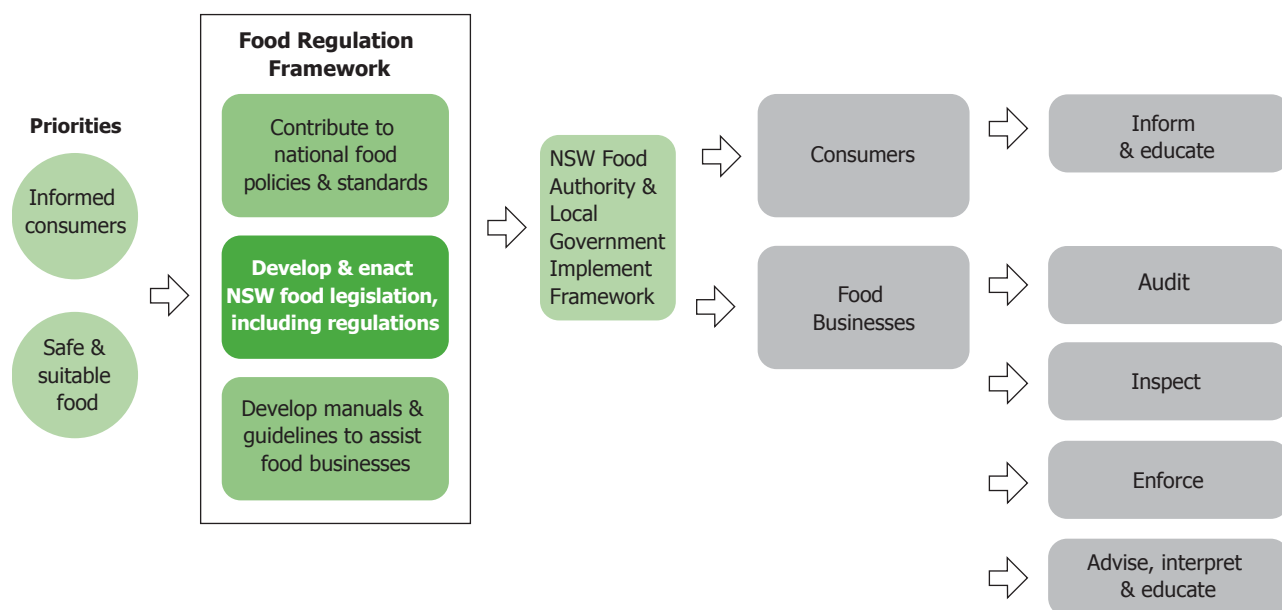
Our work includes:

- Licensing and auditing businesses subject to food safety schemes
- Inspecting other food premises for compliance with food safety standards
- Sampling and analysing foods for compliance with the *Food Standards Code*
- Monitoring labels for compliance with the *Food Standards Code*
- Penalising non-compliance (where necessary)
- Working closely with local government to ensure food safety in non-licensed premises
- Enhancing the scientific base underpinning food policy and regulation.

## OPERATING STRUCTURE



## THE NSW FOOD REGULATION FRAMEWORK



Our contribution to food safety includes:

- Contributing to the development and implementation of bi-national food policies
- Active involvement in applications and proposals to amend the *Food Standards Code*
- Establishing food safety schemes for high-risk foods and businesses through a process of risk prioritisation
- Educating consumers by providing information on good food handling practices and assistance in understanding food labels.

## Our partners

The Authority works closely with other government agencies and local councils.

This includes NSW Health, the NSW Department of Primary Industries, the NSW Department of Environment and Climate Change, the NSW Office of Fair Trading and 152 councils across the state.

We work with them to monitor food safety compliance, manage foodborne illness outbreaks, implement nutrition policy and participate in healthy food promotions.

At the local government level, we also administer and enforce aspects of the *NSW Food Act 2003* and the *Food Standards Code*.

Most significant during 2007-08 was the finalisation of the Food Regulation Partnership which sees councils across New South Wales working more closely with the Authority to monitor food safety compliance.



## Our management team



### **George Davey, Director-General**

*Bachelor of Science (Honours) & Master of Science in Food Technology  
Fellow, Australian Institute of Food Science and Technology*

As leader of the Authority, George reports directly to the NSW Minister for Primary Industries on all the Authority's activities. George has extensive research experience in public health food microbiology. He has contributed to more than 40 publications and has presented at more than 50 scientific and food policy conferences around the world. Prior to his role with the NSW Food Authority, George was Chief Executive Officer of SafeFood NSW and General Manager of the New South Wales Dairy Corporation.



### **Craig Sahlin, Deputy Director-General and Executive Director Science and Policy**

*Bachelor of Arts (Honours), LLB*

Craig leads the Science and Policy Branch, which is responsible for advising on strategic direction, undertaking risk assessment, policy development and coordinating changes to legislation. Before joining the public sector in 1990 Craig worked as a lawyer in the private and community sectors. As Deputy Director-General, Craig supports the Director-General in the day-to-day management of the Authority and relieves during absences and periods of leave.



### **Ed Kraa, Executive Director Compliance, Investigation and Enforcement (retired 06/05/08)**

*Associate Diploma in Health and Building Surveying*

Ed led the Compliance, Investigation and Enforcement Branch until his retirement in May 2008. An important role of this Branch is to ensure the safety and integrity of the NSW food supply by monitoring NSW food industry compliance with regulatory requirements. This includes enforcement of the *NSW Food Act 2003*, *Food Standards Code* and the *Food Regulation 2004*.



### **Christine Tumney, Acting Executive Director Compliance, Investigation and Enforcement (from 06/05/08)**

*Bachelor of Applied Science, Master of Science (Food Science),  
Grad Cert in Public Sector Management*

Christine assumed the role of Acting Executive Director Compliance, Investigation and Enforcement following Ed Kraa's retirement in May 2008. Her role involved food legislation development and the management of administrative decisions in relation to the *NSW Food Act 2003*. Christine has been with the Authority since its inception. Prior to that she worked for the agency's predecessors – SafeFood NSW and the Meat Industry Authority.



### **Peter Sutherland, Director, Industry Liaison and Business Planning**

*Bachelor of Science (Honours) Microbiology/Immunology*

In his role, Peter is responsible for engaging the Authority's key stakeholders within the food industry and government. He also directs and manages strategic and corporate planning activities. Peter has more than 25 years experience as a food microbiologist and has written for text books and presented papers both nationally and internationally.



### **Sian Malyn, Financial Controller**

*Bachelor of Business Accounting*

Sian is responsible for the Authority's Finance, Licensing, IT, Asset Management, Procurement and Legal functions. This includes managing the Authority's financial planning, operational and reporting activities, including those of its controlled entities, the Office of the NSW Food Authority and subsidiary companies. Her area is also responsible for issuing licences to approximately 13,000 primary production businesses in New South Wales.



### **Samara Kitchener, Director, Communications**

*Bachelor of Science Food Science and Technology (Honours) MBA*

Samara is responsible for the Authority's public affairs, consumer and industry communication functions and business systems. She was awarded the 2005 Public Relations Institute Golden Target Award for the Authority's Mercury in Fish campaign, and has worked as an advisor to WHO to help develop guidelines on risk communication as a tool for managing mercury in fish. Samara has also facilitated workshops in China and the Philippines on risk communication and food issues. Samara began her career as a field officer with the NSW Dairy Corporation.



### **Dr Lisa Szabo, Chief Scientist**

*Bachelor of Science (Honours) & Doctor of Philosophy (Microbiology)*

Lisa joined the Authority in 2006, providing leadership on the scientific aspects of our business and keeping the team up to date with national and international developments in food safety. She has published articles in peer reviewed international scientific journals, written book chapters, guest lectured at universities and supervised students during their doctoral studies. Prior to joining the Authority Lisa was a research scientist with the CSIRO.



From top left: Lisa Szabo, Samara Kitchener, Peter Sutherland, Christine Tumney, Sian Malyn, George Davey and Craig Sahlin.



## How we work

The way the Authority operates is guided by our Results and Services Plan (RSP) – a planning and budgeting tool which allows us to demonstrate the impact our services are having on society.

Our RSP focuses on our overall vision of reducing foodborne illness while meeting the key objectives of the NSW Government's State Plan – building healthier communities and a maintaining a stronger New South Wales economy. Our 2007-08 RSP (opposite) shows how our service groups link to these priorities.

The Authority uses the RSP as a decision-making and planning tool. It allows us to ensure resource allocation is aligned with organisational priorities that achieve results. It provides the rationale for what we do and why we do it.

### Realignment of our structure

Following an eight-month structural realignment process and review of our service groups, we streamlined our operations in August 2007 and reduced our seven service groups to just three.

These new groups are:

- Science, Standards and Communication
- Compliance, Investigation and Enforcement
- Internal Services.

#### *Science, Standards and Communication Service Group*

This group aims to deliver a sound and science-based food regulatory framework, working on the principle that food safety can only be delivered in partnership with industry and the community. To this end it includes an industry communication, consultation and training focus. It also includes a focus on delivering information and education to the community.

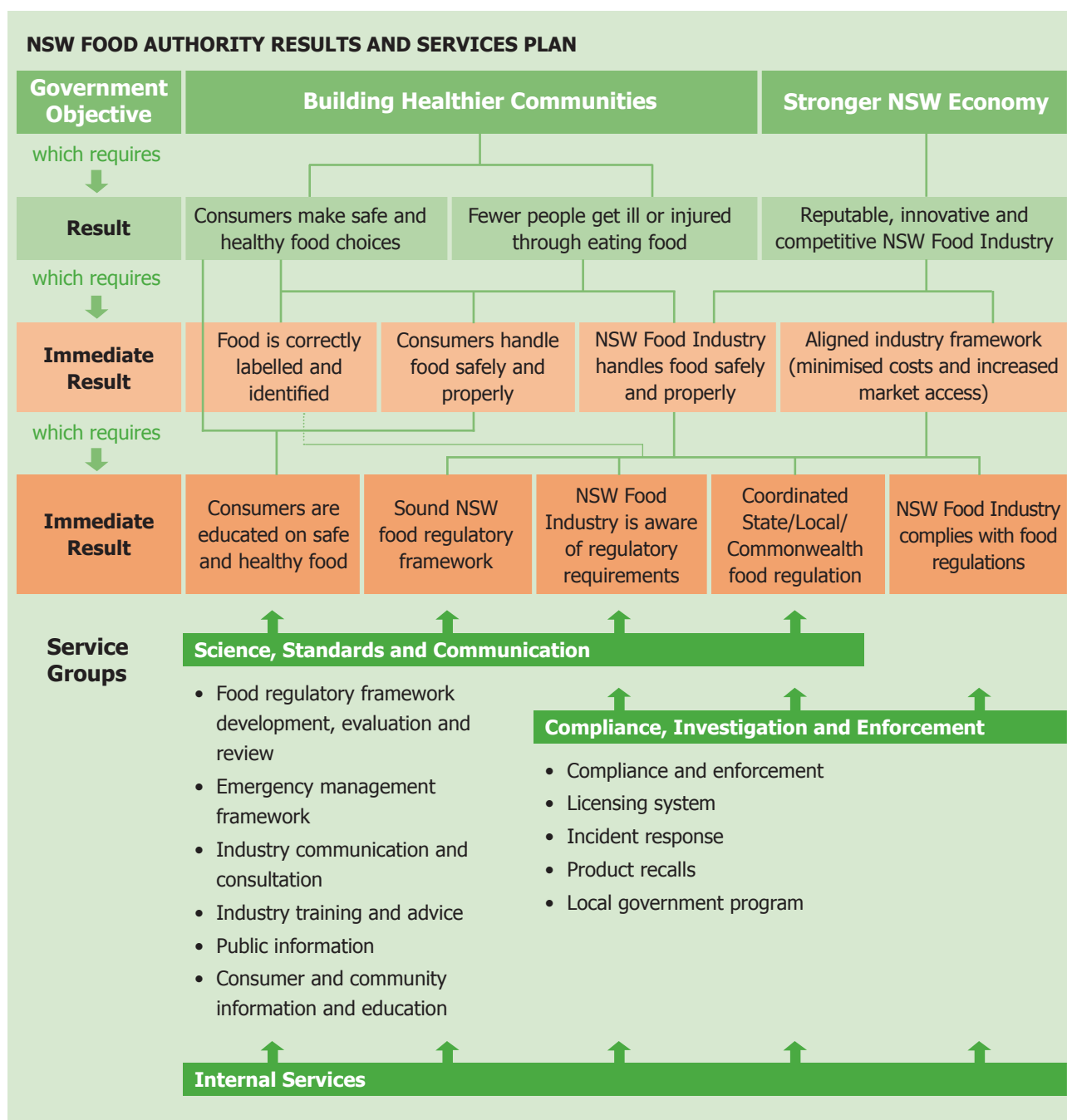
#### *Compliance, Investigation and Enforcement Service Group*

This group is about ensuring compliance with the regulatory framework. It includes a compliance and enforcement function, a licensing system for higher risk industries, and a local government program which aims to support local government in delivering a consistent compliance and enforcement program to non-licensed businesses. The service group also includes incident response and product recall programs for food safety incidents and non-complying products.

#### *Internal Services Group*

This group supports the delivery of all internal services. This includes the human resources, legal, information management and technology, administration, and financial and asset management programs.

The new group structure was the result of an RSP review process designed to align the Authority services better with the priorities of the NSW Government.







## Priorities and results

The Authority contributes to NSW State Government priorities in the following ways:

### 1. Building healthier communities

The Authority is responsible for ensuring that food for sale is safe, suitable for human consumption and correctly labelled. This responsibility directly relates to the government priority of building healthier communities in New South Wales. Other government departments, principally NSW Health, also contribute.

This priority aims at reducing foodborne illness and enabling consumers to make informed choices about the food they eat.

To achieve this, food must be correctly labelled and handled properly and safely – by both the food industry and consumers. For the food industry, this covers everything from manufacturing, producing, collecting, extracting and processing to storing, transporting, delivering, preparing, treating, preserving and packaging food. It also extends to cooking, thawing, serving and displaying of food. These processes are defined by the *Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code*, which is administered by the Authority in New South Wales.

Our Results and Services Plan shows four basic (lower-level intermediate) results which link to the Authority's food regulatory responsibilities. These results are that the regulatory framework is sound (ie it is science-based and practical); that industry is aware of the regulatory requirements; that industry complies; and that the Authority coordinates with other agencies which have food regulatory responsibilities.

The remaining (basic) result requires that consumers are educated on safe and healthy food. This links into foods being correctly labelled and identified, which ultimately results in consumers making informed food choices.

### 2. Maintaining a stronger New South Wales economy

In carrying out our food regulatory functions, the Authority aims to keep compliance costs for the food industry as low as possible and ensure that areas of duplication are identified and addressed. This supports the government priority of maintaining a stronger New South Wales economy.

Other elements which feed into this priority include cost rationalisation and industry consultation, which form an important part of all the services the Authority delivers. Together, these services help make the food industry safe, competitive and reputable (planned result).

Achieving this planned result requires the industry framework to be aligned with other requirements (eg export requirements) to minimise industry cost and increase market access for New South Wales produce.

Building healthier communities contributes to the Government's 'stronger NSW economy' priority because the annual cost of foodborne illness is substantial when measured in terms of lost productivity and medical costs.

## Strategic plan and corporate plan

The Authority also has a rolling three-year strategic plan and a corporate plan, each of which is linked to the RSP.

The Authority's strategic plan 2008-11 identifies eight high-level outcomes, which we seek to achieve by mid-2011, and twelve interim milestones, which should be reached by mid-2009. There are projects related to each milestone. The RSP explains what we do and the strategic plan explains where we are going.

The strategic plan is reviewed every 90 days by the executive, project leaders and a cross-section of other staff. Progress is assessed and new 90 day deliverables are set. The current strategic plan is set out on page 78. Its 'Outcomes' and 'Scorecard' link to the RSP 'Result Indicators and Service Measures'.

The corporate plan is also linked to the RSP and reports monthly on the Result Indicators and Service Measures within the Plan. The corporate plan also informs the executive on performance against targets set for the Authority's other day-to-day activities in achieving our corporate business objectives.

Our strategic plan is reviewed every 90 days by the executive, project leaders and a cross-section of other staff.



# 1





# Reducing foodborne illness

Foodborne illness occurs when four essential elements come together – a susceptible consumer, a hazard (eg a microorganism), a food that contains the hazard and an environment (eg temperature and storage duration) that transmits the hazard.

In Australia, around 21 billion meals are consumed each year. Of these, it is estimated that less than 0.02 percent result in foodborne illness.

Although this is low, it still equates to around 5.4 million individual cases of foodborne illness each year, 1.2 million visits to a doctor and 2.1 million days of lost work. This costs the Australian community more than \$1.2 billion each year, around \$350 million of that in New South Wales alone.

While no one can guarantee that all food will be free of hazards, by seeking improvements in the hygienic production and handling of food, it is possible to minimise the risk to consumers. Ultimately, this leads towards reducing foodborne illness, which is a key objective of the NSW Food Authority.

To deliver on our mission to provide 'safer food and clearer choices' for the community we must work proactively with our partners in local councils, other NSW Government agencies and industry bodies to reduce foodborne illness.

