

NSW Food Authority Annual Report 2006-07



NSW Food Authority

safer food, clearer choices



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

Our Cover: NSW Food Authority Enforcement Officer, Gregory Vakaci, discusses food inspection procedures with Dhanuka Siriwardena, a Randwick Council Environmental Health Officer at the Farmers' Produce Market in Moore Park, Sydney. Building partnerships with 152 councils was a highlight of the Authority's activity in 2006-07.

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Our Minister



This year, the NSW Food Authority implemented a vital partnership with local councils that is integral to ensuring food safety for consumers throughout the State.

The Authority is still the only fully integrated food safety agency in Australia. It continues to make real progress in ensuring food safety right through the food chain – from farms and factories through to wholesalers and retailers – for the benefit of over six million NSW consumers. In pursuing its paddock to plate approach, the Authority has enjoyed excellent relationships with other state and local government departments.

Through a combination of communication, education, training, scientific analysis and enforcement activities, the Authority ensures NSW is a leader in food safety. It also assists consumers, including pregnant women and people with allergic reactions, to make informed food choices.

New legislation will soon be before Parliament to make local councils' involvement in food regulation mandatory and increase uniformity for the 55,000 food businesses in this State. The NSW Government has allocated \$1.58 million towards implementing the partnership and this year the Authority has set up a dedicated unit to enable this to

happen. Local councils have indicated overwhelming support for the partnership, which the Authority is now piloting.

The vast majority of food businesses continue to do the right thing. However, during 2006-07 the Authority issued 183 Penalty Infringement Notices and initiated 16 successful court prosecutions for 70 offences. Businesses that contravene the food laws will rightly face the full glare of public scrutiny with the Authority's 'name and shame' initiative to publish successful prosecutions on the NSW Food Authority's website. The Government takes food safety very seriously and the public has a right to know about those outlets that have not met stringent standards.

This year, the Authority cemented important international relationships by signing memoranda of understanding with the New Zealand Food Safety Authority and the Beijing Food Safety Administration (BFSA). The Authority has shared Australia's expertise on food handling at the Sydney Olympics with the BFSA. This system is now being used as a model by the Chinese authorities for setting high food standards for the Beijing Olympics.

The end customers of the Authority are consumers – who everyday enjoy the diversity of food NSW has on offer. The



Authority has continued to meet the changing needs of NSW consumers. For example, it redesigned its website to be more accessible to people with special needs and implemented a well received campaign on food safety during pregnancy. The Authority's presence in events such as the Sydney Royal Easter Show continues to meet growing consumer interest in food issues.

I invite you to read the details of the Authority's achievements in this 2006-07 annual report.

The Hon. Ian Macdonald MLC
NSW Minister for Primary Industries

Letter of Submission



31 October 2007

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 2007.

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

Yours sincerely

George Davey
Director-General



Our Director-General



This year we developed the tag line “safer food, clearer choices” to define our commitment to the people of NSW, which is to make sure that we have access to a safe food supply and are able to make healthy and informed decisions when we choose food from that supply.

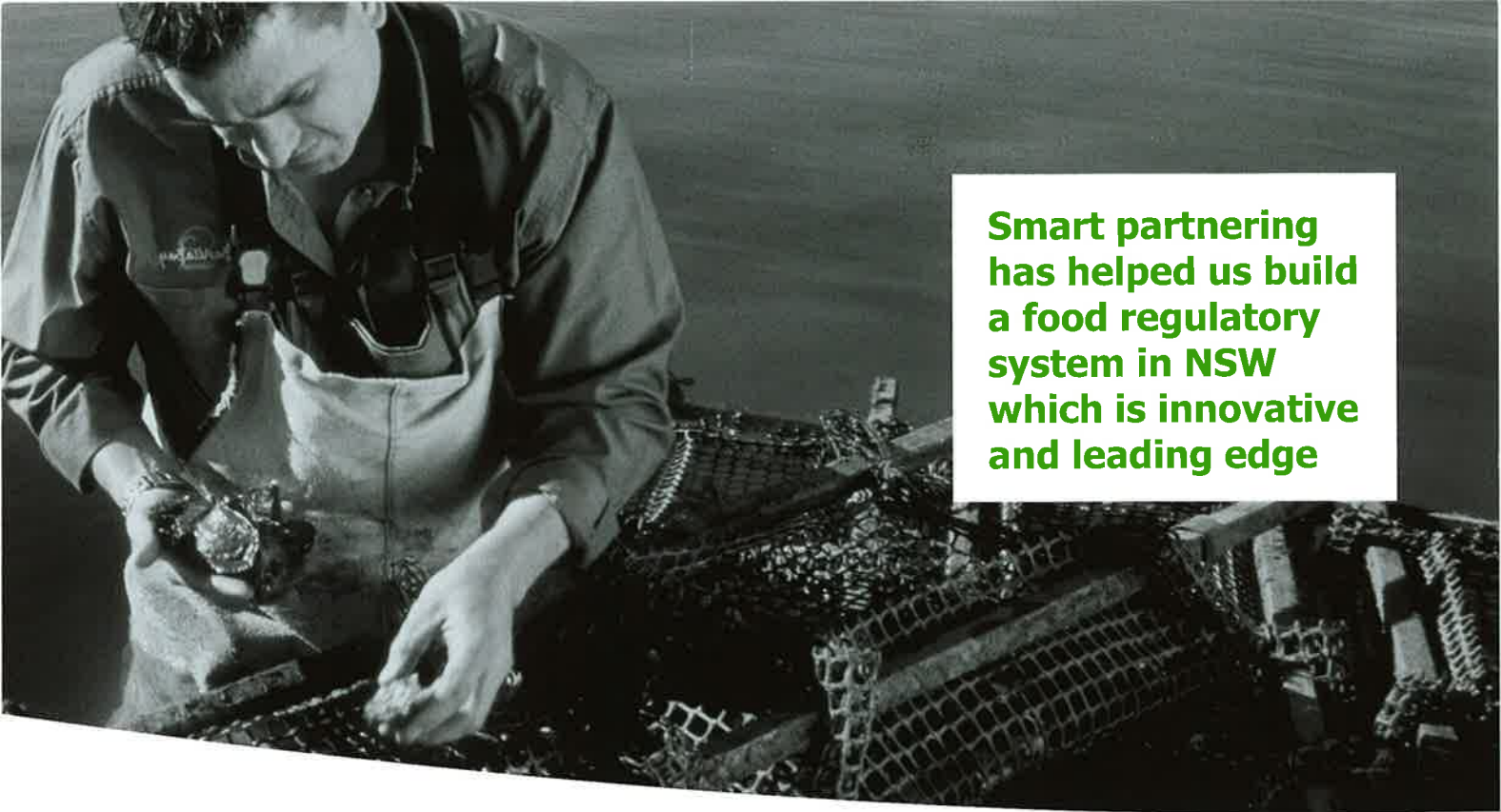
The Authority and its 118 staff are responsible for regulating around 55,000 food businesses. We recognise that the Authority can only achieve so much on its own and that it is far more effective to work with our partners to achieve our goals and those of the government, ultimately delivering safer food and clearer choices for the people of NSW.

In this report I will highlight how smart partnering has helped us build a food regulatory system in NSW which is innovative and leading edge in many areas. In the past year we have continued to build partnerships with government agencies within NSW, with national and international agencies and with the food industry.

Working in conjunction with its partners, the NSW Food Authority has been able to take very effective measures to maintain the high level of food safety expected by the people of NSW and to respond effectively to food safety incidents. The results of this cooperative approach are described in this report and clearly prove that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

Partnerships within NSW – working closely with local government and other NSW agencies

With a strong focus on the retail and food service sectors, local government has been involved in food regulation in NSW for more than 100 years. However, local councils are not obliged to undertake food regulatory work. In recent years, the Authority and local government have developed a partnership model that recognises the need for effective and uniform food regulatory coverage across the State. The NSW Government provided the



**Smart partnering
has helped us build
a food regulatory
system in NSW
which is innovative
and leading edge**

Authority with \$1.58M during 2006-07 to implement the model, which was used to fund a program called the Food Regulation Partnership. The success of this major initiative relies on the cooperation and involvement of the Local Government and Shires Associations, other peak local government bodies and each of the 152 local government councils.

The Food Regulation Partnership was officially launched by our Minister, the Hon Ian Macdonald, MLC on 5 December 2006, and I am delighted to report that substantial progress has been made.

Legislation has been drafted which will for the first time mandate the role of local government, within a framework that takes account of variable resources and capacity within councils. Cost recovery mechanisms will be enhanced and the Authority will provide training and other support to councils. Where there are gaps in regulatory coverage, the Authority will engage alternative suppliers of regulatory services.

Through the enthusiastic involvement of local government, I am confident that the Food Regulation Partnership will prove an effective and efficient model for food regulation in the retail and food service sectors.

The Authority also values its partnerships with other NSW government agencies, especially those with NSW Health

and the NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI), which are defined by Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs).

With NSW Health we work together in responding to foodborne illness, managing emergencies (intentional and unintentional), developing policy and standards and providing consumer education and health promotion. Examples of cross-agency cooperation this year include:

- joint investigation of almost 1000 group and individual cases of food poisoning.
- the use of DNA fingerprinting technology to trace the source of outbreaks in collaboration with the Institute of Clinical Pathology and Medical Research at Westmead Hospital.
- our rapid response to NSW Health's call for assistance during the flood in the Hunter region by providing food safety information to flood affected food businesses and households through our local government partners, our website and the media.
- support and advice from NSW Health in assessing the public health impacts of proposed national and trans-Tasman standards in relation to food fortification, and in the development of programs to mitigate identified risks.