We do this by:

- investigating complaints and notifications of foodborne illness
- contributing to policy development
- conducting ongoing research
- monitoring food labelling practices
- ensuring the food industry handles food safely
- providing consumers with information to make informed choices and handle food safely.

During 2007-08 we made major advancements in policy, consumer and industry education and foodborne illness detection technology.

## CHECKLIST

- |  |
|--|
| ✓ Continued to monitor and investigate food safety practices |
| ✓ Identified and adopted new technologies                    |
| ✓ Strengthened regulations where required                    |
| ✓ Gathered valuable data through surveys and studies         |
| ✓ Evaluated the success of food safety programs              |
| ✓ Communicated with consumers and industry                   |

Foodborne illness costs NSW around \$350 million every year.





**In New South Wales** testing compliance is high and failures are low.

## Monitoring and investigating food safety practices

By constantly monitoring and evaluating the food industry, the Authority is able to assess potential threats and, where possible, take appropriate action before they become an issue.

We do this by working in partnership with other government agencies, local councils and peak industry bodies to investigate foodborne illness.

### *Investigation of foodborne illness complaints and notifications*

During 2007-08 the Authority received 550 complaints alleging individual cases of food poisoning. Another 358 were received from the community and NSW Health relating to outbreaks of disease involving two or more people. This represents a 10 percent decline in complaint numbers compared to the 2006-07 financial year.

A specialist unit exists within the Authority to investigate food poisoning complaints and notifications of disease. Known as the 'FBI Unit', it is responsible for monitoring foodborne illness trends and developments, coordinating and investigating outbreaks and recalls, and investigating and sampling all businesses along the food supply chain that may be implicated in an incident.

*Salmonella* continues to be the predominant organism of concern for outbreaks of disease in New South Wales. During 2007-08 several outbreaks from this pathogen were attributed to inappropriate use of eggs in foods by industry and consumers.

A key outcome of foodborne illness investigations is the identification of common problems occurring at local, state and national levels. Information obtained as a result of investigations contributes to new policy and standards development, and food safety education programs.

This year the information was used to strengthen food standards in the area of egg food safety, food service to vulnerable populations and in childcare facilities.

### *Vigilant monitoring of sensitive industries*

The Authority monitors compliance of food safety regulations amongst food businesses through ongoing inspections and audits. There are, however, some industries that require closer attention due to the potential risk of their food products causing foodborne illnesses after being consumed.

This includes high-risk food processors captured under the dairy, meat, seafood and plant products food safety schemes. These businesses are required to follow a detailed plan to control hazards – supported by pathogen testing on finished products.

The main pathogens tested for are:

- *Listeria monocytogenes*
- *Salmonella*
- *E.coli*
- Coagulase Positive Staphylococci.

Food businesses have 24 hours to advise the Authority of a failed pathogen test so that corrective action can be taken.

In New South Wales testing compliance is high and failures are low.

## Identifying and adopting new technologies

The Authority maintains a watching brief on new technologies that can assist with the early detection and management of potential foodborne illnesses.

During the year we identified several new technologies that have assisted in this area. These included the following:

### *MLVA fingerprinting tool*

The Authority, in partnership with NSW Health and the Institute of Clinical Pathology and Medical Research at Westmead Hospital, funded research to develop a routine system for the detection and identification of *Salmonella* clusters using a DNA-based fingerprinting tool – MLVA typing. The MLVA system was retrospectively tested on isolates associated with foodborne illness. It provided a higher success rate in determining a food vehicle/source than existing methods and improved outbreak resolutions. It will be further refined during actual outbreak investigations during 2008-09.

### *Temperature logging devices*

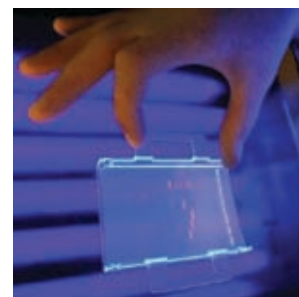
A foodborne outbreak or compliance issue can occur at any time. When it does, it is imperative that the integrity of the samples collected is maintained. This helps to preserve the evidence trail, add to the robustness of the analysis process, and preserve the accuracy of the investigation.

Keeping food samples at the appropriate temperature is a key factor in these investigations. To assist with this, the Authority invested this year in miniature temperature logging devices and new cold storage facilities. These initiatives enable the temperature history of a sample to be recorded from its place of origin until analysis or destruction.

### *Novel molecular tools for managing biotoxins*

The Authority partnered this year with the University of New South Wales, other government agencies and a private company on a three-year collaborative research project to improve biotoxin management in shellfish harvest areas. Paralytic shellfish poisoning (PSP) – caused by an algal biotoxin – is a food safety issue in Australia and around the world.

Limitations with the current test methodology have resulted in some false alarms leading to harvest area closures and unnecessary costs. This research aims to produce a fast, cost-effective and a reliable method of monitoring for biotoxins. This would assist in instilling public and industry confidence in the management of shellfish harvest areas in New South Wales and around Australia.



*MLVA typing – a DNA-based fingerprinting tool used to detect *Salmonella*.*



#### Surveys

10

#### Food samples analysed

5,000

#### Tests for microbial contaminants

7,600

#### Tests for chemicals

13,700

## Strengthening regulations where required

Each year the Authority undertakes policy development at both a state and national level. Our aim is to develop and strengthen regulation where it's most needed.

Part of this process involves the development of risk management programs, including regulatory Food Safety Schemes (FSS). These schemes are based on sound science and include practical requirements that can be implemented by industry without imposing undue costs.

In developing the FSS, the Authority engages the NSW food industry from grassroots to leadership level, ensuring that industry participants contribute their knowledge and are clear on their regulatory requirements.

During 2007-08 we began working on a new Food Safety Scheme for childcare, continued our work on schemes for Vulnerable Persons and Eggs and updated existing schemes for the shellfish and meat industries.

### *Egg Food Safety Scheme*

To address increases in egg related illness, the Authority continued work this year on the Egg Food Safety Scheme. This Scheme seeks to enhance traceability and emergency response programs for food safety and Avian Flu preparedness. It is expected to commence during 2008-09.

### *Vulnerable Persons Food Safety Scheme*

The NSW Vulnerable Persons Food Safety Scheme seeks to improve food safety controls in food businesses serving 'vulnerable' persons in aged care facilities, hospitals and delivered meals organisations. The Scheme is expected to commence in August 2008.

### *Childcare Food Safety Scheme*

Foodborne illness in New South Wales' childcare centres is estimated to cost many millions of dollars a year. During 2007-08 we began our development work on a Childcare Food Safety Scheme designed to improve food safety controls in this sector. It is expected to commence in 2008-09.

## Gathering valuable data through food testing and surveys

The Authority uses data we gather from tests, studies and surveys to help prevent the spread of foodborne illness and maintain general food safety.

We work closely with industry, local government and consumers to identify key food safety issues and put in place the processes required to manage them effectively.

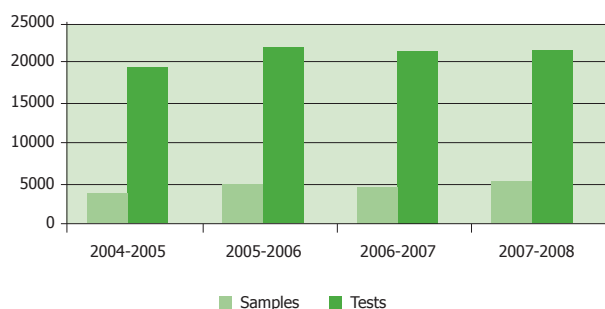
### *Food Testing*

The Authority contracts the Division of Analytical Laboratories (DAL) to undertake most of our food testing. DAL's food analysis also includes molecular biology testing, which identifies viruses, genetically modified ingredients in foods and certain bacteria.

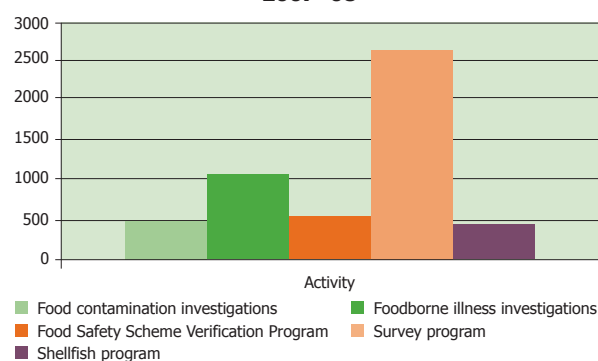
During 2007-08, DAL conducted around 7,600 tests on more than 2000 samples for microbial contamination. Approximately 13,700 tests were conducted on 3000 samples for chemical composition or contaminations. This was consistent with previous years (see Annual Laboratory Utilisation graph).

Laboratory testing also supports foodborne outbreak investigations, general compliance checks and shellfish testing.

## ANNUAL LABORATORY UTILISATION



## FOOD SAMPLES TESTED BY THE NSW FOOD AUTHORITY 2007-08



## Environmental Monitoring

We work closely with shellfish farmers and water managers, including local councils, to monitor the 76 shellfish harvest areas in New South Wales, which all have the potential to be affected by polluted water. Poor water quality can especially affect the food safety of filter-feeding shellfish such as oysters and mussels.

A major milestone during 2007-08 was the re-opening of Tiller Creek at Port Stephens for commercial shellfish farming. It had been closed since June 2005 due to persistent pollution from septic tank spills and agricultural run-off.

The re-opening (in December 2008) was possible following successful remediation by a State Government Task Force. The Authority's role was to develop and implement a management plan for the area.

## Surveys

Most monitoring and surveillance conducted by the Authority occurs via a survey program that targets high-risk foods.

This included:

- Assessing the microbiological quality and safety of ready-to-eat foods such as sushi, kebabs, and certain bakery products (eg Vietnamese rolls, custard products and cheesecakes).
- The detection of naturally occurring chemical compounds (such as cyanogenic glycosides) in cassava-based crackers.
- The presence of gluten in foods labelled gluten free.

Surveys of these issues were conducted in close liaison with industry throughout the year.

Some notable outcomes of our efforts during 2007-08 included:

- The results of the ready-to-eat food surveys being used to focus industry education and training on safe handling and preparation practices of perishable and high-risk foods.
- The results of the gluten survey (which showed a high level of compliance in gluten content labelling) being used to provide sufferers of coeliac disease (gluten intolerance) with added confidence when selecting their food.
- The discovery of elevated levels of naturally occurring chemical compounds in cassava-based crackers highlighted a potential public health issue and triggered the development of a proposed national food standard.

## National Gastroenteritis Survey

In February 2008, work began on a national gastroenteritis survey – designed to estimate the prevalence of the disease in Australia by state/territory, socio-economic group and age. This survey included estimates on how gastroenteritis is attributable to food. Survey outcomes will provide a 2008 snapshot baseline of foodborne illness in Australia, which can be compared to a study conducted in 2001.

The survey will show if levels of foodborne illness have shifted (up or down), and identify the most frequent causes of illness. This data will assist the Authority to focus on improving the hygienic production and handling of food where it is most required.



## Evaluating the success of food safety programs

To assist in measuring trends and improving the effectiveness of food safety regulations at an industry-wide level, the Authority developed the Program Evaluation Framework (PEF).

The PEF operates independently of our routine inspection and audit activities. It determines whether a particular sector of the food industry is handling food safely and minimising food safety risks – as intended by its regulatory program. If it isn't, it is part of the Authority's role to find out why.

PEF results help us to fine tune regulatory requirements, develop programs that assist industry in improving their performance and, ultimately, help to reduce foodborne illness.

During the year we completed important evaluations in the following three sectors.

### *Domestic red meat abattoirs*

Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) requirements for red meat abattoirs were first introduced more than ten years ago. It was therefore seen as timely to conduct an industry-wide evaluation. This involved collecting food safety standard data and microbiological carcase samples from all 16 domestic abattoirs in New South Wales. In January 2008, we provided each abattoir with a detailed report on our findings showing that abattoirs are, in general, managing food safety well. Opportunities for system enhancements were also noted.

### *Sprout growers*

In 2007, the Authority updated the Food Safety Program for sprout growers (mandatory since 2005). This had a positive impact on food safety, as evidenced by a snapshot survey of 122 sprout samples – tested for microbiological indicators of food safety and hygiene over a three-month period. Unlike previous surveys, no faecal contamination was found. The survey results will be reported to sprout growers later in 2008.

### *Childcare*

In April 2008, the Authority completed a preliminary evaluation study on food safety handling practices in childcare centres in New South Wales. Information from the survey will help us determine how best to improve food safety controls in this sector. In March 2008, 2,484 NSW childcare centres were contacted and asked to complete the survey. Just over 700 centres responded. The Authority will report the findings to participants during the latter part of 2008.

Evaluation programs help us to fine tune regulatory requirements and, ultimately, reduce foodborne illness.



## Communicating with consumers and industry

People who handle food have a big role to play in reducing foodborne illness.

Sharing information with consumers and food handlers can be very effective, especially when trends are identified, or specific illnesses are affecting certain target populations.

This information is exchanged through regular industry meetings, communication vehicles (such as websites, newsletters and promotions), market research and consumer awareness programs. This process allows the Authority to plan, strategise and implement food safety policies and programs that are relevant and make a real impact.

Our communication with consumers and industry is ongoing and during 2007-08 resulted in the development of a range of new food safety initiatives.

*For more information see Section 3: Working with industry and Section 5: Informing and educating consumers.*



### New sushi guidelines improve food safety

Sushi is a potentially hazardous food that must be properly stored and refrigerated.

Keeping it for long periods at lower temperatures can, however, impact the quality of the rice used in sushi products.

During 2007, the Authority received numerous requests from food businesses asking permission to display sushi at higher temperatures. Our challenge was to provide appropriate guidance while not impacting on the safety of the food.

Using research data and the results of a survey amongst businesses selling sushi, the Authority introduced new guidelines in July 2007.

Food businesses are now permitted to display their sushi products unrefrigerated for up to four hours as long as they document the process.

The new sushi guidelines were part of an overall update of Food Safety Guidelines for all food businesses in 2007.





2



# Developing new partnerships with local government

The NSW Food Authority enjoys a close relationship with local government.

Councils help us to monitor food safety in more than 55,000 businesses across the state.

In the past, however, their role as food regulators has been voluntary with no formal reporting mechanisms to the Authority.

This changed in 2007-08 with the finalisation of the Food Regulation Partnership (FRP).

As a result of new legislation, councils now have a more defined role as food regulators with a requirement to report to the Authority on a regular basis. This information provides us with a better overview of food safety in the state and ensures more efficient inspections and compliance.

Of the 152 councils approached to participate in the FRP, 151 agreed to take part at a major level. This outcome exceeded our forecast and was the result of three years of consultation between the Authority and local government.

This consultation model has set the benchmark for similar programs nationally and has helped the Authority realise our vision of through-chain regulation throughout New South Wales.

## CHECKLIST

- |   |
|---|
| ✓ New food legislation passed           |
| ✓ Food Regulation Partnership finalised |
| ✓ Council participation in FRP secured  |
|   |

The FRP is one of the most significant pieces of legislation in food regulation for 100 years.





## New food legislation passed

The Food Regulation Partnership (FRP) operates under the *NSW Food Act 2003* (amended by the *Food Amendment Act 2007* and proclaimed on 1 January 2008). It is one of the most significant pieces of legislation in food regulation in 100 years.

The Authority was responsible for drafting the amendments to the Act and working closely with local government to ensure they understood their new role and were happy to work within the proposed guidelines.

As a result, each of the 152 councils in New South Wales now has a defined role as a food safety enforcement agency.

The new legislation provides a mechanism whereby councils can recover costs from retail food shops and food services that are inspected. It also allows the Authority to recover the full costs for inspecting manufacturing and wholesale businesses.



## Food Regulation Partnership finalised

The implementation of the FRP was finalised on 30 June, 2008.

Councils now work more closely with the Authority across New South Wales to monitor food safety compliance and issues.

The introduction of the FRP will mean faster and more efficient response times in food emergencies and improvements in food safety. It will also enable the more effective deployment of the Authority's resources to focus, more proactively, on priorities such as analysing foodborne illness trends and planning for food safety in the future.

The FRP is the culmination of three years work by the Authority, which included intensive liaison with councils and other key stakeholders including:

- Local Government and Shires Associations of NSW
- Australian Institute of Environmental Health (NSW Division)
- Development and Environmental Professionals Association
- Local Government Managers Australia (NSW Division)
- NSW Department of Local Government
- NSW Health.

The FRP will clarify and strengthen the respective roles of the NSW Food Authority and local councils as together we continue to ensure the safety and suitability of food for sale in NSW.



In preparing for the FRP, the Authority formulated protocols and guidelines on what councils would need to do to fulfil their new food regulation duties.

These were further refined following regular meetings and communication with key local government personnel.

This consultative approach helped to create a true working 'partnership' between the Authority and local government.

Our role in the establishment of the FRP was multi-faceted and involved an extensive consultation, communication, networking and training program.

### *Consultation and Support*

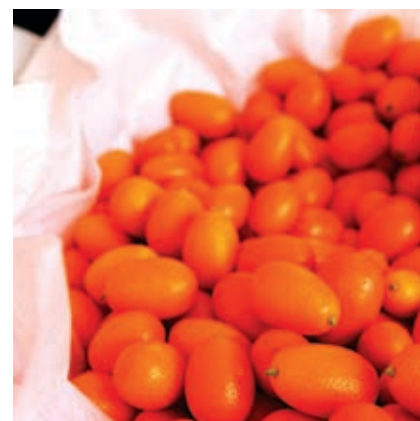
Consulting with and supporting local government was the cornerstone of our approach to establishing the framework for the FRP. Activities in 2007-08 included:

- Regular meetings (51 in total) with 15 regional food groups across New South Wales – providing feedback and input into the partnership. Attendance: 500+.
- Providing 24/7 technical support – assisting in the interpretation of regulations and advising on other technical areas. We responded to 360 requests.
- Holding three meetings of the State Liaison Group – producing input on operational protocols, advisory guidelines and new Environmental Health Officer training.
- Assisting in the formation of a number of regional alliances between Councils – to share food inspection resources within their area.
- Holding three FRP Steering Committee meetings – deliberating on draft legislation, guidelines and operational procedures.
- Establishing a special project grants program – to promote best practices in food surveillance work.
- Forming a partnership with the University of Western Sydney – to establish an Environmental Health Officers' scholarship program.

### *Communication and Networking*

Maintaining dialogue with stakeholders was vital during the preparatory phase of the FRP. To do this a strategic communications plan was created and included the following activities in 2007-08:

- Preparing and distributing more than 200 information packs – explaining the changes to the *NSW Food Act 2003* and councils' new responsibilities.
- Communicating regularly with council officers involved in food inspection or regulation – via email or SMS.
- Starting development work on a dedicated website portal for Council officers.
- Preparing and distributing 12 Food Safety News (monthly) newsletters.
- Developing FRP branding and livery – to establish a consistent look and feel.
- Participation in several conferences – including the Annual Conference of the Local Government and Shires Associations of NSW (Coffs Harbour), two conferences for the Australian Institute of Environmental Health (Brisbane and Culcairn) and an EHO Workforce Shortage Masterclass at the Australian Food Safety Conference in Sydney.
- Sponsoring a session at the Annual Conference of Local Government Managers of Australia in Sydney.



We have been critical in the past of the way the Food Authority has gone about categorising councils for the future food surveillance roles. We originally thought they mishandled the introduction of the Food Regulation Partnership (FRP). Our complaint was that without considerable encouragement from the Authority itself, far too many councils would decide to opt out of food surveillance entirely. But now, we think they've done a great job. Over the past three years, the Food Authority has consulted through the FRP with local government. Councils have now overwhelmingly opted to continue inspecting food premises."

**Development and Environmental Professionals Association (DEPA)**



## The benefits of the FRP

- Raises the profile of food regulation in councils
- Improves the consistency of food regulation across NSW
- Increases councils' involvement in food regulation
- Benefits the community through improved food safety in the retail sector

## Training

To support the new FRP, the Authority developed a detailed training program for council officers.

Our aim was to advance the professional development of Environmental Health Officers to ensure they had the right skills once the FRP began operating. Activities for 2007-08 included:

- Seven training workshops in five locations – using the newly formed 'New EHO Network' platform. Topics included: temperature control, critical food handling practices and basic enforcement. Total attendance: 110+.
- More than 50 food safety campaign training workshops. Topics included: handwashing, consistency in *NSW Food Act 2003* enforcement and improvement notices and prohibition orders. Total attendance: 500+.

## Council participation in FRP secured

In 2005, the Authority commenced negotiations with local government to make significant changes to the *NSW Food Act 2003*, designed to enhance food regulation services in New South Wales.

The outcome of these negotiations was the development of a model for the FRP. This model was approved, and received the necessary funding from the NSW Government for legislative changes to be made. The implementation of the FRP was finalised on 30 June 2008.

A critical aspect of the new legislation was the mandatory requirement for participation by councils in food regulation in New South Wales and a mechanism for councils to recover costs for these services from food businesses.

Councils were given a choice of three levels of participation - dependent on their capacity and resources.

These were:

### Category A

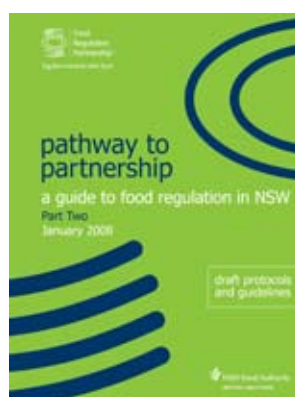
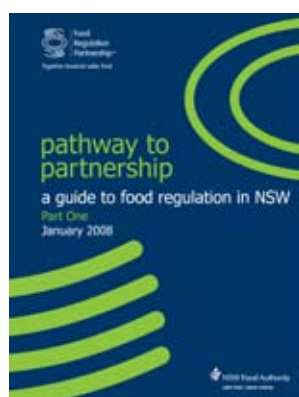
Emergency response and recalls only.

### Category B

All of category A plus routine inspections, food complaint investigations and enforcement of regulations.

### Category C

All of categories A&B plus inspections of food manufacturers and wholesalers (in consultation with the Authority).



To determine the likely response for participation, the Authority conducted a survey in June 2007. It indicated that 94 percent of respondents would be prepared to participate in Category B (taking on a routine inspection role).

As a result of ongoing consultation, this figure rose to 99.35 percent by the time the FRP was finalised on 30 June 2008 with 151 councils agreeing to a routine inspection role (Category B).

Category	Participation
A	152 councils
B	151 councils
C	2 councils

*The Department of the Environment and Climate Change  
(managers of the Kosciuszko National Park local government area)  
has elected to participate in all categories.*

Of the 152 councils approached to participate in the FRP, 151 agreed to undertake a major role – testimony to the strong relationship developed over the past three years between the Authority and local government.





# 3





# Working with industry

Working with industry is a vital part of how the Authority achieves its goal of reducing foodborne illness in New South Wales.

The ongoing relationships we enjoy with primary producers, manufacturers, processors, wholesalers, distributors and food businesses help us to maintain a consistent approach to food safety and plan effectively for the future.

The Authority produces information for the food industry to explain policy, food safety and enforcement requirements. We also help with other aspects of business such as image building and government and media relations.

During 2007-08 we maintained our relationships through ongoing communication, participation on industry consultative committees, training and technical advice.

Key activities during the year included the establishment of new strategic business plans for industry consultative committees, key industry stakeholder meetings, quarterly newsletters for all licensees, ongoing work with the shellfish industry and organising key food safety summits for the food industry.

## CHECKLIST

- ✓ New business plans for industry established
- ✓ Organising key food safety summits for the food industry
- ✓ Ongoing management of the NSW Shellfish Program
- ✓ Industry communication ramped up

Our relationship with industry is a two way street. We learn from each other and work together to improve food safety.





“The Authority is an integral component of the egg industry’s national food safety system assisting to guide policy settings, program enforcement, customer education and government communication and coordination.”

**James Kellaway, Managing Director, Australian Egg Corporation Limited**

## New business plans for industry established

The Authority works closely with all the key food industry groups in New South Wales, helping them to communicate regulatory requirements to their members and maintain food safety standards.

We also provide industry groups with the skills and means to liaise directly with the State Government and Minister as single representative bodies, to discuss issues that directly affect their industry.

A key focus during 2007-08 was the establishment of strategic business plans for four key industry consultative committees:

- NSW Dairy Industry Conference
- NSW Meat Industry Consultative Council
- Poultry and Egg Industries Committee
- NSW Seafood Industry Conference

The Authority worked proactively with these groups to create detailed business plans, which encourage a more cohesive approach to industry decision-making. These plans also help strengthen relationships with the Authority, government, their industry peers, the media and consumers.

Strategies and tools varied between organisations, but plans typically covered:

- communication (with members, government, consumers and the media)
- liaising with government
- identifying priority research needs for each industry sector
- developing a consumer responsive culture
- enforcing food standards
- developing an export culture
- engaging with the national food standards-setting process.

Work also began this year establishing consultative group structures for new industry groups representing vulnerable people (eg aged care facilities, hospices and hospitals), plant products (eg fresh cut produce, vegetables in oil and fresh juices) and children’s services (eg childcare facilities).

## Organising key food safety summits for the food industry

Sharing food safety information with industry is another way the Authority helps to reduce foodborne illness.

Each year we organise forums, summits and study groups to discuss topical food safety issues that have had, or may have, an impact on the wider community.

This year we covered a wide range of topics including egg safety risk management and the impact of climate change in the dairy industry.

### Food Safety Summits 2007-08

- National Egg Safety Summit – August 2007
- National Food Safety Conference – September 2007
- Fresh Cut Melons Meeting – November 2007

- Dairy Industry Climate Change Forum – June 2008
- NSW Dairy Industry Conference UK Dairy Industry Study Tour – June 2008
- Issues & Crisis Management in the Food Industry Conference – June 2008

## Ongoing management of the NSW Shellfish Program

Shellfish is a high-risk food group susceptible to contamination through poor water quality.

There are 76 shellfish harvest areas in New South Wales, all with the potential to be impacted by polluted water. Poor water quality can affect the food safety of filter-feeding shellfish such as oysters and mussels.

To help maintain food safety in this industry, the Authority manages the NSW Shellfish Program which classifies shellfish harvest areas based on potential pollution sources and water quality that may impact these areas.

During 2007-08, we worked closely with the industry to strengthen relationships and ensure they were continuing to benefit from the Shellfish Program.

A significant advancement was the regionalisation of the program team into two offices – one in Taree (covering Tweed Heads to Brisbane Waters) and one in Sydney (covering Patonga Creek to Wonboyn Lake).

This has helped bring our staff closer to regional shellfish farmers, strengthened the role of our local coordinators, improved our estuary knowledge and made our support services more accessible.

Other significant Shellfish Program activities during the year included:

- The classification\* upgrades of six harvest areas (two from prohibited to restricted and four from restricted to approved).
- The development and management of four, full-day Coordinator workshops and a series of sampling and depuration training courses (held on request).

SHELLFISH HARVEST AREAS IN NSW (TOTAL 76 – AS AT 30 JUNE 2008)		
APPROVED [24]	RESTRICTED [49]	PROHIBITED [3]
Harvesting and direct sale is permitted	Harvesting is restricted to certain times with depuration	Harvesting is not permitted at any time
<b>Reason</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highly predictable water quality that meets the approved standards.</li> <li>• No poisonous substance that exceeds safety standards has been detected.</li> </ul>	<b>Reason</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The area does not consistently meet the approved criteria.</li> <li>• Depuration or relay is required prior to sale.</li> <li>• The area is subject to a limited degree of pollution.</li> <li>• The level of pollution in the area is moderate and shellfish can be made fit for human consumption by relay or depuration.</li> </ul>	<b>Reason</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The area is contaminated with faecal wastes exceeding restricted criteria or poisonous substances.</li> <li>• The area is adjacent to a sewerage outfall.</li> <li>• Pollution sources in the area are unpredictable.</li> </ul>

\* Classification of shellfish harvest areas can take up to three years, with areas classified as either Approved, Restricted or Prohibited.

“The NSW Food Authority’s role in ensuring that the product reaches the consumer in a safe condition should not be underestimated. The constant monitoring and surveillance of all links in the red meat food chain is absolutely vital to the financial well being of the industry as well as the health of the general populace.”

**John Warre, Livestock Producers’ Representative, NSW Farmers Association**


**Workshops  
conducted**
**35**
**Foodwise  
newsletters**
**4**
**Fact sheets**
**15**
**Conferences**
**8**

- Coordinating and attending four meetings of the NSW Shellfish Committee (to address important technical issues) and three meetings of the Peak Oyster Advisory Group (POAG) – the key oyster industry consultative body for NSW.
- Facilitating relationships between Shellfish Program participants, State Government departments (such as the Department of Environment and Climate Change and Department of Primary Industries), other state-funded agencies and initiatives (such as Catchment Management Authorities and Tide to Table initiatives) and local councils.

## Industry communication ramped up

The Authority communicates with industry in a variety of ways – through regular meetings, fact sheets, newsletters (printed and electronic), training programs, conferences, sponsorships and our website. We also prepare written submissions, program documents and manuals for key industry sectors.

This year was one of the most prolific to date, with participation in a record number of conferences and training programs. A large number of direct communication materials (newsletters, fact sheets etc) were distributed electronically and in printed form.

### Information publications

- Fact sheets – featuring a new look and clearer layout. Topics included: Food Safety for Caterers, Egg Food Safety, Suitability of Chemicals in Food Businesses and Seafood Substitution in Restaurants and Takeaways.
- *Foodwise* newsletter – featuring a new look (four issues printed and distributed in hard copy or electronically to all NSW licensees, and by email to other interested parties).
- Guidelines for Seafood Retailers – foreign language version (Vietnamese and Chinese).

### Submissions

The Authority assists industry with submissions on food regulation and food standards reviews that are undertaken both nationally and internationally. Examples during 2007-08 included:

- Food Standards Code – presented submissions for changes to *Food Standards Code* provisions in Australia and New Zealand.
- AQIS Bio-security and Quarantine Review – presented a submission focussing on the food regulatory system and export certification following the Equine Influenza outbreak of 2007.
- Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport – presented a submission focussing on lamb branding and regulatory controls in NSW following investigations into lamb substitution by abattoirs and interstate suppliers.

## Issues & Crisis Management in the Food Industry Conference Sydney, 3-5 June 2008

The Authority instigated and project managed this two-day conference which featured more than 30 speakers (including nine international experts) and three masterclasses on issues and crisis management in the food industry. Attended by more than 200 people, the conference focussed on how to prepare for, respond to, and recover from, a crisis. The event helped reinforce the Authority's role as an industry influencer and educator.

### Program documents and manuals

- Food Regulation for Local Government Part 1 & 2
- NSW Meat Manual
- Shellfish Program Media Guide for Coordinators Handbook 2007
- Vulnerable Persons Food Safety Scheme Manual.

In addition, revisions were made to nine existing documents and manuals including the NSW Dairy Manual, Food Safety Program for Farmed Oysters and the Plant Products Safety Manual.

### Sponsorships

- NSW State Council of Rural Lands Protection Boards Annual Conferences – held in Bathurst in July 2007 and Coffs Harbour in June 2008
- Dairy Research Foundation (University of Sydney)
- Wine, Dairy and Fine Food Show (Royal Agricultural Society of NSW).



## Australia's first Egg Safety Summit

**Sydney, 22 August 2007**

More than 3.5 billion eggs are sold in Australia each year. Eating eggs might make you sick if they are not handled, stored or cooked correctly.

Between January 2001 and April 2007 there were 75 egg related outbreaks of foodborne illness. Of the 1,222 individuals involved, 361 were hospitalised and three died. In January and February 2008, thirty cases of egg-borne *salmonellosis* were reported.



To address concerns around this growing issue, Australia's first National Egg Safety Summit was held. Convened by the Authority, the event attracted more than 100 delegates, including industry leaders and representatives of regulators from every state.

The objective of the summit was to identify egg-related foodborne illness in Australia and to map possible industry and government solutions to address the issue. Discussion focused on cracked and dirty eggs, cross contamination, inadequate traceability and increased use of unpasteurised raw eggs in restaurants, bakeries and homes.

Information shared at the summit was circulated to all participants and has been used to advise on future regulatory approaches to egg food safety and industry education.

This year we participated in a record number of conferences and training programs.





# 4





# Protecting the community

As Australia's first integrated or 'through-food-chain' regulatory agency, the NSW Food Authority is responsible for food safety across all levels of the industry – from primary production to point-of-sale.

To maintain food safety and protect the community, the Authority must enforce the requirements of the *NSW Food Act 2003* to prevent misleading or unhealthy conduct in connection with the sale of food.

This is an important part of the Authority's overall objective of reducing foodborne illness in New South Wales.

Our responsibility in enforcing food safety compliance includes the following key activities:

- Applying the food standards code, including labelling and advertising compliance
- Inspecting food premises, vehicles and equipment used for the handling of food
- Auditing and verifying statutory food safety programs.

In 2007-08, we saw across the board improvements in compliance with fewer public complaints and a 17 percent drop in prosecutions (down from 70 to 58). The seriousness of offences increased however, attracting fines of \$183,059 – up from \$138,950 last year. Our prosecution success rate remained at 100 percent.

During the year we inspected 2,454 food businesses, conducted 5,956 audits, seized almost 19 tonnes of non-compliant food and issued 1,245 improvement notices. We also responded to a number of foodborne emergencies including a *Salmonella* outbreak, which was quickly resolved.

In 2007-08 we saw across the board improvements in compliance with fewer public complaints and a 17% drop in prosecutions.

## CHECKLIST

- |  |
|--|
| ✓ Monitored foodborne illness              |
| ✓ Maintained vigilant enforcement programs |
| ✓ Prosecuted breaches of the Food Act      |
| ✓ Conducted regular food industry audits   |
| ✓ Seized non-compliant food products       |



## Monitoring foodborne illness

The Authority works closely with NSW Health to investigate outbreaks of foodborne illness.