With DPI we continued our joint response to the detection of dioxins in

Above: The Authority's shellfish harvesting classification program ensures oysters and mussels harvested in NSW are safe for human consumption and meet export requirements.

seafood from Sydney Harbour, with a particular focus on recreational fishing. Based on the outcomes of an extensive DPI testing program, our expert panel recommended that fish and crustaceans caught west of the Sydney Harbour Bridge should not be consumed. The panel also concluded that certain fish species caught by recreational fishers east of the Sydney Harbour Bridge were relatively free of dioxins and could be consumed in accordance with specific dietary advice. The Authority and DPI relayed this advice to recreational fishers via letters, magazine articles, foreshore signage and various websites.

DPI also assisted the Authority to improve seafood traceability along the supply chain and joined forces with NSW Police and the Authority to investigate black market oyster operations. NSW Police also supported us in a number of other enforcement activities during the year.

National partnerships – working toward national consistency in food safety

The Authority is committed to delivering nationally consistent food safety outcomes and therefore continued its engagement with the trans-Tasman food regulatory system. This requires us to maintain strong cooperative relationships with other Australian jurisdictions and New Zealand.

Our contribution to trans-Tasman policy and standards development and to work on consistent implementation remains substantial. Last year, Authority staff participated in over 50 committees and working groups, often in a leading role. We take this responsibility seriously and work towards facilitating agreement between jurisdictions on the delivery of minimum effective food regulation. Key achievements this year include:

- joint leadership of the development of the National Food Incident Response Protocol with Food Standards Australia New Zealand, which was successfully tested through the year.
- leadership of the working group which facilitated development of a five-year

Food Regulation Standing Committee Strategic Plan.

In addition, the Authority's work on food safety schemes for vulnerable populations in hospital and aged care facilities was presented nationally and provided evidence to underpin the national standard, which will come into effect in October 2008. Similarly, in anticipation of a national egg food safety standard, the Authority advanced its consultation with the NSW egg industry to develop an egg food safety scheme framework.

Partnerships with the food industry – early engagement

Food safety schemes only work effectively with the full support and cooperation of our industry stakeholders. Therefore, a solid partnership with relevant industries is an essential element of our regulatory programs to enable the delivery of safer food and clearer choices.

Ministerial advisory committees have been established for all industries which have a food safety scheme in place. These currently cover the dairy, seafood, shellfish, poultry and egg, and meat industries, with committees for the horticulture industry and for food service to vulnerable populations to be established in the future. The committees agreed to undertake business planning processes to establish their goals and targeted work plans for the next three to five years, which is a significant development. Several business plans were prepared this year and the remainder are underway.

During the year we substantially completed our comprehensive shellfish harvesting classification program in accordance with international standards. The program ensures that oysters and mussels harvested in NSW are safe for human consumption and meet export requirements. This extensive program commenced three years ago and involves classifying harvest areas in 37 estuaries along the NSW coastline.

The program allows the Authority to determine appropriate control measures

for the management, harvesting and sale of shellfish grown in NSW. In partnership with industry, we now monitor test sites to ensure conditions are suitable for the harvest of shellfish. The program meets the requirements of the national Seafood Primary Production and Processing Standard and the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service for export-listed areas.

Proactive interaction with industry helps prevent breaches of the food law. However, when breaches do occur, the Authority takes appropriate and proportionate enforcement action. For instance, this year 3847 complaints were investigated and 183 Penalty Infringement Notices were issued. Areas of ongoing concern have been meat and seafood substitution and the use of the illegal additive sulphur dioxide in some meats. Targeted enforcement activity has resulted in a significant reduction in these offences. Enforcement of breaches in health claims legislation also continues to be a growing, resource intensive and complex area of activity.

Where prosecutions were warranted because of the nature of the offence, the Authority achieved a 100 percent success rate. This includes our first Supreme Court prosecution, in a case involving false labelling of Scotch whisky.

In response to significant public interest, the Authority now provides consumers with easy access to information on successful prosecutions on our website. The Authority is also working towards providing information on its website on businesses that receive penalty notices or on-the-spot fines from the Authority and local councils. This initiative is consistent with our objective to be open and transparent in our work and serves as a strong deterrent to food businesses breaking the law.

Right: Plump tuna are auctioned at the Sydney Fish Market. The Authority has published *Guidelines for Seafood Retailers* to inform shopkeepers how best to handle and store fish to avoid risks to consumers.

International partnerships – keeping pace with world's best practice

Developing partnerships with similar agencies in other countries enables us to improve our policies and procedures to meet international benchmarks and pursue our goal to be Australia's leading food agency.

One of our most valued relationships is with the New Zealand Food Safety Authority, which is domestically similar

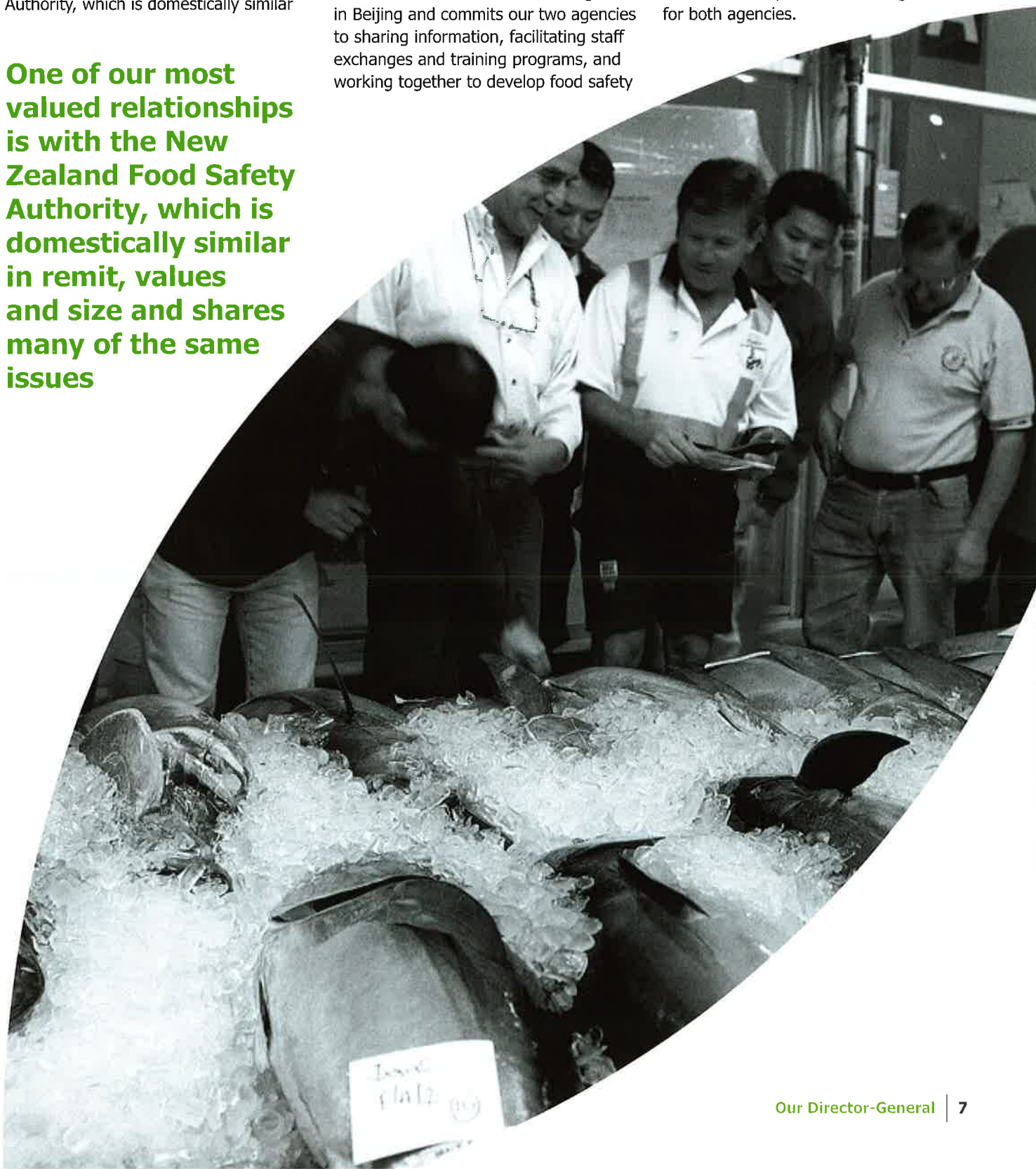
One of our most valued relationships is with the New Zealand Food Safety Authority, which is domestically similar in remit, values and size and shares many of the same issues

in remit, values and size and shares many of the same issues. Our close and productive relationship was formalised in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) this year under which we share information, share experts and provide opportunities for staff exchanges.

The Authority has also developed an excellent relationship with the Beijing Food Administration. This too was formalised in a MOU which was signed in Beijing and commits our two agencies to sharing information, facilitating staff exchanges and training programs, and working together to develop food safety

programs for major events such as the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

Over the past couple of years we have also fostered closer relations with food safety agencies in the UK and Ireland. This year, a senior manager from the Food Standards Agency of Northern Ireland (FSANI), Greg Irwin, acted in a senior management position on our executive team. This proved to be a successful and productive arrangement for both agencies.





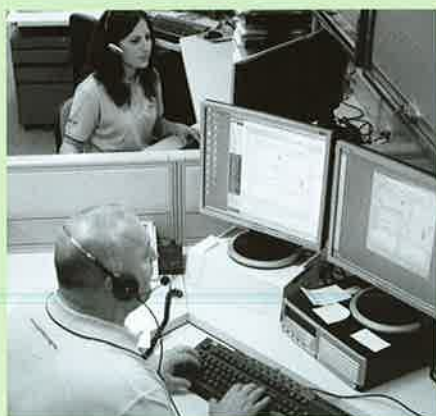
We are now developing a MOU with the FSANI to further develop the cooperative relationship.

The Authority's expertise in risk communication received international recognition. Following the success of our 2005 mercury in fish education program, the Hong Kong Food and Environmental Hygiene Department commissioned us to conduct risk communication training programs for their management team. The workshops were well received and further enhanced our reputation in this field.



International partnerships allow us to continue to develop and implement world class food safety management systems. They also enable us to develop valuable networks for our staff with experts in other countries and to provide professional development opportunities. We gain access to the world's best practice, develop good communication links and are provided with input on emerging issues that could impact on the people of NSW.

The combination of our partnerships with local government, with NSW, national and international agencies, and our partnerships with the food industry, allows us to provide a range of food safety services to the people of NSW, including targeted education campaigns.



Community services

The Authority has a statutory responsibility to provide the people of NSW with information on food safety and to assist them to make healthy food choices. We continue to pursue funding opportunities for this area to help us meet our obligations in community education.

Currently we deliver community programs in two ways. Firstly, we provide a website and Consumer and Industry Helpline to manage consumer enquiries and complaints. Secondly, we run targeted education programs to address knowledge gaps in the community.

The use of our website and Helpline continues to increase. For instance, the latter fielded more than 18,000 enquiries this year and there was a 72 percent increase in visits to our website, with 165,000 visitors over the year.

The website was redesigned to make it easier to navigate, with dedicated sections for industry and consumers. The new site complies with accessibility standards and the NSW Government's new style directive so that the content reaches the widest possible audiences.

In terms of community education campaigns we focused on three themes: food safety during pregnancy, understanding food labels and allergy awareness.

We initiated a campaign on food safety during pregnancy when feedback on our successful mercury in fish campaign suggested that consumers wanted more information on food safety during pregnancy in general. The campaign was a success, with post campaign market research finding that 61 percent of pregnant women now feel there is sufficient information available on diet and food safety (up 23 percent).

We also received positive feedback on our exhibit at the 2007 Sydney Royal Easter Show within the Woolworths Fresh Food Dome, which focused on helping consumers read and understand food labels, including the "use by date", the "best before date" and ingredients lists. An estimated 900,000 people visited the Woolworths Fresh Food Dome.

In relation to food allergens, we continued to work closely with Anaphylaxis Australia and we sponsored its redeveloped allergen ingredient cards. These cards alert people to food ingredients they need to avoid preventing allergic reactions.

Aligning our functions with the NSW State Plan

All government agencies articulate the services they provide for the people of NSW in a standard format called a Results and Services Plan (RSP). Indeed, this Annual Report is structured around our RSP.

In December 2006, we commenced a major review of our RSP to align it with the priority areas outlined in the NSW Government's State Plan, which was launched by the Premier on 14 November 2006. This also provided us

the opportunity to align our functions in relation to the State Plan via our RSP.

The review was conducted in consultation with staff, the unions and stakeholders. The outcome was a proposal for a new organisational structure, which is more balanced and more clearly links our roles and responsibilities to the State Plan.

The Authority's most important resource is its staff. I am indebted to their professionalism, dedication and commitment.

The new structure will be implemented next year without any loss or downgrading of positions. Our service areas will be:

- science, standards and communication
- compliance, investigation and enforcement.

These will be supported by internal services.

I believe the alignment will give the organisation a better balance, allowing us to focus on strategic goals, improve communications and joint team work, and enhance development opportunities for our staff.

In tandem with the alignment process, I invited staff to share their views on how we can "build a stronger workplace" to ensure the Authority remains an employer of choice with a supportive and achievement-oriented culture. I was impressed by the clarity of thought, enthusiasm and honesty with which staff engaged in the exercise. I look forward to building a dynamic learning and development environment that will enable us to balance our commitments in work and life, enhance our skills and expertise, and plan for succession.

Acknowledgements

The Authority's most important resource is its staff. I am indebted to their professionalism, dedication and commitment. These qualities enabled us to build a food regulatory agency recognised amongst its stakeholders for its integrity, objectivity, effectiveness and efficiency.

Our partnerships within government, and with industry and community stakeholders, are based on people and I acknowledge their dedication and commitment which makes our food system as good as it is.

I thank all our stakeholders for their continued cooperation and support of our activities. In particular, I acknowledge the strong and enthusiastic leadership and support of our Minister, the Hon Ian Macdonald MLC.



George Davey



Our Highlights

- The implementation of a new Food Regulation Partnership between the Authority and local governments will boost consumer food safety and enable authorities to respond more quickly to food emergencies and recalls. The partnership, which will enable councils to play a bigger role in monitoring 55,000 food businesses across NSW, serves as a model for other state and national partnerships.
- Out of 152 local councils, 143 (94 percent) have committed to undertaking regular food inspections of food businesses in their areas when the *Food Amendment Bill 2007* is gazetted. The Authority is trialling the arrangement with 30 councils so that the program can be rolled out smoothly when the legislation is passed.
- The Authority has almost completed a major reorganisation exercise to align its service groups more closely with its results and services plan and State Government priorities. The new arrangement, arrived at after extensive consultation with staff and unions, will be implemented in the next financial year.
- A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed between the Beijing Food Safety Administration (BFSA) and the Authority in November 2006. The MOU will benefit consumers through increased cooperation, sharing of scientific expertise and promoting exchanges and training programs. The Authority has given advice to the BFSA on food safety policies for the 2008 Beijing Olympics.
- A MOU, which was signed by the New Zealand Food Safety Agency and the Authority, will improve cooperation on a range of food safety issues and benefit consumers and industry.
- The Foodborne Illness Investigation (FBI) Unit responded to almost 1000 cases of food poisoning within the time deadlines specified in the Authority's results and services plan.
- The Compliance and Enforcement Unit performed 6139 audits of food businesses and investigated 3847 complaints.
- The Authority successfully prosecuted 16 food businesses for 70 offences and also had its first Supreme Court victory in a case involving falsely labelled Scotch whisky. The contraventions included unhygienic conditions representing a public health risk; fish and meat substitution; and, illegal use of sulphur dioxide preservative in fresh meat.
- In a joint operation with the Department of Primary Industries, the Authority checked 293 restaurants, seafood retailers, wholesalers, processors and commercial fishers along the NSW coastline from Eden to Tweed Heads. Evidence was gathered for three prosecutions and 39 penalty notices were issued for substitution and labelling offences.
- The Authority's website was revamped and an intranet, entitled Food Loops, completed. Among the most visited areas of the website was the Food Safety and Pregnancy portal, which targets food safety during pregnancy, especially prevention of *Listeria* infection.
- The Authority's stand at the Royal Easter Show in Sydney was situated in the Woolworths Fresh Food Dome, which received 900,000 visitors. The theme was labelling and the Authority launched a suite of new educational publications at the show.
- The Authority has begun publishing its name and shame list of food outlets which were successfully prosecuted and convicted for contravening the Food Act.
- The Authority's new Safe Kids' Lunch Boxes campaign has been adopted as a model by the United States Army's Environmental Health unit. The campaign promotes the use of ice blocks and frozen drinks to help prevent food poisoning.
- The Authority continued to play an important role in educating consumers about allergy prevention. This included working with Anaphylaxis Australia, the Australian Medical Association and other industry and community groups to help



The partnership, which will enable councils to play a bigger role in monitoring 55,000 food businesses across NSW, serves as a model for other state and national partnerships

raise awareness of serious allergies during Allergy Awareness Week.

- *New Food Handling Guidelines for Temporary Events*, which were issued by the Authority and are published on its website, will help improve food safety and cut red tape at markets and special food events across the state.
- An investigation into claims of misleading labelling in the egg industry is being conducted by the Authority. The Minister asked for the investigation after media reports alleged consumers were paying premium prices for eggs incorrectly labelled as free range.
- After winning an international tender, the Authority conducted two workshops on risk communication and management for Hong Kong's Food and Environment Hygiene Department. The workshops were rated highly by participants.
- A Poultry and Egg Industries Advisory Committee has been formed to advise the Food Authority and the Minister for Primary Industries. In addition, the Authority has helped constitute the first consumer-directed advisory committee on food safety among vulnerable populations.
- The Authority's investigation into links between *Salmonella* Saintpaul food poisoning cases and rockmelons became the first test of the National Food Incident Response Protocol.

The investigation eventually involved authorities in Queensland, Victoria and the Northern Territory. The Authority used new DNA fingerprinting technology to trace particular types of *Salmonella*.

- The NSW Shellfish Program, which is administered by the Authority, passed the rigorous export quality inspection of the Australian Quarantine and Food Inspection Services (AQIS) with distinction. The program involves monitoring and controlling 37 estuaries and 75 shellfish harvesting areas along the coast. The harvesting areas are closed or opened for oyster harvesting depending on water quality levels.
- Delegations from China and Hong Kong were among international visitors to the Authority in 2006-07. Heading the China delegation was Jianhua Wang, Deputy Director of the Beijing Food Administration and Deputy Director of the Beijing Administration of Industry and Commerce.
- Overseas visits by agency staff included a visit by Dr Craig Shadbolt, Manager of the Authority's FBI Unit, to government agencies in North America and Europe to examine best international models in foodborne illness investigation. Among the agencies he visited was the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention; the Food Safety Authority in Ireland and the United Kingdom Health Protection Agency.

Above: The Authority is responsible for the regulation of 13,000 licensed food businesses and monitors the activities of thousands other food outlets.



Our Organisation

Our history

The NSW Food Authority was established on 5 April 2004 by merging SafeFood NSW with the food regulatory activities of NSW Health. The merger completed the integration process begun in 1998 when SafeFood NSW was established to bring together a number of state agencies and programs.

The Authority regulates the entire food industry in NSW and has introduced specific food safety schemes by regulation for a number of food industry sectors. The Authority is responsible to the Minister for Primary Industries.

Australia's first and only through-chain food regulatory agency, the Authority is responsible for food safety across the entire NSW food industry, from primary production to point-of-sale. It enables a more streamlined, consistent and efficient approach to food regulation and provides a single point of contact for both the industry and the public.

Our role

The Authority provides the regulatory framework for the food industry in NSW by administering and enforcing the State's food legislation. This includes the national Food Standards Code as it applies in NSW and in particular the *Food Act 2003*, and the food safety schemes introduced by regulation.