NSW Health conducts epidemiological investigations of potential food sources, while the Authority conducts the environmental investigations – inspecting food premises and collecting and testing samples.

During 2007-08, the Authority received 550 complaints alleging individual cases of food poisoning. Another 358 were received from the community and NSW Health relating to outbreaks of disease involving two or more people. This represents a 10 percent decline in complaint numbers compared to the 2006-07 financial year.

### *Salmonella Outbreak*

*Salmonella* continued to be the predominant organism of concern for foodborne illness in NSW in 2007-08, particularly its association with eggs.

Several outbreaks during the year were attributed to products containing raw or undercooked eggs.

In January and February 2008, 30 cases of *Salmonella Typhimurium* 126 were reported to NSW Health, all originating from the NSW Central Coast.

Investigations by the Authority established that all eggs came from the same supplier. Corrective action was taken and the problem was resolved quickly.

### *Control of Listeria in Meat*

In June 2008, the Authority issued a circular to all New South Wales meat processors and retail meat premises about new requirements for the control of *Listeria Monocytogenes* in ready-to-eat meat (via microbial swabbing). We began working with the industry on a series of workshops to help businesses implement these new requirements.

Some foodborne illness is inevitable, but the Authority continues to make major inroads into limiting its impact – through the use of advanced technology, improved education and ongoing monitoring.

The Authority works closely  
with NSW Health to investigate  
outbreaks of foodborne illness.



## Maintaining vigilant enforcement programs

A key part of the Authority's role is developing and administering food safety enforcement programs that help us identify businesses that are not following regulations.

This is particularly important in high-risk food groups such as seafood and dairy, especially oysters and raw milk. Correct packaging and labelling of food is also important.

### Oysters

The harvesting and opening of oysters is a high-risk process. This risk is managed by the licensing and auditing of these businesses.

The Authority also controls and monitors areas where oysters are harvested, restricting harvesting to times when water quality is suitable. Our technology allows harvested oysters to be traced from the time and place of harvest to the retailer.

Oysters that are not properly harvested, opened or labelled pose a food safety risk to consumers. Foodborne illness caused by illegal oysters can also have serious economic implications for the shellfish industry.

Early in 2008, the Authority's enforcement unit coordinated an intensive audit and investigation of oyster harvesters and openers to verify their compliance with harvesting, record keeping and labelling requirements.

The investigation included 28 oyster leases along the east coast of New South Wales. Appropriate enforcement action was taken and included Warning letters (1), Improvement Notices (6) and Penalty Notices (4).

### Raw milk

Un-pasteurised milk and milk products have the potential to cause foodborne illness. In New South Wales, all milk and milk products must be pasteurised if sold for human consumption.

During 2007-08, the Authority conducted a covert investigation of a food business involved in the manufacture and sale of un-pasteurised milk, yoghurt, whey, ricotta and cottage cheese products.

During this investigation, we seized 80 litres of milk, six litres of yoghurt and 2.5kg of butter after they were sold to undercover enforcement officers.

### Packaging and labelling

Packaging is also an area that requires vigilant monitoring – to ensure manufacturers label food correctly. This is particularly important when 'health claims' are made on food products.

Health claims are statements appearing on the packaging or in advertising of food that:

- implies the food can heal or prevent disease
- uses the word 'health' in conjunction with the name of the food
- is advice of a 'medical' nature
- mentions a disease or a physiological condition.

Currently, only foods containing folate are permitted to make health claims.

During 2007-08, the Authority's enforcement unit completed a review of health claims on food packaging across a variety of industries. The data collected will be used to improve enforcement strategies and encourage food businesses to consider compliance an 'everyday' part of their business activity.



**An oyster farmer from Port Macquarie** received a record fine of \$42,000 in June 2008 after more than 8,000 unsafe oysters were seized from a retailer at the Sydney Fish Market. He was charged by the Authority for harvesting oysters from the Hastings River while all harvest zones in the area were closed due to rainfall (between 28 February and 3 March 2006).



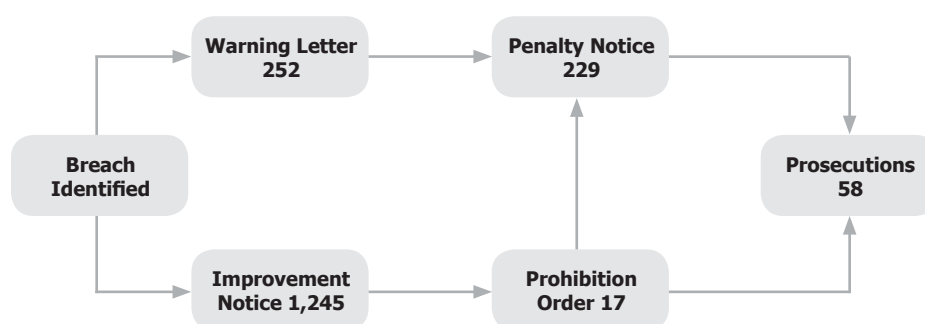
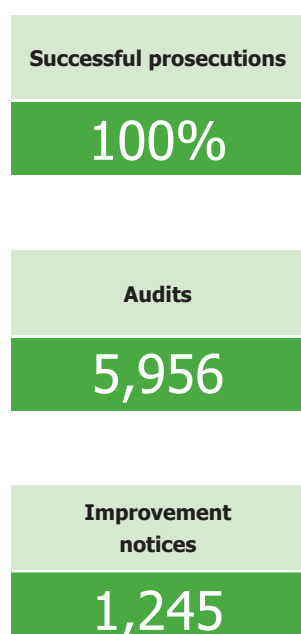
## Prosecuting breaches of the Food Act

The Authority is responsible for investigating breaches of the *NSW Food Act 2003*. Our trained officers routinely undertake investigations of food businesses that sometimes result in enforcement action and prosecution through the courts.

The application of these enforcement strategies ensures that food is safe and correctly labelled, allowing consumers to make informed choices when they buy it.

During 2007-08, we pursued seven prosecutions (for 58 offences) in the Local Court. All were successful and total fines of \$183,059 were imposed.

High profile offenders included a chain of Sydney poultry shops (for selling mince meat containing a sulphur dioxide preservative) and an oyster farmer (for harvesting oysters in an area that had been closed for harvest).



*The Authority uses a graduated enforcement approach when taking corrective action with food businesses. In most cases, offenders correct their mistake on receiving an improvement notice thereby avoiding further action. Of the 1,245 improvement notices issued in 2007-08, only 17 prohibition orders were issued, representing a 97 percent compliance rate.*

## Conducting regular food industry audits

Licensed food businesses are required to identify where food safety hazards may occur in the production and handling of food, and implement systems to manage those risks.

One of the roles of the Authority is to ensure that businesses comply with this requirement. We do this by auditing businesses operating under an approved food safety program.

The audit allows us to verify that the business is doing what it should (as required by legislation under the *Food Regulation 2004*).

Authority officers regularly check the overall effectiveness of Food Safety Schemes in the meat, dairy, seafood, and plant products sectors. During 2007-08, this resulted in 5,956 audits being conducted.

Significantly, of all the food businesses in New South Wales, less than 0.1 percent were prosecuted – indicating that, as a whole, industry is complying with food safety requirements.

## 2007-08 COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCEMENT STATISTICS

Activity	2006-07	2007-08	% change from 06-07
Audits	6139	5956	Down 2.3%
Failed audits	556 (9% of total audits)	814 (13% of total audits)	Up 4%
Inspections	2257	2454	Up 8.7%
Failed inspections	106	108	Up 1.2%
Investigations of unlicensed premises	86	87	Up 1%
Complaint investigations (by the Authority)	3847	2897	Down 24.7%
Investigations of foodborne disease incidents (single case)	551	553	Up 0.3%
Investigations of foodborne disease incidents (involving two or more people)	430	358	Down 16%
Investigations of food labelling complaints	339	324	Down 4.5%
Improvement notices	739	1245	Up 31.6%
Prohibition orders	16	17	Up 6%
Written warnings	252	252	No change
Licence cancellations	0	1	Up 100%
Prosecutions	70 (against 16 defendants)	58 (against 7 defendants)	Down 17%
Penalty notices	183	229	Up 25.1%
Voluntary food recalls (nationwide)	84	53	Down 38%
Voluntary food recalls (NSW manufacturers)	34	19	Down 45%
Shellfish harvest area openings	451	816	Up 55%
Shellfish harvest area closures	519	844	Up 61%

**The Authority is responsible** for investigating breaches of the *NSW Food Act 2003*. Our trained officers routinely undertake investigations of food businesses that sometimes result in enforcement action and prosecution through the courts.

Authority officers regularly check the effectiveness of Food Safety Schemes in the meat, dairy, seafood and plant product sectors.



**A key part of the Authority's** role is developing and administering food safety enforcement programs that help us identify businesses that are not following regulations.

<b>2007-08 LICENCE TABLE NUMBERS</b>	
<b>Business</b>	<b>Type number of licensed facilities (eg premises, vehicles and vessels)</b>
Animal food store	36
Animal meat processing plant	15
Dairy farm	891
Dairy farm (goat)	11
Dairy product factories	99
Farm milk collectors	97
Fishers	971
Food store (dairy, meat, poultry, seafood and plant products)	516
Food transportation (dairy, meat, poultry, seafood and plant products)	7,020
Game meat processing plant	173
Goat dairy product factories	7
Knackery	7
Meat processing plant	329
Meat retail premises	1,828
Milk factories	11
Non-shellfish aquaculture	50
Oyster farmer	291
Plant products processing plant	48
Poultry abattoir	46
Red meat abattoirs	34
Rendering	20
Seafood processing plant	140
Unpasteurised goat milk producers	4
<b>TOTAL number of licensed facilities (down from 13,036 in 2006-07)</b>	<b>12,644</b>

## Seizing non-compliant food

As part of our regular inspection of food premises across New South Wales, the Authority will come across food that is out of date, poorly stored, labelled incorrectly or in some other breach of food regulations.

In these cases we advise food business owners to take remedial action to rectify the issue and, where necessary, we seize non-compliant food.

In 2007-08, we made 30 food product seizures totalling 18.95 tonnes – up 118 percent from 8.67 tonnes in 2006-07. The biggest offender was poultry with 14.76 tonnes seized across the state.



2007-08 ANNUAL SEIZURE SUMMARY		
Commodity	Estimated Quantity	Reasons for Seizure
GAME MEAT Kangaroo carcasses Feral pigs Game rabbits	2,020 kg 420 kg 20 kg <b>Total 2,440 kg</b>	Unlicensed harvesters. Unsuitable pet food carcass stored in a game meat chiller.
MEAT PRODUCTS Beef Lamb Pork Manufactured product	260 kg 274 kg 152 kg 353 kg <b>Total 1,039 kg</b>	Illegal production of meat. Manufacturing process, handling and storage unsafe. Salami product being produced without licence permission.
POULTRY Various fresh and frozen poultry products	<b>Total 14.76 tonnes</b>	Processing facility operating after its licence was cancelled and no food safety plan monitoring.
OYSTERS	<b>Total 56 kg</b>	No traceability label verifying its harvest area and harvester or date of harvest.
OTHER PRODUCTS Cracked eggs, bread products, Goji juice, Kashta (dairy product)	<b>Total 650 kg</b>	Eggs were cracked and unfit for human consumption or processing. Food prepared during a prohibition order. Dairy production conducted in an unlicensed premises.
<b>TOTAL = 18.95 tonnes (up from 8.67 tonnes in 2006-07)</b>		



## Record fine for chicken shop owner

The owner of a chain of five Sydney poultry meat shops received a record fine of \$132,000 in June 2008 for a string of food law offences.

The proprietor was convicted of 22 charges under the *NSW Food Act 2003* including having unhygienic premises, substandard maintenance and poor pest control.

In February 2008, the company was also fined nearly \$12,000 for illegally adding sulphur dioxide preservative to chicken mince at its Ashfield shop.

The proprietor no longer operates the business, which has shops in Ashfield, Cabramatta, Granville, Ingleburn and Macquarie Fields.

Most food businesses in New South Wales do the right thing, but when they repeatedly breach food standards the Authority will prosecute to the full extent of the law.

In addition, major offenders will appear in the Authority's Name and Shame website where details are published of food businesses that receive penalty notices or convictions for food law breaches.

# 5



# Informing and educating consumers

One of the Authority's primary objectives is informing and educating consumers about food safety.

We do this through a variety of communication channels including our website, brochures, newsletters, targeted education programs and regular media coverage.

The information we provide comes from research, surveys, consumer and industry feedback, and trends in foodborne illness.

During 2007-08, our consumer reach widened considerably with a record number of hits on our (enhanced) website, improved media presence and increases in enquiries to our Helpline. This has all been achieved cost effectively within a limited budget.

Significantly, we finalised the Name and Shame initiative which allows us to publish on our website details of food businesses that receive penalty notices or convictions for food law breaches.

## CHECKLIST

- |                                       |
|---------------------------------------|
| ✓ Name and Shame initiative finalised |
| ✓ Website enhancements completed      |
| ✓ Strong media presence maintained    |
| ✓ Helpline enquiries increased        |
| ✓ Consumer reach widened              |

The Authority continued to widen its consumer reach in 2007-08 through a range of strategic communications programs.







**Our website has** been optimised for major search engines such as Google. This means key words such as 'pregnancy food' and 'Name and Shame' generate first hit results, which bring more people to our site.

## Name and Shame initiative finalised

The Name and Shame initiative was passed in NSW Parliament on 8 April 2008.

The first of its type in Australia, it allows consumers to access information about successful food prosecutions and penalty notices on the Authority's website.

It is now an important part of NSW food regulation as it achieves a balance between the public's right to know and the rights of food businesses to their good reputation.

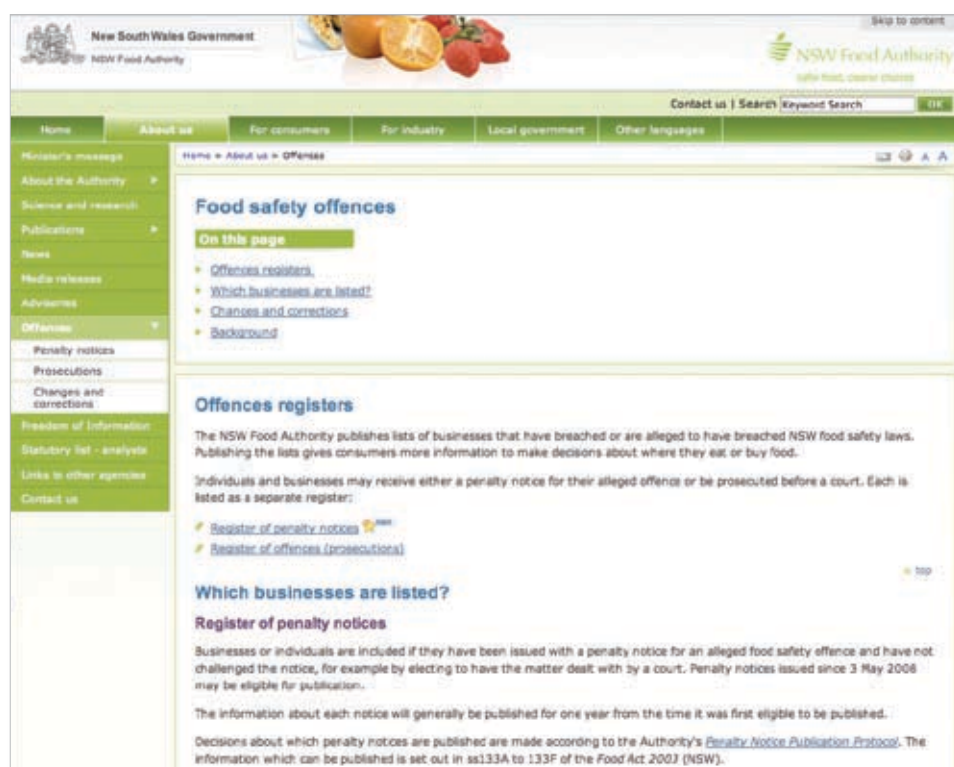
The Name and Shame idea was developed in response to strong public sentiment that food business performance information be made available to consumers, particularly in circumstances where food businesses were not doing the right thing.

The Authority's role in this initiative included policy development and consultation, legislation and Parliamentary support and implementation.

To assess opinions on the concept of naming food offenders, a stakeholder forum was held with consumers, industry and local government in August 2007. Using the results of this forum and other consultation programs, the Name and Shame proposal was then formalised and presented to the NSW Government for consideration in December 2007.

Once approved, the Authority began work on a publication protocol and website portal to deliver the information – in conjunction with 152 local councils, the State Debt Recovery Office and other stakeholders.

The Name and Shame website (pictured below) empowers consumer choice and serves as a powerful incentive for the food industry to boost its performance.



## Website enhancements completed

Our website has proved a very valuable communication channel for both consumers and industry and continues to be the primary vehicle to relay food safety messages, alerts and general information.

A major revamp of the site was undertaken early in 2007, in keeping with the new website style directive mandated by the NSW Chief Information Office. This made the site easier to navigate, more accessible to people with disabilities and more user-friendly.