The Authority's 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
- where necessary, penalising non-compliance
- enhancing the scientific base underpinning food policy and regulation.

The Authority facilitates the development and review of national and NSW food legislation in consultation with stakeholders by:

- 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.

The Authority educates consumers on food issues by:

- delivering targeted consumer education programs
- disseminating information on good food-handling practices
- helping consumers understand food labels.

Working with other NSW agencies

The Authority works closely with other NSW Government agencies, particularly NSW Health, the NSW Department of Primary Industries, the NSW Department of Environment and Climate Change, and the NSW Office of Fair Trading.

NSW Health remains responsible for the notifiable disease system and surveillance of foodborne illness, and epidemiological investigation. The Authority and NSW Health respond jointly to foodborne illness, implement nutrition policy and participate in health promotion activities related to food.

Australia's first and only through-chain food regulatory agency, the Authority is responsible for food safety across the entire NSW food industry

The NSW Department of Primary Industries remains responsible for the control of animal and plant diseases and pests, livestock identification and traceability, stock foods, use of veterinary medicines and other products and fertilisers.

Working with local government

The Authority works with local government to administer and enforce aspects of the *Food Act 2003* and the Food Standards Code, especially the

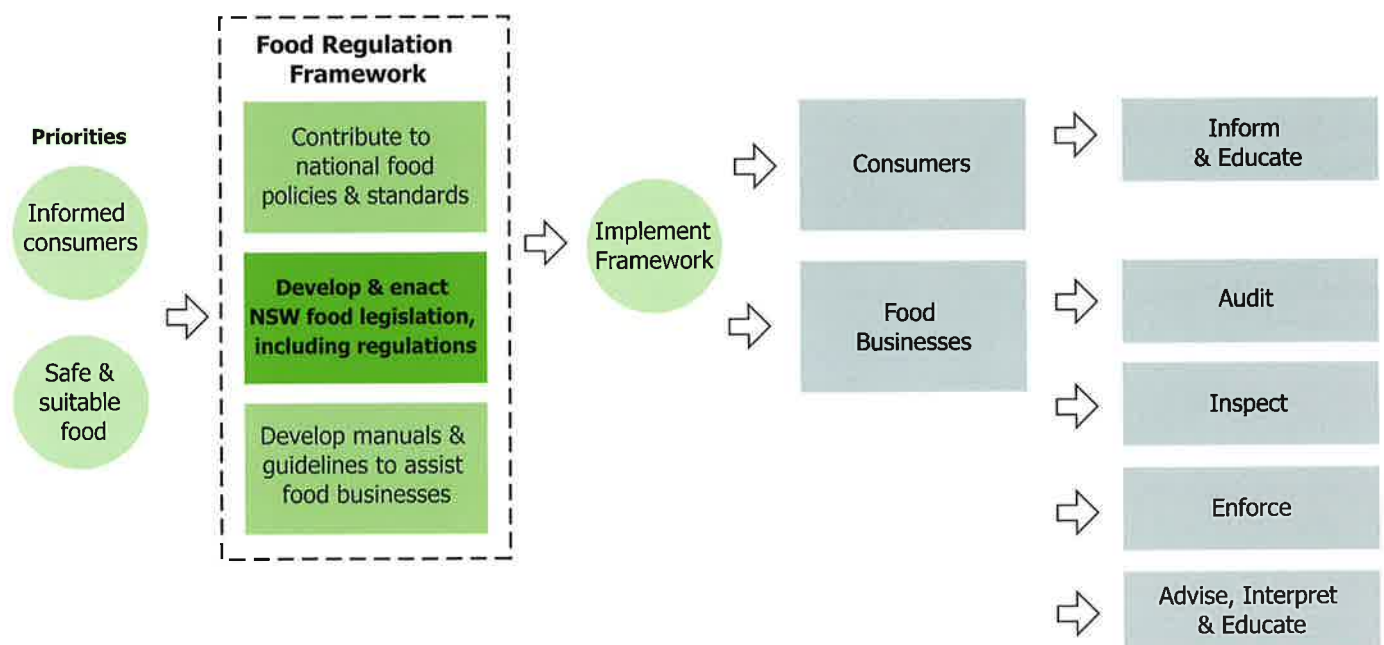
food safety standards in the code.

It has developed the Food Regulation Partnership, which includes representatives from the Local Government and Shires Associations of NSW, the Australian Institute of Environmental Health, the Development and Environmental Professionals Association, the NSW Department of Local Government and NSW Health. The partnership will allow local governments and the Authority to work together to regulate the NSW retail and food service industry.

Above: The Authority's responsibility for food safety extends from handling of crops on farms through to consumption by the public. It is still the only through-chain food regulatory agency in Australia.

The blueprint for this partnership was developed and agreed to by the NSW Government and local government. Implementation commenced in 2006-07. It will improve the coordination and effectiveness of local government in food regulation.

Figure 2: The NSW Regulation Framework



Our management and structure



George Davey, Director-General

As leader of the Authority, Mr Davey reports directly to the NSW Minister for Primary Industries on all the Authority's activities, which are directed at ensuring food in NSW is safe and suitable. He is a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Food Science and Technology, a Member of the Australian Society for Microbiology, and a member of the Institute of Food Technologists (USA). He holds Bachelor of Science (Honours) and Master of Science in Food Technology from the University of NSW.



Terry Outtrim, Executive Director Operations

Until December 2006, Mr Outtrim led the Operations Branch, which comprises work units for compliance; audit and inspection; industries enforcement; foodborne illness investigation; new food safety program development; food recall; technical and scientific support; labelling and the NSW Shellfish Program. These functions extend State-wide. Mr Outtrim holds a Diploma in Dairy Technology from Hawkesbury Agricultural College. He resigned in December 2006.



Sian Malyn, Executive Director Finance and Licensing

Ms Malyn leads the Finance and Licensing Branch, which is responsible for managing all of 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. The branch is also responsible for issuing licences to over 13,000 primary production businesses in NSW. She holds a Bachelor of Business in Accounting from the University of Technology, Sydney.



Craig Sahlin, Executive Director Policy and Science

Mr Sahlin leads the Policy and Science Branch, which is responsible for advising on strategic direction, undertaking risk assessment, policy development and program evaluation, and coordinating changes to legislation, including the food safety scheme regulations. He holds a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) degree from Macquarie University and an LLB from the University of NSW.



Edward Kraa and Peter Sutherland, Joint Acting Directors Operations

Mr Kraa and Mr Sutherland assumed shared responsibility as acting leaders of the Operations Branch from December 2006. Mr Kraa leads the compliance and enforcement teams and holds an Associate Diploma in Health and Building Surveying from Sydney Technical College. Mr Sutherland leads the industry consultation, training and technical support teams and holds a Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Microbiology/Immunology from the University of NSW.



Samara Kitchener, Executive Director

Consumer and Corporate Services

Ms Kitchener leads the Consumer and Corporate Services Branch, which is responsible for consumer education and communication plus corporate functions, including human resources and information management. She resumed her executive role in June 2007, following maternity leave. Ms Kitchener holds a Bachelor of Science in Food Science and Technology (Honours) from University of NSW, a Graduate Certificate in Applied Science (Dairy Technology) from University of Melbourne and a Masters of Business Administration (Executive) from the Australian Graduate School of Management.



Greg Irwin, Acting Executive Director

Consumer and Corporate Services

Mr Irwin assumed leadership of Consumer and Corporate Services from May 2006 for one year while Ms Kitchener was on maternity leave. He was on secondment from the Food Standards Agency of Northern Ireland. He holds a Bachelor of Arts in Politics (Honours) from Queens University Belfast, a Master of Social Science in Irish Politics from the same university, and a Master of Business Administration from the Open University Business School.

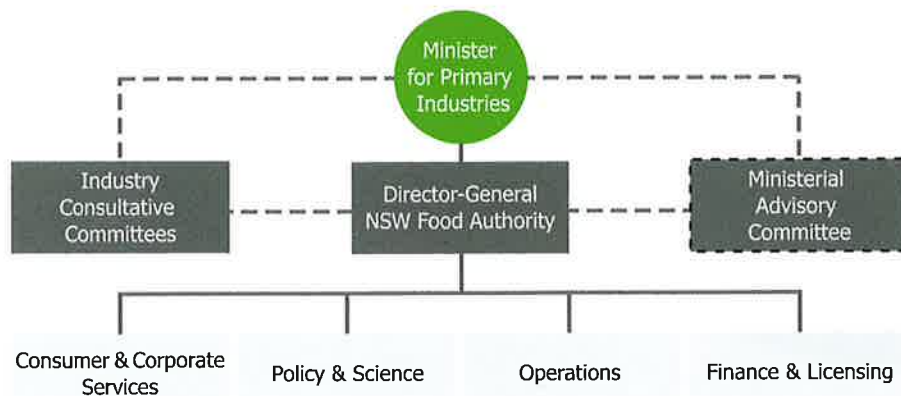


Lisa Szabo, Chief Scientist

Policy and Science

Dr Szabo joined the Authority in January 2006 and provides leadership for the scientific aspects of the Authority business and keeps it up to date with national and international developments in food safety. She is a Member of the Australian Institute of Food Science and Technology, the Australian Society for Microbiology and of the Institute of Food Technologists (USA). She holds a Bachelor of Science (Honours) and Doctor of Philosophy (Microbiology) from the University of Queensland.

Figure 3: Work Areas of the NSW Food Authority



Right: The Authority's executives. Clockwise from left front are George Davey, Lisa Szabo, Peter Sutherland, Sian Malyn, Edward Kraa, Samara Kitchener and Craig Sahlin.



How we work

The Authority's Results and Services Plan informs the way it works and ties in with two New South Wales Government priorities:

- building healthier communities
- stronger NSW economy.

The main results the NSW Food Authority works towards are enabling consumers to make informed food choices and ensuring less people get ill or injured through eating food.

The Results and Services Plan (RSP) is a planning and budgeting tool which all NSW government agencies are required to develop. It fits within a NSW Treasury framework, which helps government agencies demonstrate the impact their services are having on society.

Our 2006-07 RSP (see flowchart opposite) shows how our service groups contribute to results and how these link into government priorities.

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

NSW Food Authority service groups

The Authority has seven service groups, six of which concentrate on external areas and the seventh on internal services and human resources.

All Authority service groups deliver services which directly impact on one or more of the intermediate results. The seven service groups are:

- Food Regulatory Framework Development and Review
- Industry Consultation, Training and Advice
- Compliance and Enforcement
- Communication and Coordination with Other Government Services
- Public Information and Education
- Consumer and Industry Helpline
- Internal Services.

NSW Food Authority Results and Services Plan

Government Priority

which requires

Result

which requires

Intermediate Result (Higher-Level)

which requires

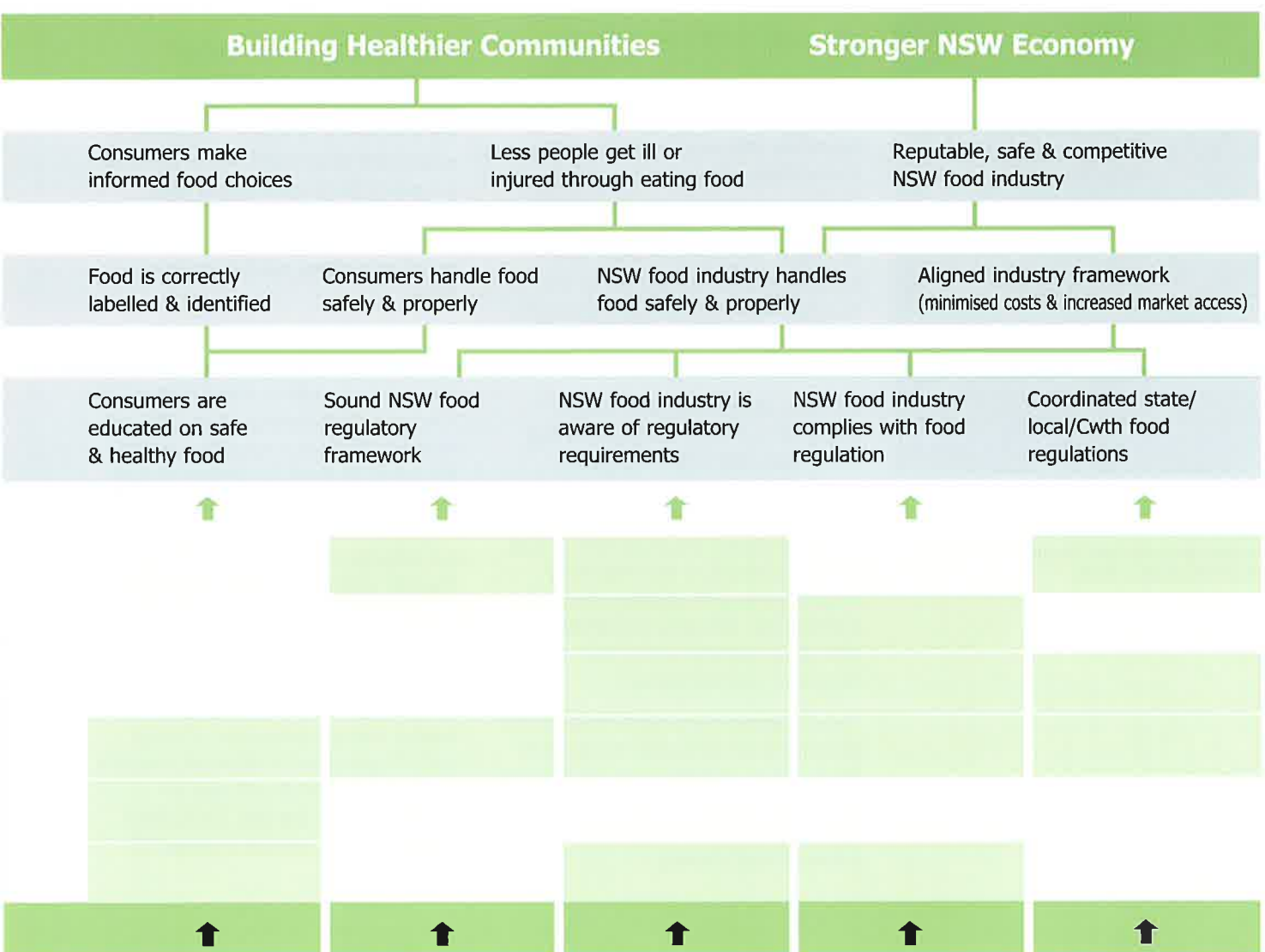
Intermediate Result (Lower-Level)

Service Groups 1-7

- 1: Food Regulatory Framework Development & Review
- 2: Industry Consultation, Training & Advice
- 3: Compliance & Enforcement
- 4: Communication & Coordination with Other Government Services
- 5: Public Information & Education
- 6: Consumer & Industry Helpline
- 7: Internal Services – which support delivery of all services



The Authority's Results and Services Plan informs the way it works and ties in with two New South Wales Government priorities





Previous page: A couple buying meat in a supermarket. The Authority is responsible for enforcing regulations at around 1800 meat retail premises in NSW.

Priorities and results

This is how the Authority contributes to the two key NSW state priorities.

1. Building healthier communities

The Authority is responsible for making sure that food for sale is both safe and suitable for human consumption and is correctly labelled. This responsibility directly relates to the government priority of building healthier communities in NSW. Several other government departments, principally NSW Health, also contribute to this priority.

This priority requires that less people get ill or injured through eating food and consumers make informed choices about the food they eat.

To achieve these results, termed higher-level intermediate results, it is necessary that food is correctly labelled and that both the food industry and consumers handle food safely and properly. Safe handling of food by industry covers everything from making, manufacturing, producing, collecting, extracting and processing to storing, transporting, delivering, preparing, treating, preserving and packaging. It also extends to cooking, thawing, serving or displaying of food. All of these processes are defined by the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code, which is administered in NSW by the Authority.

The 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 (it is science-based and practicable); 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 and can ultimately result in consumers making informed food choices.

2. Stronger NSW economy

In carrying out its food regulatory functions, the Authority tries to keep compliance costs for the food industry as low as possible and make sure that areas of duplication are identified and addressed. This supports the government priority of a stronger NSW 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. These services together help the food industry to be 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 NSW 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 2006-09 identifies high-level outcomes, which the Authority seeks to achieve by mid-2009, and interim milestones, which should be reached by mid-2007. 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 on the strategic program projects is assessed and new 90-day deliverables are set. The current Strategic Plan is set out on page 64.

The Corporate Plan establishes targets for each of the service measures in the seven service groups and also includes the 90-day deliverables in the current strategic program. Progress is reviewed monthly by the Authority's executive. The Corporate Plan also provides the framework for branch plans made annually by each of the Authority's four branches.

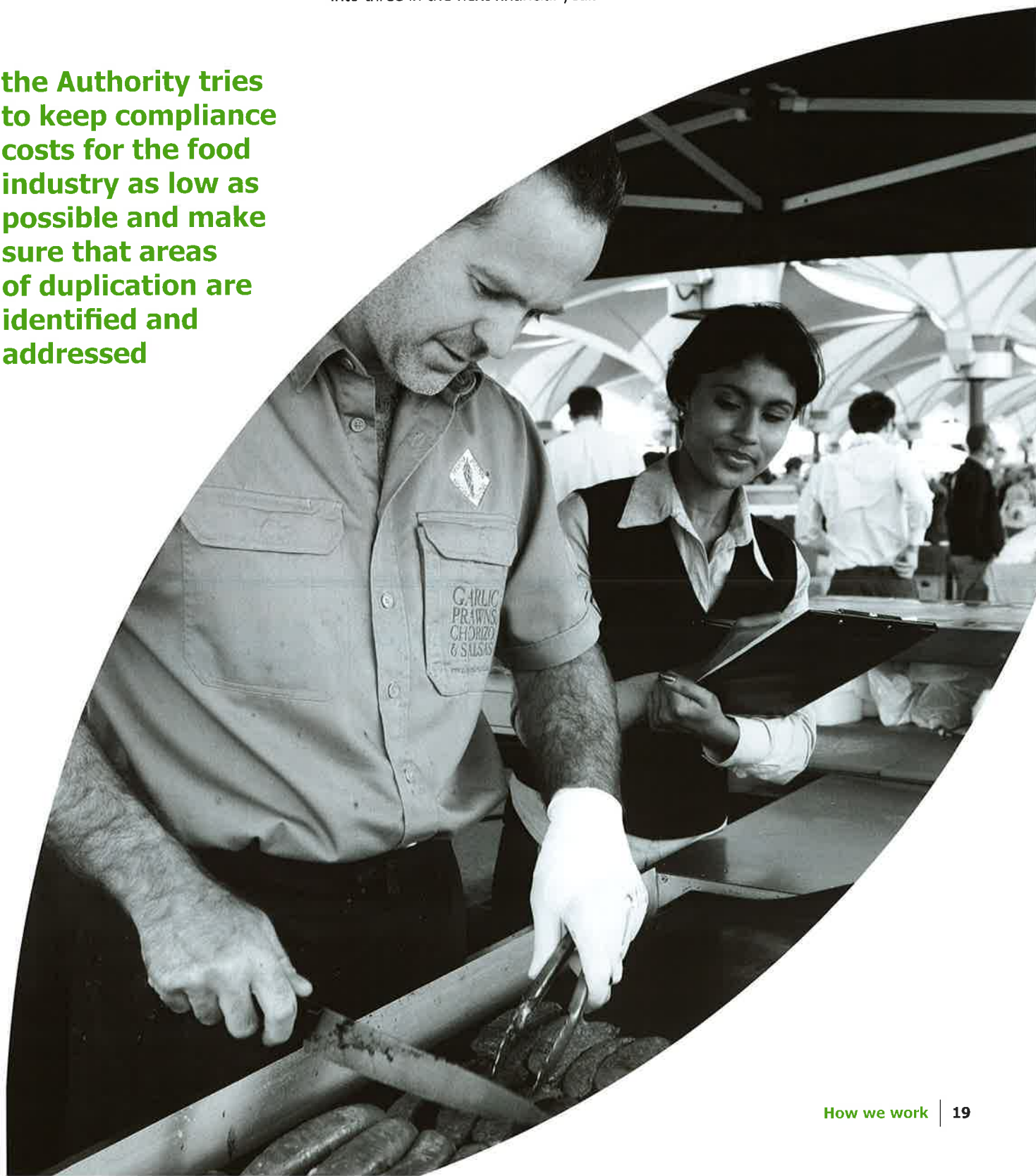
Review of RSP and restructuring of service groups

From December 2006, the agency began a process of reviewing its RSP to align better with NSW Government state priorities. The process involved intensive consultation with staff and unions. The Authority decided to streamline its function in relation to the RSP and to merge the seven current service groups into three in the next financial year.