During 2007-08, a new content management system was introduced. This makes updating the site much quicker, allowing us to cover major issues as soon as they arise. Using new reporting software, we can also analyse what visitors are looking for on the site.

New or revamped columns and portals have been introduced and include:

- A new 'Advisories' section which reports on current food safety issues and state-wide recalls
- A revamped 'News' column – now on the homepage for easier access
- Dedicated portals for the Allergy Aware, pregnancy and summer food safety programs
- Reworked food safety tips and mascots
- 'Name and Shame' section – listing penalty notices and convictions under the new legislation.

The site was also used for the promotion of special Authority events such as the food safety stand at the Sydney Royal Easter Show and the Issues & Crisis Management in the Food Industry Conference held in June 2008.

During 2007-08, our website received 344,000 visits, almost double that of 2006-07. A total of 1.2 million pages were viewed by those visitors.

Website visits	
2006-07	2007-08
182,000	344,000
UP 89%	

The Name and Shame website serves as a powerful incentive for the food industry to boost its performance.





## Strong media presence maintained

The Authority maintained a strong media presence during 2007-08, reinforcing our status as a credible and responsive source on food safety issues.

The media continues to be an important partner, assisting us to raise awareness of food safety and emerging industry topics.

In January 2008, we began using a new software tool that allows us to accurately measure and manage our media coverage.

It showed that in the six months from January to June 2008 the Authority achieved either positive or neutral media coverage in 86 percent of all print, radio and television coverage we received. This is testimony to the importance we place on our relationships with the media and our commitment to being responsive, open and transparent.

The software also identified:

- exposure in 319 separate media items
- an 80 percent plus 'placement rate' in print, electronic and broadcast media
- a regular media presence, peaking at over 20 news items in one week in every month.

The Authority's unblemished record on successful prosecutions continued, with each case generating positive media coverage for our compliance and enforcement work.

Notable media events during the year included:

### July 2007-June 2008

- The forthcoming Name and Shame laws offered several public communication opportunities during the year, creating wide media interest on each occasion.

### October-December 2007

- Consumers were kept informed about foodborne illness outbreaks involving unpasteurised ('raw') milk and cracked and dirty hens' eggs.

### January-February 2008

- Joint announcement (with NSW Health) advising pregnant women and parents of young children how to safely include seafood in their diet by avoiding fish products with high mercury levels.
- A back-to-school promotion reminding parents to follow some simple food safety rules for packed school lunches.

### March 2008

- Announcement of the results of two food monitoring surveys regarding compliance levels for gluten content labelling and kebabs.

### April 2008

- Joint announcement (with NSW Health) reminding pregnant women to 'watch what they eat' following an increase in cases of *listeriosis* (a foodborne bacterial infection).



## Helpline enquiries up

Our Consumer and Industry Helpline continued to provide valuable assistance during 2007-08, with inbound contacts up almost three percent on the previous year.

Our small team maintained an 'always there' reputation, with the service available 100 percent of the time.

This was despite a requirement to operate without our usual computer support systems for two days in March 2008 – during a systems shutdown. This shutdown was part of an organisation-wide business continuity exercise to ensure the Authority could continue to operate in the event of an emergency.

More than 60 different types of inbound contact are handled by our Helpline team and include enquiries ranging from a consumer asking questions about the correct cooking temperature for poultry to a food business enquiring about its food safety obligations.

The Helpline team also assists in the distribution of information – such as brochures, guidelines and newsletters – to those who cannot access the material online or prefer a printed copy.

In addition to providing day-to-day support for consumer and industry enquiries during 2007-08, the Helpline also assisted with major programs including Name and Shame, the Food Regulation Partnership with local government, the Issues & Crisis Management Conference and a variety of communications campaigns.

**The Helpline (1300 552 406) is available to the public from 8.30am to 5.30pm on weekdays with interpreter facilities available. Staff monitor service levels on an ongoing basis.**

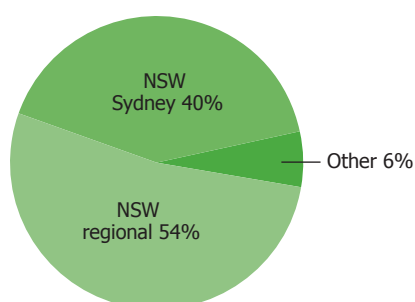
### Inbound Contacts

2006-07	2007-08
18,500	19,000

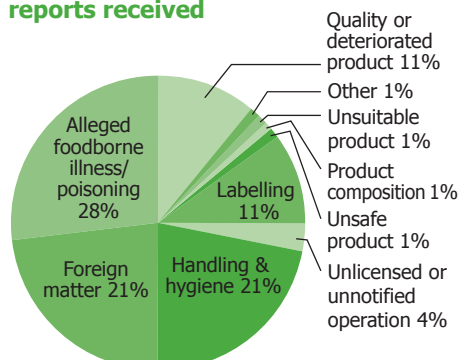
**UP 3%**

**An important measure of our Helpline service** is our ability to resolve requests during the first level of discussion. Our 'first call resolution rate' remained at a similar level to last year (85.4 percent), despite increases in both the volume of calls and the complexity of issues handled by Helpline staff.

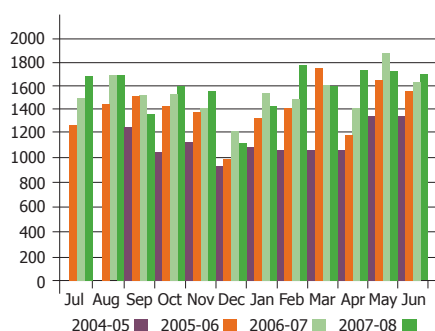
### Helpline calls by geographic origin



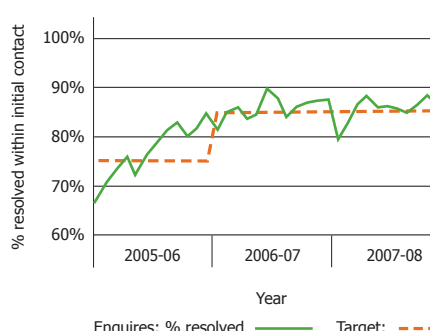
### Helpline complaints/ reports received



### Helpline inbound communications volume



### Helpline first call resolution



# We reached at least 45,000 NSW households with our Golden Rules of Food Safety promotion at the Royal Easter Show.



## Consumer reach widened

The Authority continued to widen our consumer reach in 2007-08 through a range of strategic communications programs, which included public awareness campaigns, website information, marketing material and promotional items.

Activities included:

### Pregnancy and food safety

July-January 2008

We continued our ongoing promotion of food safety messages for pregnant women. This included public reminders about the dangers of *Listeria* (a bacteria which can grow even on properly refrigerated food), Bounty Bag inserts for mums-to-be and fact sheets about food safety during pregnancy.



### Food Safety Week

November 2007

We again took an active roll in Food Safety Week, coordinated nationally by the Food Safety Information Council. Over the past 10 years, this themed week has provided opportunities for wide media coverage reinforcing food safety messages. Outcomes have included: a rise in the number of people washing their hands correctly (up from 54 percent ten years ago to 97 percent this year) and keeping their chopping boards clean (up from 70 percent to 89 percent). The Authority represents the state and territory food safety organisations on the Food Safety Information Council's executive board.



### Summer eating portal

December 2007-March 2008

A section of our website was dedicated to summer eating and Christmas feasting food safety tips – addressing the challenges of keeping food cold when catering for large groups. This included advice on preparing and serving ham, turkey and a range of summer foods.

### Golden Rules of Food Safety promotion

March 2008

One of our more wide-reaching campaigns during the year was to promote the Golden Rules of Food Safety at Sydney's Royal Easter Show (attended by approximately 900,000 people). The focus of attention was an 1,100 litre esky containing free fridge thermometers and 'Remember the golden rules' tips cards – covering home preparation and storage of food. More than 45,000 thermometers were given away during the 14-day event.

## Publications and promotional items

### Year round

- Fact sheets (topics included: Food Allergies, Correct Cooking Temperatures, Safe Handling of Eggs, Food Safety During Pregnancy and Guide to Organic Food).
- Mercury in Fish cards for pregnant women.
- Food safety during pregnancy brochures – distributed via midwives, clinics and medical practitioners.
- Food safety during pregnancy fridge magnets in mums-to-be 'Bounty Bags' (provided to women visiting their antenatal clinic for the first time or registering at the hospital).



## Allergy Aware pilot program aimed at giving consumers more choice

Allergic reaction to food is becoming an increasing problem. Food allergies affect more than 160,000 people in New South Wales alone (5 percent of children and 1 percent of adults).

Research shows that 85 percent of people with food allergies have experienced an allergic episode in a dining establishment, but still choose to eat out.

To help give allergic consumers more choice, and provide food businesses with a way to support them, the Authority conducted an Allergy Aware pilot program.

In doing this we sought the support of local councils, whose role it is to audit food service businesses. For the pilot, the City of Canada Bay Council and Orange City Council agreed to participate.

The program was conducted in three phases:

1. Food businesses in the council areas were surveyed to determine their existing allergy practices, identify gaps in their knowledge and assess their eagerness to learn more.
2. Based on the results of the survey, Allergy Aware information kits (manuals, posters and stickers) were developed to assist food businesses to manage the issue.
3. Four half-day training sessions were conducted to further educate business operators about managing allergy requests, and help them implement allergy aware practices. Around 40 businesses signed up for the training.

Follow up visits to businesses after the training revealed a high level of implementation of allergy aware practices, improved knowledge of allergy issues and more confidence in serving customers with allergies. Most businesses found that they could incorporate allergy aware practices into their regular hygiene routine. A determination on whether the Allergy Aware pilot will be rolled out to other council areas is yet to be made.



Australians have come a long way in their awareness and understanding of severe allergies and anaphylaxis, but we can't afford to be complacent. About 10 Australians die each year and thousands of others require emergency treatment as a result of anaphylactic reactions, which are largely preventable."

**Marie Said, President  
Anaphylaxis Australia**



# 6



# Taking a leadership role

Since the NSW Food Authority was established in April 2004, we have maintained our role as a leader in food safety.

This is reflected through our status as Australia's only through-chain food regulator, advisor to the NSW Minister for Primary Industries and partner of business and local government.

Our expertise is recognised both locally and internationally where our people are regularly sought to chair industry committees, sit on advisory panels and present at conferences and training seminars.

We also attend key industry events to keep up with the latest in food safety and technology trends.

During 2007-08, our Director-General and executive staff presented at more than 50 conferences – in Australia and around the world.

We also convened key industry events such as the Issues and Crisis Management in the Food Industry conference and Egg Safety Summit, and again played an active role in Food Safety Week.

Our experience as food safety advisors (either directly or indirectly) on major events such as the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games, the Rugby World Cup, APEC and World Youth Day saw us approached this year to assist on projects such as Shanghai World Expo 2010 and the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games.

## CHECKLIST

- ✓ Shared knowledge with organisers of major events
- ✓ Presented at more 50 conferences
- ✓ Published 7 papers in scientific journals
- ✓ Participated in more than 85 food sector committees

Our expertise is recognised both locally and internationally where our people are regularly sought for conferences, committees and advisory panels.



## Sharing knowledge with organisers of major events

Our involvement (either directly or indirectly) in such major events as the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games, Rugby World Cup, APEC and World Youth Day has helped position the Authority as a respected world leader on food safety issues.

During the year, we continued to contribute to food safety aspects of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games through an Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU) with the Beijing Food Administration, providing information, planning, training and technical advice.

In May 2008, our Director-General, George Davey, was asked to participate on a world expert panel at the International Forum on Food Safety for World Expo 2010 Shanghai. The Forum helped set the ground rules for improved food safety control and assurance systems in the lead up to the World Expo, which is expected to be attended by more than 70 million people.

From November 2007 to March 2008, the Authority hosted Mr Chen Xiaoning – the section head for food safety at the Haidian District Sanitary Supervision Institute (Ministry of Health) in Beijing.

Under a Fellowship from the World Health Organisation, Mr Chen worked from our Newington offices where he learned about the role of the Authority, food safety and management practices and how food safety was handled during major events such as the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games and APEC. He also participated in planning sessions in the lead up to World Youth Day.

Mr Chen returned to Beijing to share what he learned with the organisers of the 2008 Olympic Games, where he had a key role in organising food inspection activities.

## Committee representation

The Authority is represented on key international and national bodies. Officials also participate in numerous working groups and committees associated with the national food regulatory system. Senior Authority officials chair several of the groups.

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEES	
Committee	Representative
2008 Beijing Olympics Expert Board on Food Safety	George Davey
International Dairy Federation Standing Committee on Marketing	George Davey (Chair)
International Milk Promotion Group	George Davey (Past President)

NATIONAL COMMITTEES	
Committee	Representative
<b>Food Regulation Standing Committee (FRSC)</b>	George Davey
<i>Food Regulation Standing Committee Working Groups:</i>	
- FSANZ Board Appointments Selection Advisory Committee	George Davey
- Strategic Planning	Craig Sahlin (Chair)
- Principles and Protocols	Lisa Lake
- Addition of Substances Subgroup	Bill Porter
- Special Purpose Foods	Bill Porter
- Infant Formula	Bill Porter
- Food Safety Management	Catherine Bass



## NATIONAL COMMITTEES *cont.*

Committee	Representative
<i>Food Regulation Standing Committee Working Groups cont:</i>	
- Primary Production and Processing	Craig Sahlin
- Oversee the Survey of Antimicrobial Resistance in Food	Lisa Szabo
- Front of Pack Labelling	Samara Kitchener
<b>Food Regulation Standing Committee Implementation Sub-Committee (ISC)</b>	George Davey and Craig Sahlin
<i>ISC Working Groups:</i>	
- Consistent Implementation Working Group, Survey Group	Lisa Szabo
- Enhancing Linkages between Human, Food and Animal Surveillance Activities	Craig Shadbolt
- Chemical Response Plan	Lisa Szabo (Chair)
- Consistent Implementation (Overarching Strategy)	Craig Sahlin
- Consistent Implementation Sub-group – Food Safety Management Group	Craig Sahlin and Catherine Bass
- Consistent Implementation Sub-group – Incident Response Plan	David Miles
- Enforcement Policy	Christine Turney
- Environmental Health Officers (EHO) Workforce Shortage Working Group	Phillip Bird and David Hook (Co-chair)
- Food Industry Support and Education Working Group	David Hook
- Food Medicine Interface Working Group	Michael Apollonov and David Cusack
- Food Medicine	Michael Apollonov
- Food Operational, Regulatory and Technical Electronic Web Forum (FORTE)	Bill Porter and David Cusack
- Government Food Communicators Group	Craig Morony
- Health Claims Watchdog Working Group	Christine Turney
- Incidence Response Plan	David Miles
- Intentional Interference	Christine Turney
- National Audit Policy Implementation Working Group	Peter Day
- Nationally Consistent Principles for the Investigation of Foodborne Illness Working Group	Craig Shadbolt (Chair)
- Performance Measurement Framework Working Group	Peter Sutherland
- Sprouts Working Group	Catherine Bass and Michelle Keygan
- Egg Industry and Jurisdiction Conference	Peter Sutherland (Chair)
- Consistent Principles for Environmental Investigation of Foodborne Illness	Craig Shadbolt
- Implementation Strategy for Mandatory Fortification Standards	Bill Porter
- ISC Senior Project Officer	David Cusack
<i>Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) Standard Development/Implementation Committees/Working Groups:</i>	
- Food Safety Programs for Catering	Catherine Bass
- Poultry	David Miles
- P289 Manufactured and Fermented Meat Advisory Group	Christine Turney
- Egg Standards Development Committee	Michelle Keygan
- FSANZ Jurisdictional Forum	Bill Porter
- Fortification Technical Advisory Group	Alan Edwards
<i>continued next page</i>	