The proposed new structure will have to be approved by a Joint Consultative Committee of management, unions and staff before being implemented later in 2007. Full details of the plan will be given in the next annual report.

Below: A council environmental health officer inspects a stall at the Farmers' Produce Market in Sydney. New legislation will mandate regular food inspections by councils.

the Authority tries to keep compliance costs for the food industry as low as possible and make sure that areas of duplication are identified and addressed





Service Group 1

Food Regulatory Framework Development & Review

Highlights

- **The group created a new, integrated model for the development and evaluation of the Authority's risk management programs, including its regulatory food safety schemes.**
- **In conjunction with other relevant NSW agencies, it developed draft whole-of-government approaches in several key areas, including pesticide management and mandatory reporting of intentional food contamination.**

This service group develops and contributes to policies, standards and programs which ensure that the food industry produces safe, suitable and correctly labelled food.

Its key requirements are expressed in legislation, principally the *NSW Food Act 2003*, *NSW Food Regulation 2004*, and the *Australia/New Zealand Food Standards Code*, which applies with force of law in all states and territories. The legislation also provides the basis for the Authority to ensure compliance with requirements, including enforcement action, and for recovery of regulatory costs from the food industry through licence fees, service charges and levies.

The Food Regulation Agreement 2002, signed by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), introduced a national approach to food regulation across jurisdictions. It provides for uniform adoption of the national Food Standards Code and its implementation by state and territory food regulatory agencies. The code includes standards on composition, labelling and contaminants, including microbiological and chemical limits for all foods produced or imported for sale in Australia and New Zealand.

The Food Standards Code, which is gradually being extended to primary production and processing activities, will ultimately replace state-based standards and other requirements.

The agreement also requires states and territories to work towards a consistent approach to implementation and enforcement.

At its meeting in April 2006, COAG agreed that the Australia and New Zealand Food Regulation Ministerial Council should commence work on re-drafting the Food Regulation Agreement following the outcome of a review of the Agreement conducted under the auspices of the Council in 2006. The NSW Food Authority participated in this review on behalf of the NSW Government.

Key activities and achievements

The key activities of this service group are:

- contributing to the development of national policies and the Food Standards Code.
- developing the policies, legislation and programs required to implement the code in NSW.
- developing and reviewing food safety schemes, tailored to specific industries and introduced by regulation. These schemes provide the base for executing the code as well as state-based requirements.
- developing standards and other requirements for industry sectors not yet covered by the code.



This service group develops and contributes to policies, standards and programs which ensure that the food industry produces safe, suitable and correctly labelled food

The Food Standards Code is developed by Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ), within a policy framework established by the Australia and New Zealand Food Regulation Ministerial Council. This council may request a review of standards approved by FSANZ and may ultimately reject or amend them. The Minister for Primary Industries, Ian Macdonald, serves as lead NSW minister on the council.

The council is advised and supported by the Food Regulation Standing Committee (FRSC), and its Implementation Sub-Committee (ISC) which is responsible for consistent implementation and enforcement. George Davey, Director-General of the NSW Food Authority, is a member of FRSC and ISC.

The Authority also participates in around 50 committees and working groups established by FRSC, ISC and FSANZ.

The Authority's work is based on scientific risk assessment, transparent processes and stakeholder consultation. Relevant industry sectors are involved in the development of food safety schemes to ensure that requirements are practical and cost effective.

This service group contributes to three of the five lower-level intermediate results. Its major responsibility is to ensure a sound NSW food regulatory

framework. It does this by ensuring that all regulatory requirements are based on sound science and can be implemented by industry, without imposing undue costs.

In developing schemes, the Authority engages the NSW food industry from grassroots to leadership level, ensuring it is aware of regulatory requirements. Where possible, the Authority aims to assist industry implement the new requirements.

The Authority's work with ISC; its efforts to align food safety schemes with existing and emerging national requirements; and its liaison with local government all contribute to coordinating local, state and Commonwealth food regulation. For example, following the closure in February 2006 of Sydney Harbour to commercial fishing because of dioxin contamination, a working group within ISC is developing a method to manage low-level chemical contamination of food. A representative of the Authority is chairing the group.

Policy development

The Authority undertook policy development in the national arena as well as within NSW. Its participation in national policy development included:

Above: Stranded cows are rescued during the Hunter region flood in June 2007. Hundreds of copies of the Authority's publication *Food Safety during an emergency* were distributed to shop owners in the flooded areas.

- leading the development of a five-year strategic plan by the Food Regulation Standing Committee
- continuing development of a Ministerial Council policy on the addition to foods of nutritive substances other than vitamins and minerals
- developing terms of reference for a forthcoming review of the operations of the Food Regulation Ministerial Council
- reviewing the intergovernmental Food Regulation Agreement
- consultation on the amendments to the Food Standards Australia New Zealand Act 1991

NSW policy development included:

- preliminary work on options to provide the public with information on food business performance
- developing a draft whole-of-government position on mandatory reporting of intentional food contamination
- finalising a model for effective consultation with small food businesses, in conjunction with the Department of State and Regional Development



The Authority is committed to ensuring a thorough whole-of-government approach to the NSW input to national food standards development processes

- developing a draft whole-of-government approach to pesticide management, with the Department of Primary Industries and the Department of Environment and Climate Change.

Standards development

The Authority endeavours to submit comments on all initial and draft assessment reports and provides advice on all final assessment reports to the minister, who is the lead minister for NSW on ANZFRMC.

The Authority is committed to ensuring a thorough whole-of-government approach to the NSW input to national food standards development processes. When developing the NSW submissions to the FSANZ assessment reports, the Authority consults with all relevant NSW Government agencies, in particular NSW Health and the Department of Primary Industries.

The Authority actively participates on FSANZ Standards Development Advisory Committees (SDACs). These committees assist FSANZ in the development of major food standards. As a SDAC member, the Authority contributed to the development or review of the following major food standards:

- novel foods (review)
- nutrition, health and related claims
- primary production and process standards for dairy products
- primary production and process requirements for raw milk products
- primary production and processing standard for eggs and egg products
- primary production and processing standard for poultry meat.

Other significant standards development processes to which the Authority contributed during 2006-07 included:

- mandatory folic acid fortification
- mandatory iodine fortification
- review of labelling requirements for food for catering purposes and retail sale.

The Authority also participates actively in the Jurisdictional Forum convened by

FSANZ. The forum provides FSANZ with a mechanism for regular engagement with jurisdictions on Australia/New Zealand food standards development processes. The Authority is a key contributor to the forum in line with its responsibility to implement and enforce the code in NSW.

Legislative program

During 2006-07, the Policy and Science Branch helped review and remake existing legislation. It continued with its program of introducing food safety schemes for regulating high-risk food sectors and advanced the implementation of the Food Regulation Partnership.

These are some of the regulatory changes that have been made or proposed.

- The Meat Industry (Meat Industry Levy) Regulation 1999 was automatically repealed and replaced with the Meat Industry (Meat Industry Levy) Regulation 2006. The new regulation, which provides the calculation method and applicable rate for the meat industry levy, remade the 1999 regulation with minor changes.
- The Authority drafted an amendment to Food Regulation 2004 which will prescribe a safety scheme for food preparation and provision to vulnerable people, including those in certain hospitals, nursing homes and hospices. If introduced, the regulation will apply a modified version of Standard 3.3.1 of the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code, excluding childcare centres, pending further assessment of the regulatory impact to that sector.
- Following a period of public consultation, the Authority is further assessing the regulatory impact of the proposed amendment to Food Regulation 2004, which will prescribe a food safety scheme for eggs and egg products.
- Amendments to *Food Act 2003* are being drafted to establish arrangements for the improved coordination of the NSW food regulatory system, as outlined in the document *NSW Food Regulation Partnership – A Blueprint*.

Program development

The Program Development Unit develops programs, including food safety scheme regulations, for industry sectors identified by the Authority as potentially presenting a higher risk to consumers. Industry-based reference and working groups assist the unit to ensure that regulatory requirements are practical and effective. The unit also helps newly-regulated industries to meet their requirements by providing implementation assistance programs. During this period, the unit is the Authority's prime contact point for these industries and responds to numerous enquiries.

In 2006-07, the Authority:

- coordinated several reference group and working group meetings with industry regarding the proposed regulations covering eggs and egg products, and food service to vulnerable persons.