<b>NATIONAL COMMITTEES cont.</b>	
<b>Committee</b>	<b>Representative</b>
<i>Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) Standard Development/Implementation Committees/Working Groups cont:</i>	
- FSANZ Science Forums	Edward Jansson and Lisa Szabo
- Food Surveillance Network	Edward Jansson and Themy Saputra
- Health Claims SDAC	Michael Apollonov
- Raw Milk Dairy Products Standard Development Committee	Peter Sutherland
<b>Standards Australia</b>	
Honorary Member of Council	George Davey
Standards Australia Food Sector Board	George Davey (Chair)
Australia New Zealand Joint Standards Development Board	George Davey
<i>Standards Australia Committees:</i>	
- FT-024 – Food Products	George Davey (Chair)
- FT-024-00-01 – Food Microbiology	George Davey (Chair) and Catherine Bass
- FT-21 Committee – Meat for Human and Animal Consumption	Peter Day
- FT-25 Committee – Detergents and Sanitisers in the Food Industry	David Miles
- FT-032 Organic and Biodynamic Products	Craig Sahlin (Chair)
<b>Other Standards Committees</b>	
Australia New Zealand Dairy Authorities Standards Committee	Peter Sutherland
Meat Standards Committee	Peter Day
<b>Australian Institute of Food Science and Technology</b>	
Australian Institute of Food Science and Technology – National Council	David Cusack
Australian Institute of Food Science and Technology Inc, Food Microbiology Group	Edward Jansson, David Miles and Rod McCarthy
Australian Institute of Food Science and Technology Organising Committee for the 12th Australian Food Microbiology Conference and Second International Conference on Microbial Risk Assessment: Foodborne Hazards	Edward Jansson (Co-chair)
Australian Institute of Food Science and Technology Technical Committee for the 41st Annual AIFST Convention	David Miles and David Cusack
<b>Other National Committees/Forums</b>	
Australian Food and Grocery Council Allergen Labelling Forum	Bill Porter and Bruce Nelan
Australian Shellfish Quality Assurance Advisory Committee	Anthony Zammit (Chair)
Industry Compliance Committee of Australian Fruit Juice Association	Bill Porter
National Association of Testing Authorities, Biological Accreditation Advisory Committee	Lisa Szabo
National Livestock Identification System Advisory Committee	Peter Day
National Gastroenteritis Survey Project Steering Committee	Craig Shadbolt and Lisa Szabo
Food Safety Information Council	Craig Morony
Public Health Nutrition Standards	Bill Porter
Dairy Research Foundation, University of Sydney	George Davey
Australia Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering, Crawford Fund	George Davey

## STATE COMMITTEES

Committee	Representative
<b>Industry Consultative Committees</b>	
Meat Industry Consultative Council	George Davey
NSW Dairy Industry Conference	George Davey
NSW Seafood Industry Conference	George Davey
NSW Shellfish Committee	Anthony Zammit
Peak Oyster Associations Group (POAG)	George Davey
Poultry and Egg Industries Committee	George Davey
NSW Meat Chemical Residue Consultative Committee	Peter Day
Milk Marketing (NSW) Pty Limited	George Davey (Chair)
<b>Interagency Committees</b>	
Food Regulation Partnership Steering Committee	Craig Sahlin (Chair)
Interagency Working Group on Pesticide Management	Craig Sahlin, Jenine Ryle, Greg Vakaci and Edward Jansson
NSW Health/Food Authority Strategic Liaison Group	Bill Porter (Co-chair)
NSW Primary Industries/Food Authority Strategic Liaison Group	Craig Sahlin
Foodborne and Other Enteric Diseases Portfolio (FEDS)	Craig Shadbolt
<b>Other State Committees</b>	
NSW Health Anaphylaxis Working Party	Bill Porter
NSW Nutrition Network	Craig Morony

## PRESENTATIONS

Conference/Meeting	Presentation Title	Representative
<b>June 2008</b>		
Issues and Crisis Management in the Food Industry Conference, Sydney	Dioxins and Seafood from Sydney Harbour	Lisa Szabo
International Symposium on Innovations in Food Science, Technology and Health Care for Social Well-being, Colombo, Sri Lanka	Managing Low Level Chemical Contamination in Food	Lisa Szabo
Joint Conference of Dairy Industry Association of Australia and NSW Farmers Association, Sydney	Food Regulation: The Carrot or the Stick?	Craig Sahlin
Nursing and Management Practices Advisory Committee, Sydney	Implementation of the New Food Safety Standard in NSW	Michelle Keygan
<b>May 2008</b>		
Food Safety Program Implementation Workshop, Tamworth	How to Prepare a Food Safety Program – Workshop	Michelle Keygan
HACC Forums, Rockdale; Marrickville; Tamworth	Implementation of the New Food Safety Standard	Michelle Keygan
International Forum on Food Safety for World Expo 2010 Shanghai	Planning and Implementing Food Safety Programs for Mega Events	George Davey
Retirement Villages Association (NSW Branch) Conference, Port Macquarie	Implementation of the New Food Safety Standard	Michelle Keygan
Sydney University, Sydney	Food Regulation in Australia: Outcome Focussed and Evidence-Based	Lisa Szabo
<b>April 2008</b>		
Food and Hotels Asia 2008 – Food Safety Forum, Singapore	Implementing Food Safety Programs for Mega Events	Michelle Keygan
HACC Issues Forum, Sydney	NSW Food Authority's Regulation for Food Service to Vulnerable Persons	Michelle Keygan

*continued next page*

<b>PRESENTATIONS <i>cont.</i></b>		
<b>Conference/Meeting</b>	<b>Presentation Title</b>	<b>Representative</b>
<b>April 2008 <i>cont.</i></b>		
NSW Water Reuse Conference, Wagga Wagga	NSW Water Reuse policy – Guidance for Food Businesses Considering Reusing Water	David Miles
University of Western Sydney, Environmental Health, Food Safety – Lecture, Richmond	Food Regulatory Role and Food Safety	Josie Rizzo
<b>March 2008</b>		
Uniting Care Ageing, Care Leadership Team, Sydney	Implementation of the New Standard for Food Service to Vulnerable Persons	Michelle Keygan
University of Sydney, Masters of Nutrition – Lecture	Microbiology of Food	David Miles
<b>February 2008</b>		
Allergen Bureau Conference Sydney	Allergy Aware Program for Food Service Businesses	Samara Kitchener
Canadian Meat Regulators Visit, Newington	Red Meat Abattoirs Evaluation Study	Catherine Bass
<b>December 2007</b>		
MOW Shellharbour Food Forum, Shellharbour	Regulation for Food Service to Vulnerable Persons	Angie Antzoulatos
NSW Meals on Wheels Association Induction, Surry Hills	Regulation for Food Service to Vulnerable Persons	Kristy McCreadie
Seoul Metropolitan Government's Bureau of Public Health and Welfare, Newington	Overview of Food Safety in NSW	Bill Porter
<b>November 2007</b>		
Advanced United Nations Leadership Training Program on Agriculture and Rural Development; Policies to Manage the Safety and Suitability of Food – National and State Perspective, Newington	Overview of the Australian Food Regulatory System	Craig Sahlin
	The Genesis of a Through-Chain Food Authority	George Davey
	A Case Study on Seafood from Sydney Harbour	Lisa Szabo
	Managing Food Safety by Prioritising Risk	Catherine Bass
	Case Studies in Risk Management: Shellfish	Anthony Zammit
	Case Studies in Risk Management: Fish Substitution	Christine Turney
	Risk Communication – Empowering the Consumer	Samara Kitchener
AFGC Health, Nutrition and Scientific Affairs Committee, Epping	Agency Update and Key Directions in Science	Lisa Szabo
Holroyd Branch of the Arthritis Foundation, Merrylands	Food Safety	Angie Antzoulatos
Hurstville City Council Safe Food Expo, Hurstville	Food Regulation Partnership	Bill Porter
NSW Meals on Wheels Food Forums, Gulgong and Queanbeyan	Regulation for Food Service to Vulnerable Persons	Angie Antzoulatos/ Kristy McCreadie
Policies to Manage the Safety and Suitability of Food, North Ryde	Microbiological Limits in Food – Legislation and Your Business	David Miles
Presentation to Visiting Delegation from Shanxi Province, People's Republic of China, Newington	Overview of the NSW Food Authority, Sydney Olympic Food Safety Planning and the Role of the Enforcement Unit	Jenni Manning/ Peter Yankos
Regional Food Group Meeting, Murrumbidgee Group, Wagga Wagga	Consistency in Food Act Enforcement	Josie Rizzo
<b>October 2007</b>		
FACTA Allergen Control and Management Seminar, Sydney	Allergen Standards	Bill Porter
NSW Meals on Wheels Food Forums, Cessnock, Kempsey and Picton	Regulation for Food Service to Vulnerable Persons	Kristy McCreadie/ Michelle Keygan/ Angie Antzoulatos
Penshurst VIEW Club, Penshurst, Sydney	Food Safety	Mark Mackie
Regional Food Group Meeting, Murray Group, Deniliquin	Consistency in Food Act Enforcement	Josie Rizzo
<b>September 2007</b>		
AIEH Food Surveillance School, Merrylands	Food Surveillance – Risk Based Approach	Corey Stoneham
Christ Church Anglican, Seniors Group, Mortdale, Sydney	Food Safety	Kristy McCreadie
Food Safety Conference	Allergy Aware Program for Food Service Businesses	Samara Kitchener

<b>PRESENTATIONS cont.</b>		
<b>Conference/Meeting</b>	<b>Presentation Title</b>	<b>Representative</b>
<b>September 2007 cont.</b>		
Food Safety Conference	Food for Thought: Regulating in the Information Age	Craig Sahlin
Multicultural Food Forum, Newtown, Sydney	Regulation for Food Service to Vulnerable Persons	Kristy McCreddie/ Michelle Keygan
Retirement Villages Association Managers Forum, Sydney	Regulation for Food Service to Vulnerable Persons	Michelle Keygan
Ulster University, Northern Ireland	Consumer Marketing of Food Safety – Mercury in Fish, a Case Study	George Davey
University of Sydney, Vet Faculty – Lecture, Sydney	Food Safety – an Introduction	David Miles
University of Sydney, Vet Faculty – lecture, Sydney	Microbiology of Food	David Miles
University of Western Sydney, Environment and Health – lecture, Richmond	Food Regulatory Role and Food Safety	Josie Rizzo
<b>August 2007</b>		
DIAA Dairy Science World Series Conference, Melbourne	Food Safety Objectives in Post-production Sector	Peter Sutherland/ David Miles
Egg Shell Quality Workshop, Saint Mary's	National Egg and Egg Product Standard	Michelle Keygan
Food Surveillance Groups, Kogarah, Kuringai, Ashfield, Port Stephens, Tamworth, Parkes and Junee	Critical Food Handling Practices	Corey Stoneham/ Josie Rizzo/David Hook/Phillip Bird
Hastings District Respite Care Meeting, Port Macquarie	Regulation for Food Service to Vulnerable Persons	Kristy McCreddie
National Egg Safety Summit, Brighton Le Sands	A Food Regulator's perspective on Risk Communication	David Miles
NSW Meals on Wheels Food Forums, Blacktown, Sutherland and Randwick	Regulation for Food Service to Vulnerable Persons	Kristy McCreddie
Packaged Ice Association of Australia (PIAA) Annual Conference, Melbourne	Food Regulations and the Packaged Ice Industry	David Miles
South East Food Surveillance Group, Yass	Critical Food Handling Practices	Corey Stoneham
<b>July 2007</b>		
Food Safety Expert Board for the Beijing 2008 Olympics, Beijing	"The Final Countdown...One World, One Dream"	George Davey
Warrigal Care Training Day, Moss Vale	Regulation for Food Service to Vulnerable Persons	Angie Anzoulatos/ Kristy McCreddie/ Anne McIntosh

## 2007-08 papers published

- Forssmanm, B et al (incl **Shadbolt, C** and **Biffin, B**) 2007 'Vibrio Cholerae O1 E1 Tor Cluster in Sydney Linked to Imported Whitebait', *Medical Journal of Australia*, 187 (6), p 345-347.
- **Sutherland, P and Miles, D** 2007 'Food Safety Objectives in Post-production Sector', *Australian Journal of Dairy Technology*. 62, p 83-88.
- **Szabo, E. A, Porter, W and Sahlin, C** 2008 'Outcome Based Regulations and Innovative Food Processes: An Australian Perspective', *Innovative Food Science and Emerging Technologies*, 9, p 249-254.
- Desmarchelier, P and **Szabo, E. A** 2008 'Innovation, Food Safety and Regulation', *Innovation: Management, Policy and Practice*, 10, p 121-131.
- **Jansson, E, Bird, P, Saputra, T** and Arnold, G 2008 'Food Safety Survey of Retail Doner Kebabs in NSW', *Food Australia*, 60, p95-98.
- Pointon, A et al (incl **Saputra, T**) 2008 'A Baseline Survey of the Microbiological Quality of Chicken Portions and Carcasses at Retail in Two Australian States', *Journal of Food Protection*, 71, p 1123-1134.
- Munnoch, S et al. (incl **Shadbolt, C**) 2008 'A Multi-state Outbreak of *Salmonella* Saintpaul in Australia Associated with Cantaloupe Consumption', *Epidemiology and Infection*, Jun-18, p 1-8.





# People and systems

Delivering our promise of providing 'safer food and clearer choices' is a team of dedicated people, driven by strategic goals and using the most efficient systems and services. During 2007-08, we completed the realignment of our structure, continued to build a stronger workplace (by reassessing our values and work practices), increased staff salaries and further enhanced our business systems through a major IT upgrade.

## Our People

### Staff breakdown and numbers

As at 30 June 2008, 117 people worked for the NSW Food Authority (115 staff and two Senior Executive Service (SES) Officers).

#### STAFF NUMBERS BY CATEGORY

Occupation Group	2007-08	2006-07	2005-06	2004-05
Administration	47	46	42	49
Technical/Science/Food Safety Officers	68	72	71	68
<b>Total Staff (non-SES)</b>	<b>115</b>	118	113	117
Senior Executive Service	2	1	2	4
<b>TOTAL STAFF (all)</b>	<b>117</b>			

### Agency realignment

During 2007-08, the Authority completed detailed consultation on re-aligning our structure with our Results and Services Plan. We moved from what was essentially a 'siloes' environment to a balanced structure that more clearly links our roles and responsibilities with the NSW Government's State Plan. This new structure will allow us to focus on strategic goals, improve communications and teamwork and enhance development opportunities for our staff.

### Building a stronger workplace

Our 'Building a Stronger Workplace' project continued this year. Our staff were engaged in developing draft organisational values and certain work practices (such as the more appropriate allocation of motor vehicles) were reviewed.

### Ongoing training and development

Following the completion of the 'Skills for Success' foundation learning program for managers during 2006-07, this year we conducted the 'Skills for Success for Aspiring Managers' program and the 'Structured Leadership' program (which included a 360 degree feedback process, mentoring and skills training). A series of Executive Workshops (dealing with contemporary leadership challenges) also commenced during the year.

## Staff salary increases

During 2007-08, all non-SES Authority staff received a salary increase of four percent. This was in line with a Memorandum of Understanding between the government and unions pursuant to the Crown Employees (Public Sector – Salaries) Award 2004. The increase was paid in the first full pay period after 1 July 2007.

## Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO)

The Authority continued to maintain support for the principles of equal employment opportunity during 2007-08.

### Statistical information on EEO target groups

TRENDS IN THE REPRESENTATION OF EEO GROUPS					
		% of Total Staff			
EEO Group	Benchmark or target	2005	2006	2007	2008
Women	50%	40%	46%	50%	49%
Aboriginal People & Torres Strait Islander	2%	0.8%	0.9%	0.8%	0.9%
People whose first language was not English	19%	15.0%	17.0%	17.0%	15.0%
People with a disability	12%	3.0%	3.0%	6.0%	4.0%
People with a disability requiring work-related adjustment	7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
TRENDS IN THE DISTRIBUTION OF EEO GROUPS					
		Distribution Index			
EEO Group	Benchmark or target	2005	2006	2007	2008
Women	100	89	87	81	90
Aboriginal People & Torres Strait Islander	100	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
People whose first language was not English	100	n/a	98	98	n/a
People with a disability	100	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
People with a disability requiring work-related adjustment	100	-	-	-	-

A 'distribution index' of 100 indicates that the distribution of the EEO group across salary levels is equivalent to other staff. Values less than 100 indicate that the EEO group tends to be concentrated at lower salary levels than other staff. The more pronounced this tendency is, the lower the index will be. *All staff percentages and distribution index figures are as at 30 June.*

As at 30 June 2008, females continued to comprise around 50 percent of the organisation. This represents a significant increase on the 36 percent recorded in the Authority's first year of operation (June 2004).

### Major EEO policies/programs in 2007-08

During 2007-08, we conducted 'Skills for Success for Aspiring Managers' and 'Structured Leadership' training and development programs. These programs included units on interview and selection skills, EEO awareness, and enhancing team effectiveness.

**The Authority  
is responsible**  
for providing a safe  
and healthy working  
environment.

### *Major EEO policies/programs planned for 2008-09*

The Authority will continue to examine our options for employing people with a disability during 2008-09, especially those people requiring a work-related adjustment. A Diversity Committee will be formed for this purpose.

## Aboriginal Affairs Committee

An Aboriginal Affairs Committee was formed by the Authority in 2006 and is chaired by the Director-General.

During 2007-08, the Authority reviewed the composition of its Ministerial Consultative Committees with a view to promoting diversity and, in particular, representation from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We also developed a testing program which, if implemented, will enable the indigenous community of Twofold Bay (south of Eden) to harvest and sell wild-grown mussels.

Other indigenous activities held during the year included:

**July 2007** – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags were permanently mounted at the Authority's Newington headquarters.

**July 2007** – a NAIDOC (National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee) event was held at our Taree office where a plaque was unveiled, officially recognising the location of our building on Aboriginal land.

**February 2008** – a morning tea was held at our Newington head office to view the live broadcast of the Prime Minister's 'Sorry' address.

The Authority encourages staff to use 'Welcome to Country' and 'Acknowledgement of Country' protocols to introduce appropriate Authority events. These include national and international conferences, staff conferences and major meetings. We have also catered indigenous foods at some of these events.

## Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S)

The Authority is committed to ensuring the health, safety and welfare of all our staff and visitors. To ensure this continues to be effective, we operate a dedicated Occupational Health and Safety Committee which meets bi-monthly. The committee comprises six elected staff representatives and five management representatives, including a representative from the Director-General. A secretary/executive officer (appointed by the Director-General) manages committee business. Elections are conducted every two years.

Key OH&S activities during 2007-08 included:

- Ongoing development and implementation of an Occupational Health, Safety and Injury Management System (with the assistance of a consultant).
- Monthly OH&S Status Reports – submitted to monthly executive meetings as a standing agenda item.
- The introduction or updating of nine policies relating to Occupational Health and Safety (such as the Safe Driving Policy).
- The launch of a dedicated OH&S page on our Intranet site (FoodLoops) as part of Safe Work Australia Week. It provides staff with direct access to policies, procedures, forms, OH&S Committee members' contact details and links to other OH&S related sites.
- Training for staff and managers in ten important areas of OH&S (such as OH&S risk management, manual handling training etc).

## Staff benefits

### Gymnasium

We further demonstrated our commitment to the health, safety and well-being of our staff this year by installing a gymnasium at the Authority's head office in June 2008. Prior to opening the gym, a staff survey was conducted, with the information used to frame operating procedures and guidelines.

### Vaccinations

During the year all staff exposed to Q Fever during the course of their work were vaccinated. In May 2008, influenza vaccinations were also offered.



## Executive Officers

### Senior Management Breakdown

SENIOR MANAGEMENT FOR 2007-08			
	2007-08	2006-07	2005-06
Total SES	2	1	2
CEO level 6	1	1	1
SES level 4	1	-	-
SES level 3	-	-	1
Female SES	-	-	-

CEO = Chief Executive Officer SES = Senior Executive Service Officers

### Director-General's remuneration and performance

#### George Davey – Director-General

B Sc (Hons), M Sc (Food Technology)

Director-General, SES Level 6 Remuneration package: \$284,950 per annum (includes employment benefits of \$16,958).

Mr Davey has been Director-General of the NSW Food Authority since its establishment in April 2004. He has a performance agreement with the NSW Minister for Primary Industries and a five-year contract of employment which has been in place since 7 July 2004.

Under Mr Davey's continued leadership, the NSW Food Authority has made considerable progress in putting systems in place that ensure New South Wales has the best food regulatory system in Australia and that food in the state is safe and appropriately labelled.

Key areas of progress during the year included the finalisation of the Food Regulation Partnership (FRP) and Name and Shame.

The culmination of three years of work, the FRP saw new legislation introduced which more clearly defines local government's role in food regulation and enables a consistency of approach in how food regulation is monitored and enforced in New South Wales. The Name and Shame program has allowed unprecedented public access (via our website) to information about the performance of food outlets. The program achieves a balance between the public's right to know about serious breaches of food standards and the rights of food businesses to their good reputation.

The Authority has shown considerable leadership in the national standard setting and implementation processes, playing an active role in more than 85 food sector committees. The Authority has also received recognition for innovation and excellence in food safety regulation and communications, and has held key advisory and training roles on a range of national and international events.

The Authority's compliance and enforcement operations have continued to target risk in the food chain effectively. Preventative food safety arrangements are in place for high-risk industries and compliance programs ensure their successful operation. The Authority's unblemished 100% prosecution success rate is testament to the efficiency of our enforcement approach.

With the support of staff, unions and stakeholders, a major realignment of the Authority's organisational structure was implemented during the year. A more balanced branch structure is now in place, providing more opportunity for staff development, improved strategic focus and better stakeholder communication.

## Administration

In addition to providing reception and executive support, the Administration Unit provides all of the office accommodation and procurement services for the Authority. Of the Authority's 117 staff, 92 are located in the head office in Newington, with 25 working from regional locations across New South Wales. There are eight regional offices, most of which share space with the NSW Department of Primary Industries. The Authority owns and maintains the Newington head office, near Sydney Olympic Park.

## Systems

### Information management

Information management is critical to the Authority's ability to regulate the 55,000 food businesses across New South Wales. To effectively manage our data requirements we have a relational database system called BYTE. It is used to manage licensing, audit and inspection data for 13,000 licensed businesses.

During the year, further progress was made on the Paddock to Plate (P2P) project, a major IT infrastructure and systems project which was initiated in 2005 to enhance the Authority's business systems. The improvements are being made in order to:

- manage interactions with the remaining 42,000 food businesses in NSW
- manage enforcement activity for all food businesses
- enable transition to the Food Regulation Partnership
- improve internal management of, and access to, information
- provide the IT infrastructure to support and manage electronic information service delivery; wireless access for auditors; and access for local government and private sector auditors.

During 2007-08, our IT group began implementing the business continuity and disaster recovery plans it developed for the Authority.

### Financial management

#### *Financial operations*

The Finance Section is responsible for managing the Authority's financial activities, including those of its subsidiary entity, the Office of the NSW Food Authority, and subsidiary companies, Milk Marketing (NSW) Pty Limited and Pacific Industry Services Corporation Pty Limited.



The role and functions performed in relation to financial management include strategic financial planning (comprising formulation of five-year forward estimates); coordination of annual budget preparation; liaison with NSW Treasury and preparation of submissions for government funding. The section also does statutory, management and industry reporting and management of taxation issues, as well as undertaking accounts payable and receivable functions.

A key focus of the Authority in relation to financial management and sustainability into the future is the establishment of a secure, appropriate and sustainable funding base. Other areas of focus include improving the efficiency and effectiveness of financial and purchasing processes through continuous process review and improvement. With a view to catering for significant increases in the Authority's licensee stakeholder numbers, we are also focusing on further implementation of electronic service delivery and related technology.

The Authority has a Corporate Risk Management Plan and treatment plans for all significant risks identified – based on Australian Risk Management Standard AS/NZS 4360:2004. The Corporate Risk Management Plan and treatment plans are regularly reviewed by the Risk Management Committee and updated as appropriate. The purpose of the plan and treatment plans are to:

- establish an overarching risk management framework that incorporates and links to existing program risk management plans
- identify and assess risks to overall service delivery and corporate strategies
- establish a corporate risk register
- develop strategies and risk treatment plans to mitigate the most serious risks and incorporate these into corporate planning and reporting
- establish a governance structure to manage corporate risks.

### *Asset management*

At 30 June 2008, the Authority's capital asset base totalled \$10.1 million, including our head office building at Newington in Sydney and a regional office at Taree, as well as various other assets. The Finance, Licensing, Property Management sections undertake certain asset management functions in relation to the Authority's assets, including management of its properties and its motor vehicle fleet; maintenance of the asset register; development of the asset management plan and coordination of the annual stocktake of fixed assets.

## Science and policy services

The Science and Policy service area provides support through its scientific and technical capability, policy coordination and development, laboratory management, strategic issues management and ministerial liaison.

### *Issues Management*

Each week, an Issues Management Advisory Group (IMAG) – that consists of a cross-section of staff from key functional areas – meets to review national and international developments and to recommend action in relation to those developments.

The IMAG chair reports outcomes and recommended actions to the executive, which allows the executive to respond quickly and effectively to current and emerging strategic issues.





Key issues discussed at IMAG during 2007-08 included:

- The development of a policy for publishing details of food related penalty notices on the Authority's website (the 'Name and Shame' initiative).
- The Authority's response to allegations of wide spread lamb substitution, where hogget or mutton is intentionally mislabelled as lamb.
- A comprehensive review of international and national management strategies in relation to trans fatty acids in food, resulting in a recommended strategy for New South Wales.

The Authority also has an internal network of scientists to assist the Chief Scientist in assessing new scientific findings and their impacts on the activities of the agency. Issues the network discussed included:

- Collaborative research opportunities
- Scientific input into issues management – such as the detection of cyanogenic glycoside in cassava-based crackers
- Reviewing action taken following foodborne illness investigations
- Reviewing and recommending action as a result of data gathered for Authority surveys.

### *Ministerial Coordination Unit*

The Authority reports to the Minister for Primary Industries. A Ministerial Coordination Unit facilitates communication with the Minister's Office to ensure that the Minister and the NSW Government are provided with accurate and appropriate advice and information on food regulatory issues.

The Ministerial Coordination Unit also coordinates advice to the Minister in relation to his role as Lead Minister for New South Wales on the Australia and New Zealand Food Regulation Ministerial Council.

The Ministerial Council establishes the policy framework for domestic food standards; considers draft food standards (and may ultimately amend or reject them); and oversees the implementation enforcement of standards, including the promotion of consistency and harmonisation.

### *Laboratory management*

The Authority contracts the Division of Analytical Laboratories (DAL) to undertake most of its food testing. The food analysis conducted by DAL includes microbiological and chemical testing as well as molecular biology tests such as identification of viruses; detecting the presence of genetically modified ingredients in foods; and DNA fingerprinting of certain bacteria.

Where testing cannot be conducted by DAL, other laboratories are used. The Authority requires each laboratory used to:

- be accredited by the National Association of Testing Authorities (NATA)
- be involved in proficiency testing programs
- use standards set by Standards Australia Ltd.

This year the performance of the laboratory was benchmarked against defined services. Overall, the laboratory was found to be performing well.

## 2007-08 legislative changes

During 2007-08, the following changes were made to the Authority's legislative framework to implement significant reforms relating to:

- implementation of the recommendations of the Food Regulation Partnership (as outlined in the document *NSW Food Regulation Partnership - A Blueprint*)
  - public disclosure of offences and penalty notice information concerning the handling and sale of food.
1. On 1 January 2008 *NSW Food Act 2003* (the Act) was amended by the provisions of *Food Amendment Act 2007* No 47 (assented to 1 November 2007) to introduce the following:
    - a new scheme for the appointment, after consultation, of local councils (and also the Director-General of the Department of Environment and Climate Change, in respect of the Kosciuszko National Park) as enforcement agencies under the Act with specific functions
    - a secure funding base for the carrying out of this enforcement work by enabling:
      - a fee for the issuing of an improvement notice to a food business and making it an offence not to pay the fee required
      - an annual administrative charge on food businesses that are not required to be licensed in relation to the exercise of functions carried out by enforcement agencies in respect of those food businesses
      - the NSW Food Authority to publish recommended maximum fees to be imposed by local councils for the inspection of food businesses.
    - the establishment of a Food Regulation Forum to consist of representatives from State and Local Government and the environmental health profession to provide advice and assistance to the NSW Food Authority on the implementation and operation of this scheme.
  2. On 1 March 2008 *Food Regulation 2004* was amended by *Food Amendment Regulation 2008*. Significantly, the regulation provides for:
    - a fee for the issuing of improvement notices and a fee for the inspection of non-licensed food businesses
    - an annual administration charge that can be imposed on non-licensed food businesses that are subject to inspection once every twelve months.
  3. On 3 May 2008 *NSW Food Act 2003* was amended by the provisions of *Food Amendment (Public Information on Offences) Act 2008* No 5 (assented to 14 April 2008) to:
    - extend the power of the Authority to publish information about convictions under the Act for offences relating to the sale and handling of food by permitting the Authority to keep a register of offences which must be available for public inspection on an internet website
    - give the Authority power to also publish information in the register about persons found guilty by a court, but in respect of whom no conviction is entered, of offences under the Act relating to the handling or sale of food
    - give the Authority power to also publish information, subject to certain limitations, about penalty notices issued for offences under the Act relating to the sale and handling of food by permitting the Authority to keep a register of penalty notices which must also be available for public inspection on the Authority's website
    - provide for payments into the Food Authority Fund.



# Statutory reporting

## Subsidiary and controlled entities

### *The Office of the NSW Food Authority*

The Office of the NSW Food Authority is a division of the Government Service, established under the *Public Sector Employment and Management Act 2002*.

The Office of the NSW Food Authority's sole objective is to provide personnel services to the NSW Food Authority and is a not-for-profit entity. It is consolidated as part of the NSW Total State Sector Accounts. It is domiciled in Australia and its principal office is at the Authority, 6 Avenue of the Americas, Newington NSW 2127.

The Office of the NSW Food Authority commenced operations on 17 March 2006, when it assumed responsibility for the employees and employee-related liabilities of the Authority. The assumed liabilities were recognised on 17 March 2006, together with an offsetting receivable, representing the related funding due from the former employer.

### *Pacific Industry Services Corporation Pty Limited*

Pacific Industry Services Corporation Pty Limited (PISC) provided laboratory services, and was a subsidiary company of the former SafeFood NSW. In May 2001, all its assets (excluding land and buildings) were sold. All its land and buildings were subsequently sold in September 2001. PISC will be wound up during 2008-09.

### *Milk Marketing (NSW) Pty Limited*

The assets and liabilities of Milk Marketing (NSW) Pty Ltd were transferred to the NSW Food Authority on 5 April 2004 when the Authority absorbed the functions of Safe Food Production NSW. The board of the company, appointed by the Minister, comprises George Davey, Director-General of the NSW Food Authority (Chair) and Robert Grey, representing the dairy industry. The company's funds are to be applied in the event of an industry emergency, and for the general purposes of facilitating information exchange, managing emerging issues, and promoting the interests of the New South Wales dairy industry.

Through its liaison with the International Dairy Federation and other international contacts, Milk Marketing (NSW) is now part of an international network. The company receives regular reports on emerging issues which may have an effect on the New South Wales dairy industry. It develops strategies for the management of issues and crises, such as the experiences in the UK with Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, foot and mouth disease, mycobacterium paratuberculosis as well as issues such as A2 milk, obesity and animal welfare. The company has developed systems for disseminating information on emerging issues to stakeholders and opinion leaders.

Some examples of the notable activities Milk Marketing (NSW) organised or participated in during the year are:

- Co-hosting (with Dairy Australia) the annual meetings of the IDF Standing Committee on Marketing and International Milk Promotion group.

- Co-hosting (with the NSW Dairy industry Conference) a forum on climate change for the dairy industry. The forum was attended by the President of the International Dairy Federation and Director General of Dairy UK, Jim Begg; Executive Director of the Global Dairy Platform, Kevin Bellamy; and the Chairman of the NSW Farmers Association Dairy Committee, Adrian Drury.
- Leading a dairy industry study tour of the UK involving 12 participants from the NSW dairy industry. The study tour was principally sponsored by Milk Marketing and the NSW Dairy Industry Conference. Other sponsors included the NSW Dairy Industry Development Company and the NSW Farmers Association.
- Sponsoring the Dairy Industry Association of Australia (NSW) annual conference and dairy products competition.

## Consultants

Details of consultants costing \$30,000 or more: Nil.

Consultants engaged for less than \$30,000: seven were engaged at a total cost of \$70,656.

## Guarantee of service

The Authority has established internal control processes designed to ensure the achievement of its objectives. The internal audit and risk management committee conducts a review program to assess these controls. The Authority is committed to delivering appropriate, effective and quality services to its stakeholders.

## Overseas travel by Authority staff in 2007-08

**George Davey** (9-14 July 2007) to China to participate in meetings of the Expert Board on Food Safety for the 2008 Beijing Olympics – costs met by the Beijing Food Authority and NSW Food Authority.

**Christine Tumney** (20 August-16 September 2007) to United Kingdom, USA, Canada and Denmark to conduct a review of enforcement strategies and methods for promoting industry compliance.

**George Davey** (22 September-7 October 2007) to Ireland to participate in the International Dairy Federation World Dairy Summit and meetings – costs met by Milk Marketing (NSW) Pty Ltd.

**Phillip Bird** (25-29 September 2007) to New Zealand to discuss common local government program strategies with New Zealand Food Safety Authority and present at the Annual New Zealand Food Safety Authority Conference – costs met by the New Zealand Food Safety Authority.

**Gregory Vakaci** (4-29 February 2008) to New Zealand to participate in a staff exchange program with the New Zealand Food Safety Authority on compliance and enforcement approaches – costs met by New Zealand Food Safety Authority and NSW Food Authority.

**Michelle Keygan** (20-27 April 2008) to Singapore and Malaysia to present at the Food and Hotel Asia 2008 Food Safety Forum and meet with Singaporean and Malaysian Government officials and industry members to discuss international developments in food safety management – costs met by conference organisers and NSW Food Authority (Malaysian side trip).





**George Davey** (16-24 May 2008) to China to present at the International Food Safety Forum for 2010 World Expo in Shanghai and participate in meetings of the Expert Board on Food Safety for the Beijing 2008 Olympics – costs met by Shanghai Municipal Food and Drug Administration and NSW Food Authority.

**Lisa Szabo** (11-14 June 2008) to Sri Lanka to present at the Symposium on Innovations in Chemical Sciences for Social Well-being – costs met by Institute of Chemistry, Ceylon.

**Peter Sutherland and George Davey** (20 June-16 July 2008) to UK to participate in NSW Dairy Industry Study Tour – costs met by NSW Dairy Industry Conference, Milk Marketing (NSW) Pty Ltd and NSW Food Authority.

**Samara Kitchener** (23-27 June 2008) to Philippines to conduct capacity building training on Food Safety Risk Communication for APEC Developing Economies – costs met by APEC.