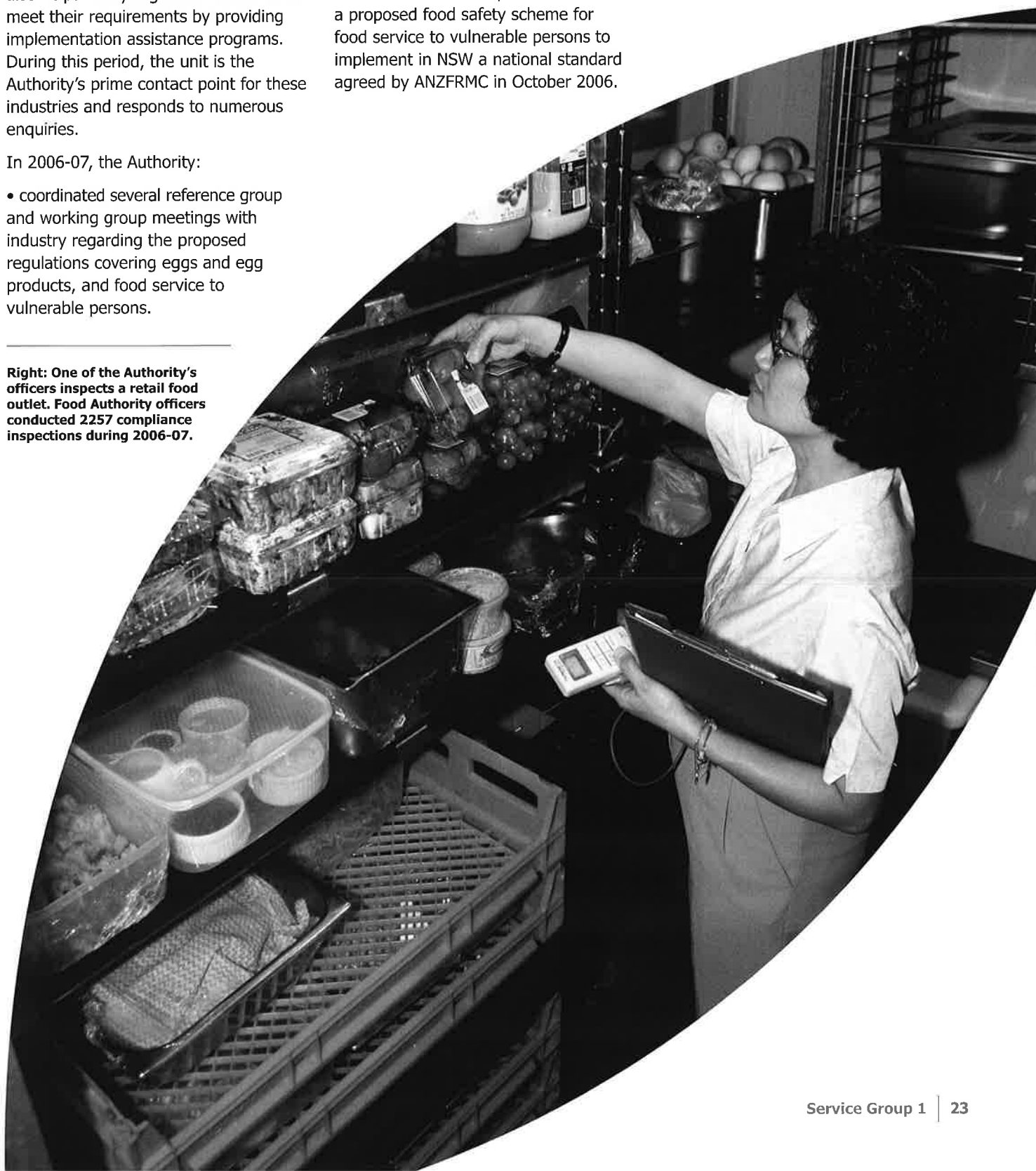
- completed its development work for proposed amendments to Food Regulation 2004 to include a food safety scheme for eggs and egg products. The reference group which assists the Authority in this endeavour completed its tasks and was dissolved. Future consultation will be undertaken through the Poultry and Egg Industry Committee.

- continued its development work on a proposed food safety scheme for food service to vulnerable persons to implement in NSW a national standard agreed by ANZFRMC in October 2006.

- participated and presented at more than 20 seminars, conferences and workshops, particularly in the aged and health care industry.

- conducted the first stage of a review of the Plant Product Safety Manual and Industry Guidelines following an evaluation of the Food (Plant Products Food Safety Scheme) Regulation 2005.

Right: One of the Authority's officers inspects a retail food outlet. Food Authority officers conducted 2257 compliance inspections during 2006-07.



Case Study

Sprout safety improved

Recently alfalfa sprouts received national attention after cases of bacterial contamination and illness resulted in a number of recalls. In response, the Authority has taken steps to further ensure the safety of seed sprouts produced in NSW.

In April 2005, NSW introduced legislation which requires businesses that produce high-priority plant products to implement food safety programs based on Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP). Five product groups, including producers of seed sprouts were identified as high priority in terms of food safety risk.

Before regulatory auditing of HACCP programs started, the Authority collected benchmark data on industry food safety practices. It reviewed industry material and identified a number of strategies to improve food safety management practices in the plant products sector.

Because of the food safety recalls, sprouts were targeted as the first priority.

The Authority has updated regulatory requirements for sprout producers to include additional process control measures. These consist of:



- seed supplier approval programs
- seed pre-screening testing (statistically valid)
- seed sanitation
- post-harvest washing
- finished product testing.

In October 2006, the Authority hosted a forum for all NSW sprout producers to discuss the recent outbreaks, the benchmark study findings and the proposed changes

to industry materials guidelines. As part of the risk communication message, the Authority also published a consumer fact sheet on sprout safety. In order to measure improvements in sprout risk management practices, the Authority plans to follow up with an evaluation in 2008.

In consultation with industry, additional process control measures for seed sprout producers were identified and an industry forum was held to discuss the revised risk management measures.

Program evaluation

The Authority has developed a Program Evaluation Framework (PEF) to demonstrate and improve the effectiveness of food safety regulation.

Routine food safety audits of individual businesses are undertaken to assess their compliance with regulatory requirements and monitor the performance of each business over time. In contrast, Program Evaluation takes a whole-of-industry approach. The main objective is to assess the effectiveness of regulation and how food safety risk is jointly managed by industry and the Authority. The appropriateness of the regulatory framework and compliance tools are also assessed.

The PEF includes a system which prioritises industries for evaluation. It describes methodologies for collecting information, reporting and communicating evaluation findings and provides a framework to deliver the benefits of the evaluation. The findings enable the Authority to fine-tune regulatory requirements; develop programs to assist industry to improve performance and benchmark measures against which to assess the impact of any new requirements on food safety risk management.

In order to inform the development of the PEF, two pilot evaluations were conducted during 2006: a mature scheme – red meat abattoirs – and a new scheme, plant products.

The NSW plant products benchmark study was completed pre-regulation. The information collected forms as a comparative baseline for future evaluations. The outcomes of the study informed the revision of the *Plant Products Food Safety Manual*. The Authority will conduct a re-assessment of the plant products industry (sprout producers) to assess the effectiveness of its food safety interventions.

A pilot evaluation of NSW domestic red meat abattoirs was completed and results showed a generally high level of compliance with the Australian Standard and carcase hygiene requirements for beef, sheep and pig carcasses.

Areas requiring attention have been identified and plans to improve industry performance include the development of an industry food safety manual.

Emergency Management Framework

The NSW Food Authority participates in the State's emergency management structure, which is coordinated by the State Emergency Management Committee (SEMC). Management of food-related emergencies falls within the Agricultural and Animal Services Functional Area, which is led by the Department of Primary Industries.

At national level, the Authority participated in the responses to several national food incidents, including a *Salmonella* outbreak linked to rockmelons

The Authority is responsible for actions under the Food Industry Emergency Sub-Plan, which is part of the NSW State Disaster Plan (DISPLAN). The Authority is currently reviewing and updating its internal emergency management procedures to ensure that they align with its current operational structure.

During the June 2007 floods in the Hunter Valley, the Authority used its media and educational resources to inform the public about steps that could be taken to limit potential food poisoning from flood-affected foods.

The Authority issued a media release; placed updated information on its website; and liaised with local councils to ensure its *Food safety during power failures* fact sheet was widely distributed to food businesses and residents.

At national level, the Authority participated in the responses to several national food incidents, including a *Salmonella* outbreak linked to rockmelons and poisoning linked to sodium nitrate and sodium borate. These responses were coordinated under the National Food Incident Response Protocol, developed by the Implementation Sub-Committee of the Food Regulation Standing Committee to ensure consistency of response by federal, state and territory food regulatory agencies.

The Authority successfully participated in the national emergency exercise Cumpston, dealing with a future human influenza pandemic. It was also represented on various NSW and national taskforces developing plans for events, such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation (APEC) summit and World Youth Day, and for continuity of the food supply chain in the advent of a human flu pandemic.





Service Group 2

Industry Consultation, Training & Advice

Highlights

- The group facilitated workshops on risk assessment and communication at a national meeting on food safety in fresh produce, following outbreaks of food poisoning attributed to fresh produce both domestically and internationally.
- It participated in industry events including the Royal Agricultural Society Fine Food Show, World Egg Day, Australian and NSW Dairy Products Awards, NSW Dairy Science Award and Oysters in the House.
- The group produced 21 industry publications with titles ranging from *Rockmelons and Salmonella* to *Food safety tips for caterers*.
- Hundreds of copies of the Authority's new publication *Food safety during an emergency* were distributed to shop owners during the Hunter Valley floods in June 2007. The contents of this publication were also publicised by the media.
- A Special Egg Taskforce meeting was convened with the Poultry and Egg Committee in August 2006 to investigate claims of misleading labelling in the egg industry.

This service group provides information and technical advice to industry about regulatory requirements and establishes mechanisms for industry to discuss issues with the Authority. Industry consultation on existing food safety schemes is achieved through industry consultative committees.

The Authority provides technical advice and industry training through targeted communication; by involvement in industry conferences, associations and groups; and by responding to calls to the Consumer and Industry Helpline. This group's key stakeholder is industry, comprising individual food businesses and industry groups. Other stakeholders involved in the process of providing consultation, training and advice include consumer groups, other government agencies (both NSW and national) and food industry leaders and scientists.

The role of this service group is ensuring that the NSW food industry:

- is aware of regulatory requirements
- complies with food regulations.

This is facilitated by introducing programs to provide industry with the tools and knowledge required to comply with food regulations.

Key activities and achievements

Industry consultation program

In accordance with Section 105 of the *Food Act 2003*, the Authority consults with relevant industries on the operation of food safety schemes and proposed amendments to such schemes. A consultative or advisory committee is established for each food safety scheme to provide advice to the Minister and the Authority on any issue relating to food.

Advisory committees currently operating are:

- NSW Dairy Industry Conference (three meetings held this year)
- Peak Oyster Advisory Group (two meetings held this year)
- NSW Shellfish Committee (four meetings held this year)
- NSW Seafood Industry Conference (four meetings held this year)



The group produced 21 industry publications with titles ranging from *Rockmelons and Salmonella* to *Food safety tips for caterers*

- Meat Industry Consultative Council (two meetings held this year)
- Poultry and Egg Industries Committee (four meetings held this year).

The advisory committees, with independent chairpersons appointed by the Minister, comprise industry, government and consumer representatives and provide a forum where issues can be discussed and addressed. The Authority provides a secretariat and administrative services for most of the advisory groups and helps drive business planning.

Barrister Terrence Healey was appointed chair of the NSW Peak Oyster Advisory Group, a consultative body which includes representatives of the Authority. Mr Healey, who has a background in agriculture, met with industry representatives at Forster and received an introduction to the oyster industry.

A Special Egg Taskforce meeting was convened with the Poultry and Egg Committee in August 2006. As a result, an extensive investigation into claims of misleading labelling in the NSW egg industry was undertaken. A final report from the investigation is due in the next financial year.

Above: Fresh fruit is not always safe to eat. The Authority traced an outbreak of *Salmonella* in NSW back to eating contaminated rockmelons.

Case Study:

Review of free-range eggs

At the request of NSW Primary Industries Minister Ian Macdonald, the Authority began a review of the production and sale of free-range eggs in NSW in August 2006. This followed media reports alleging that normal eggs were being falsely labelled as free range.

The review, coordinated by the Enforcement Unit, examined current practices within the free-range egg industry to determine the level of compliance with provisions of the NSW *Food Act 2003*. It involved an examination of the production and sale of free-range eggs at each stage including production, packing, wholesale and retail sale.

As part of the review, the Minister asked the Authority to consider industry practice in labelling free-range eggs. There is no clear legislative definition of "free range". For the purposes of the investigation, free-range eggs were simply defined as eggs that were laid by hens that were not caged and were provided with access to a free-range area. The review determined that production processes varied greatly, including the level of "free range" available to the chickens.

Whilst not in breach of the Food Standards Code, at five sites it was difficult to trace whether the eggs came from free-range or battery hens. The production practices used by these producers did not always ensure separation of cage and free-range products.



Some production sites failed to comply with labelling requirements, mainly because they used second-hand cartons or packaging. A brief of evidence has been prepared against one egg producer. A report detailing the findings and recommendations is pending.



The Authority has a dedicated technical unit which keeps abreast of industry developments, new technologies, and scientific innovations

Presentations were made to a regional conference of the Rural Lands Protection Boards, at Whitecliffs and at the Annual State Conference held in Bathurst on the use of NSW Meat Industry Levy funds.

Food handler training program

The Authority continues to investigate the potential for enhancing food safety through the training and assessment of food handlers, especially those working in areas of significant public health risk. There is substantial but qualified support from food service industry associations and from representatives of small business. In particular, practical options for assessing current food handlers for skills and knowledge have emerged as a potentially effective tool. The Authority is also involved with a national approach that is underway through the Implementation Sub-Committee of the Food Regulation Standing Committee. This will develop a nationally agreed approach to the assessment of the skills and knowledge of food handlers and supervisors.

Industry information and advice program

The Authority has a dedicated technical unit which keeps abreast of industry developments, new technologies, and scientific innovations. The unit provides technical advice to industry through direct contact, workshops, presentations, technical papers, fact sheets and interpretation of standards and legislation.

During 2006-07 it participated in the following industry workshops:

- NSW Influenza Pandemic Taskforce
- National Food Incident Response Protocol Workshop with FSANZ
- National Food Chain Assurance Advisory Group Workshops
- Exercise Fairly Fed, Influenza Pandemic Food Continuity Plan National Workshop
- AIFST Fresh Produce National Food Safety Summit

- NSW Premier's Department Task Force on pollution remediation in oyster harvest areas in Tilligerry Creek and the Bellingen River
- NSW Shellfish Program Workshops for local program coordinators
- Food Microbiology in food service establishments.

General circulars

- Microbiological and chemical testing of cooked ready-to-eat meat and poultry products
- Microbiological testing for process monitoring in the red meat and poultry industries
- Antibiotic detection method approved for use
- Requirements for livestock traceability and residue management programs.

Industry communications

Communicating with industry about regulatory and food-safety issues continues to be an important means of achieving the Authority's objective of ensuring the safety of food supply for NSW consumers. Since the appointment of an Industry Communications Coordinator in September 2005, there has been a steady increase in quality communications with industry sectors.

Significant achievements in 2006-07 included:

- producing the quarterly newsletter *Foodwise* and distributing it, by post and email, to food licensees and the broader food industry
- producing 21 new or updated fact sheets (see page 29)
- contacting key industry and other language media to ensure that new industries were targeted successfully and supplied with information about new regulations
- participating in industry events, such as Oysters in the House, Beef Spectacular, the Royal Agricultural Society Fine Food Show, World Egg Day,

NSW Dairy Science Awards, Australian and NSW Dairy Industry Association Dairy Products Awards, and oyster field days

- representation and poster presentation at industry conferences such as the International Conference on Molluscan Shellfish Safety in New Zealand in March 2007.

Industry publications

- *Foodwise* – Volumes 4 to 7
- *Food handling guidelines for temporary events*
- *Guidelines for seafood retailers*
- *Food safety guidelines for the preparation and display of sushi*
- *Food safety tips for caterers*
- *Safe handling of fresh fruit and vegetables*

- *Food safety during a power failure*
- *Charity fish auctions*
- *Labelling requirements – Country of Origin*
- *Seafood substitution in restaurants and takeaways*
- *Colour of mince meat*
- *Sprout food safety*
- *Food safety during an emergency*
- *Meat tray raffle safety*
- *Eggs – safe use and handling*
- *Food service to vulnerable persons newsletter*

- *Food recalls*
- *Controlling histamine food safety*
- *Borax, sodium borate or boric acid*
- *Rockmelons and Salmonella*
- *Campylobacter*
- *E. coli*
- *Hepatitis A*
- *Listeria monocytogenes*
- *Salmonella*

Right: An Authority official discusses the new *Food handling guidelines for temporary events* with a council environmental health officer at a market meat stall.





Service Group 3

Compliance & Enforcement

Highlights

- **The Compliance and Enforcement group investigated 3847 complaints and performed 6139 audits.**
- **The Foodborne Illness Investigation (FBI) Unit responded to almost 1000 group and individual cases of food poisoning within the time deadlines specified in the Results and Services Plan.**
- **The Authority issued 183 Penalty Infringement Notices with fines totalling \$96,910 this financial year.**
- **It instigated 16 court prosecutions for 70 offences. The courts imposed fines totalled \$138,950, with costs of \$224,000 awarded to the Authority.**
- **Only three of the Authority's 16 prosecutions were defended and in each case the defendants were convicted, substantial fines were imposed and costs awarded to the Authority.**
- **Among cases investigated was one that resulted in the Authority seizing and destroying 202 barrels containing 2920kg of salted eggs and 2520kg of century eggs, valued at around \$60,000. A Prohibition Order was also issued following continued non-compliance with structural and hygiene standards outlined in an Improvement Notice. A Penalty Infringement Notice was also issued for non-compliance with the Prohibition Order.**

This service group ensures the safety and integrity of the NSW food supply by monitoring food industry compliance with regulatory requirements. This includes enforcement of the NSW *Food Act 2003*, Food Standards Code and Food Regulation 2004. It does this by:

- 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
- managing the NSW Shellfish Program, which addresses classification of harvest and growing areas, harvest control, harvest restriction on public health grounds, and post-harvest handling

- undertaking surveys of foods, food hygiene practices, industry verification and benchmarking studies

- investigating consumer and food industry complaints.

It is critical that this service group has the capacity to respond quickly in the event of a food system breakdown. Two key areas of work are:

- investigating foodborne infections and intoxications, in cooperation with NSW Health

- conducting, monitoring and supervising food recalls, in cooperation with Food Standards Australia New Zealand and local government.

The Authority transferred responsibility for providing export certificates for NSW food exporters to the Australian Quarantine Inspection Service (AQIS) without disruption to the food industry.

Key stakeholders for this service group include food consumers; licensed food businesses within the meat, dairy, seafood and plant products industries; and the food import, manufacturing, retail, transport and service sectors throughout NSW. Other key stakeholders are local councils and government agencies, such as the NSW Department of Primary Industries, NSW Police, Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service, Australian Competition and Consumer Commission,



**The Authority
issued 183 Penalty
Infringement
Notices with fines
totalling \$96,910
this financial year**

Food Standards Australia New Zealand, Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing, NSW Health, Division of Analytical Laboratories (DAL) and NSW Department of Fair Trading.

Key activities and achievements

Audit and verification

This unit was primarily involved with conducting audits and inspections of high-risk premises licensed with the NSW Food Authority.

It did this at frequencies recommended in the Priority Risk Classification tool. The audits are used by the Authority to ensure all premises comply with legislative and NSW Food Authority requirements.

During the year, the Audit and Verification unit worked with new industries, such as the plant production sector, as well as with the consumer-oriented vulnerable population sector, to ensure that they would meet the requirements outlined in current and proposed legislation. Staff completed this through audits and providing guidance to these sectors to ensure representatives understood and complied with new requirements.

Above: The Compliance and Enforcement