## Risk management and insurance activities

The Authority is a member of the NSW Treasury Managed Fund (TMF) which is a self-insurance scheme owned and under-written by the NSW Government. TMF provides a full range of insurance cover for the Authority including workers' compensation, property, public liability, comprehensive motor vehicle and miscellaneous risks.

The Authority is also provided certain protection under the *NSW Food Act 2003* under certain circumstances as provided in the Act. It is also committed to using risk management principles to minimise risk exposure and premium costs. The management of risk has been a key consideration in the development of the Authority's strategic plan and issues management is carried out as part of its routine operations.

In 2007, the Authority implemented its Business Continuity Plan and Disaster Recovery Plan. Both plans were successfully tested in March 2008. The plans comprise a set of processes and procedures that are updated quarterly and tested annually, to ensure that critical business functions can continue during and after a disaster, minimising disruption of services to the public.

## Ethnic Affairs Priorities Statement

This statement confirms the Authority's ongoing commitment to the NSW Charter of Principles for a Culturally Diverse Society and reflects how services and facilities are accessible to the New South Wales community. The Authority's programs cater for the ethnic diversity of the state's food industry and consumers, and service those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

This assists industry in two ways:

- ensuring access to the Authority's consultation, regulatory programs and advisory services to all food industry participants
- taking ethnic methods of food preparation into account when designing regulatory programs.

The Authority takes its commitment to improving access to, and communication with, ethnic communities very seriously and has developed consumer and industry fact sheets on a range of food issues. Several of these are targeted at particular communities and address unique food issues. Select resources have been translated into a number of languages, including Arabic, Chinese, Greek, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Spanish, Turkish and Vietnamese.

The Consumer and Industry Helpline team and field staff make use of an accredited interpreter service to accommodate speakers of languages other than English.



Each month the Authority provides the *Australian Chinese Daily* with food safety information on topical food issues, which the publication translates for its readers.

Public media statements are distributed not only to the mainstream press, but also to sections of the media that serve different cultures. In the longer term, the Authority will develop consumer information and education programs which take into account the specific needs of different communities. All residents of New South Wales have access to the Authority's services. The needs of the community and industry will be met professionally, equitably and appropriately.

## Ethnic Affairs Action Plan

To implement the Ethnic Affairs Priorities Statement, we have developed an Ethnic Affairs Action Plan which clearly defines our strategy and corresponding action.

STRATEGY	ACTION
Identify ethnic groups within each industry that has a food safety scheme in place and determine the best way to manage specific food safety risks.	Ethnic representatives are included on the following Industry Consultative Committees: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• poultry and egg</li> <li>• dairy</li> <li>• meat</li> <li>• seafood.</li> </ul>
Take ethnic/traditional methods of food preparation into account when considering risk management options for particular food products.	Translated industry guidelines and fact sheets cover: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sushi handling</li> <li>• food business notification</li> <li>• seafood substitution</li> <li>• sulphur dioxide</li> <li>• unpackaged seafood</li> <li>• guideline for seafood retailers - compliant with the <i>Food Standards Code</i> (Chinese and Vietnamese).</li> </ul>
Provide access to a translation service for the Consumer and Industry Helpline.	An interpreter service is available for non-English speakers who wish to contact the Authority. A direct number is provided for the interpreter who calls our Helpline.
Target ethnic media with relevant press releases through the Community Relations Commission's ethnic media contacts.	Press releases are regularly distributed to ethnic media and specific publications. For example, each month the Authority provides the Australian Chinese Daily with food safety information on topical food issues, which the publication translates for its readers.
Take the needs of people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds into account when developing consumer information and education program proposals.	Pregnancy and allergy information (major initiatives for the Authority) has been translated into multiple languages.

As well as the translations noted above, the language set includes Khmer and Macedonian. Languages are included in the set where the incidence of consumers who speak a language other than English at home is highest.

A practical action the Authority is taking to make our website content accessible to speakers of other languages is to progressively create navigation paths through the site to translate material in each language. This means they will be able to navigate any page they land on in their own language.

## Code of conduct

The Authority is committed to meeting the expectations of the community to conduct our work with efficiency, economy, fairness, impartiality and integrity. These principles are inherent in our Code of Conduct.

## Annual report production

The NSW Food Authority Annual Report 2007-08 cost \$23,945 + GST to produce 1,000 printed copies. This report is available for free download from [www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au](http://www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au).

## Freedom of Information (FOI)

All the Authority's policy documents are published in the Government Gazette in the Summary of Affairs, as required under the *Freedom of Information Act 1989* (FOI Act). These documents are available for inspection at our offices. Some documents are free, while larger manuals incur a fee. Information about these policy documents can be obtained through the Authority's Consumer and Industry Helpline.

**Phone: 1300 552 406 Fax: (02) 9647 0026**

**Hours: Weekdays 8:30am to 5:30pm**

**Email: [contact@foodauthority.nsw.gov.au](mailto:contact@foodauthority.nsw.gov.au)**

A request to access documents or amend a record concerning an individual's personal affairs may be made by completing the application form which is found on the website [www.premiers.nsw.gov.au](http://www.premiers.nsw.gov.au). The form together with a cheque covering the \$30 application fee should be submitted to:

**The FOI Officer, NSW Food Authority, PO Box 6682, Silverwater NSW 1811**

Applications will be assessed in accordance with the provisions of the FOI Act.

During 2007-08, the Authority received nine new requests for documents under the FOI Act, compared with 13 in 2006-07. Two of these applications were broadened during the processing period. Three applications were also carried over from the 2006-07 reporting period. Of the 12 requests completed, nine were granted in full and three in part.

There has been a noticeable increase in the number of applications lodged by the media.

The Authority received two applications for an internal review of a FOI determination in the reporting period. Both of the internal review decisions upheld the original determination. In addition, two appeals to the Ombudsman were finalised. The first review found the Authority had acted appropriately in processing the FOI request. The second review saw differing views of the consultation provisions of the FOI Act, however the matter was closed and the Ombudsman did not conduct a formal investigation of the Authority. No applications were received for the amendment or notation of records, nor were any Ministerial certificates issued. The Authority also determined all requests within the time limits prescribed by the FOI Act.

## Privacy management

The *NSW Food Act 2003* imposes particular obligations on officers of the NSW Food Authority in relation to the non-disclosure of certain confidential information obtained by them in the course of their duties. Further, in the collection, disclosure and use of personal information the Authority is governed by the provisions of the *Privacy and Personal Information Act 1998* and, if the personal information contains information or an opinion about an individual's health or disability, then the provisions of the *Health Records and Information Privacy Act 2002* also apply. During 2007-08, the Authority considered a privacy consultant's report regarding the Authority's adherence to the information protection principles (contained within these three Acts), with a view to revising the Authority's Privacy Management Plan.

## Energy performance

### *Corporate commitment*

The NSW Food Authority is committed to minimising its impact on the environment by:

- achieving energy savings
- incorporating sustainable energy management practices where cost effective
- using whole-of-government energy contracts to achieve cost savings
- purchasing green power to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Electricity is supplied to our offices through the State Contract Control Board electricity contracts C777. This includes the purchase of six percent green power.

### *Planning*

An Energy Manager and Energy Coordinator have accountability and responsibility for energy management. Where feasible and cost effective, the Authority will endeavour to reduce energy consumption in buildings and its vehicle fleet. This year we continued with our 'Think Tank' initiative (established in March 2007). The Think Tank explores and develops the ideas and talents of people within the Authority – with a view to thinking creatively about a range of issues, including reducing the Authority's carbon footprint. To encourage staff to reduce energy use and reinforce sustainability, they are sent regular emails and are updated on environmental promotions on our Think Tank intranet page.

### *Future Direction*

The Energy Management Plan includes the NSW Food Authority's policy directions, monitoring targeting and reporting mechanisms and energy management strategies. Apart from using whole-of-government energy contracts, we purchase GreenPower and products with recycled content where feasible. We also have a 'Greener Workplace Group' – a committee of dedicated staff members who explore new initiatives in reducing greenhouse emissions. Successful projects during the year included the introduction of a worm farm and increasing light energy efficiency at head office by installing sensor lights and light switches for meeting rooms and individual offices. Our vehicle fleet is being progressively downsized to use four-cylinder and hybrid cars, and smarter travel plans are being introduced where possible. Staff awareness and participation is promoted through our intranet Think Tank page.

## Waste reduction

The Authority operates in accordance with the NSW Government Waste Reduction and Purchasing Policy (WRAPP). Details are reported to the Department of Environment and Climate Change on a bi-annual basis. Our policy is to continue to reduce waste by increasing recycling and purchasing recycled content products where possible. Individual paper recycling boxes have been distributed to staff members with the aim of increasing recycled content. All copy paper purchased has a minimum 50 percent recycled content and remanufactured laser printer and fax toner cartridges are purchased when available. Initiatives for waste reduction have included increasing the replacement of paper documents with electronic documents. This includes email, e-newsletters and electronic record keeping. Double-sided printing and copying is also used where appropriate. Our Waste Reduction and Purchasing Policy is one of the key areas our Greener Workplace Group continues to focus on.







# Preparing for the future

The NSW Food Authority has developed a three-year strategic plan (2008-11) which clearly outlines our goals and objectives.

The plan identifies five milestones which need to be achieved by June 2009 if we are to reach our 2011 goals. These milestones are the Authority's strategic priorities for the coming twelve months.

Cross-agency projects are formed around each milestone area, with the progress of these projects reviewed quarterly. The strategic plan is then revised annually in a workshop involving staff from across the agency.

## STRATEGIC PLAN 2008-11

### June 2009 milestones

- 1. Targeted pathogen reduction intervention strategy development**
- 2. Food Regulation 2009 finalised for gazettal**
- 3. Knowledge strategy developed and approved**
- 4. Building a Stronger Workplace phase II implemented**
- 5. Regulatory gaps proposal developed**

### Strategic pathways

Effectively  
manage  
emerging risks

Effective  
partnership  
approach

Focus on  
sustaining  
resources

Building and using  
a science and  
evidence base



The strategic plan identifies five milestones which need to be achieved by June 2009 if we are to reach our 2011 goals.



## 2011 scorecard

## 2011 outcomes

- Decrease of the foodborne illness (FBI) trend
- % decrease in illness as a result of targeted pathogen intervention
- No. FBI incidents that are suspected to be linked to improper food handling by industry.

### Reduced foodborne illness

- % of food products that comply with labelling regulations
- % of unacceptable audits compared to all audits
- % of audits with critical CARs
- % of unacceptable inspections compared to all inspections.

### Strategies in place for food industry culture of compliance

- No. of visits to key consumer content on website
- No. of consumer and community education campaigns conducted.

### Empowered consumers make safe and healthy food choices

- % of food regulation MC standing committee & ISC meetings attended
- % of regulations enacted (with direct impact on food businesses) which have been through a formal risk assessment process, industry consultation, peer review and for which a Regulatory Impact Statement has been prepared.

### Effective and nationally aligned NSW regulatory framework

- No. of visits to key consumer content on website
- No. of consumer and community education campaigns conducted.

### Trusted source of food information

- No. of field staff with remote access to NSW Food Authority network
- Customer satisfaction with NSW Food Authority Electronic Service Delivery.

### State-of-the-art service delivery

- % of staff engaged in training and development programs
- % of staff who believe they have the skills and support required for their duties.

### Sustainable workforce with a knowledge culture

- Secure, sustainable and diverse funding framework
- Agency revenue is sufficient to meet capital and recurrent expenditure requirements.

### Secure and diverse funding

Proactive role nationally and internationally

Embracing technology

Proactive communications

Actively engage stakeholders



## Strategic pathways

### Effectively manage emerging risks

- Proactive detection of emerging risks through effective stakeholder management
- Base issues management on risk analysis principles: risk assessment, risk management, risk communication relationships and horizon scanning
- Utilise risk analysis principles to manage known and emerging risks
- Develop plans and protocols to efficiently coordinate resources to manage risks.

### Effective partnership approach

- Consult proactively with industry and other stakeholders
- Continue to build partnerships with local government and approved auditors
- Enhance partnerships with other government agencies.

### Focus on sustaining resources

- Workforce development and review framework linked to regulatory model
- Workforce culture repositioned
- Recruitment, training programs and succession planning aligned with regulatory model
- Infrastructure supports staff roles
- Learning organisation supported by knowledge management
- Retain staff through flexible working arrangements which meet lifecycle needs.

### Building and using a science and evidence base

- Foodborne illness data analysis informs regulatory process and priorities
- Regulatory process supported by current science and best practice
- Survey program targeting problem areas
- Maximise use of laboratory services
- Build science partnerships
- Review decisions in light of emerging science
- Be transparent and open in communicating science.

### Proactive role nationally and internationally

- Participate actively in national regulatory forums, focussing on areas relevant to 2011 targets
- Participate actively in FSANZ processes
- Coordinate input from relevant New South Wales agencies
- Tap into Australia's work in international forums
- Enhance the Authority's network in regional New South Wales.

### Embracing technology

- Move to remote audit and inspection reporting for field staff
- Build internal capacity to provide electronic service delivery to customers
- Keep abreast of developments within technology sectors to identify opportunities for developing business solutions
- Align our technology needs with the NSW Government Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Strategic Plan.

### Proactive communications

- Open and responsive communications practices
- Communicate changes to regulatory model to stakeholders
- Ensure communications meet audience needs
- Share issues management outcomes with stakeholders
- Communications mechanisms linked and diverse
- Website delivers live information
- Maximum use of media to deliver key messages.

### Actively engage stakeholders

- Develop, maintain and enhance consultative committees for all regulated industry sectors
- Regularly communicate in industry journals, newsletter and forums
- Support consultative committees to deliver on their strategic business plans
- Seek support and assistance from stakeholders in their areas of expertise.

## Meeting the June 2008 milestones

To remain dynamic and fresh, the Authority reviews its strategic plan every 12 months. The following achievements were made against the June 2008 milestones (featured in the 2007-10 Plan).

JUNE 2008 MILESTONES	ACHIEVEMENTS AGAINST JUNE 2008 MILESTONES
1. Indicative baseline level of foodborne illness in NSW established.	A survey program was established that determines the underlying (baseline) level of foodborne illness in the community. Surveys are now collected and analysed on a monthly basis by the Department of Health and Ageing.
2. Innovative intervention strategies for foodborne illness reduction developed.	This project has increased the range of intervention strategies used by the Authority to reduce foodborne illness. Many new strategies have been adopted from overseas models, including the UK. This project has also enhanced the methodology to determine priority areas for intervention, again using models from other agencies.
3. Third party audit program piloted in nominated sectors.	This project was successful in developing a communication strategy for industry and commercial food safety auditors. Pilots in nominated low risk audit areas are due to commence early in 2009.
4. Strategy for enforcement program to promote compliant behaviour developed.	This project determined a range of enforcement programs to promote compliance with the <i>NSW Food Act 2003</i> by food businesses within NSW. Key outcomes from this project included convening a workshop with local government representatives to educate them on the enforcement programs and tools that are available to them in enforcing the <i>NSW Food Act 2003</i> .
5. First round of 'building stronger workplace' initiatives in place.	This project saw staff workshops held to discuss the Authority's values and behaviours, as well as developing an improved 'goal setting, review and development' system for staff feedback and appraisal.
6. New strategies for consumer education function developed.	This project saw the successful appointment of a Manager for Consumer Education for 2008-09, as well as an ongoing commitment to educating the community about food safety through a major promotion at the Royal Easter Show in Sydney.
7. Strategy for knowledge management developed.	This project set about capturing the intellectual capital of the Authority's employees to assist in succession planning and address knowledge gaps when long term employees leave. This project has been rolled over into the 2008-11 strategic plan.



# Glossary

AFSC	Australian Food Standards Committee
ANZFA	Australia New Zealand Food Authority
ANZFAAC	Australia New Zealand Food Authority Advisory Committee
ANZFSC	Australia New Zealand Food Standards Council
AQIS	Australian Quarantine Inspection Service
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
CRC	Cooperative Research Centre
FBI Unit	Foodborne Illness Investigation Unit of the NSW Food Authority
FRP	Food Regulation Partnership
FRSC	Food Regulation Standing Committee – an advisory group of the Australia and New Zealand Food Regulation Ministerial Council
FSANZ	Food Standards Australia New Zealand
FSC	Food Standards Code Australian
GM	Genetically Modified
HACC	Home and Community Care
HACCP	Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point
ISC	Implementation Sub-Committee of the Food Regulation Standing Committee
NAFSIS	National Food Information System
NFSC	National Food Standards Council
NSFWG	National Safe Food Working Group
OH&S	Occupational Health and Safety
PIN	Penalty Infringement Notice
SDAC	Standards Development Advisory Committee of Food Standards Australia New Zealand (see FSANZ)

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6 Avenue of the Americas, Newington NSW 2127

PO Box 6682, Silverwater NSW 1811

Tel: 02 9741 4777 Fax: 02 9741 4888

[www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au](http://www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au)

Consumer and Industry Helpline

Tel: 1300 552 406 Fax: 02 9647 0026

Email: [contact@foodauthority.nsw.gov.au](mailto:contact@foodauthority.nsw.gov.au)

Office hours 8.30am to 5.30pm Monday to Friday

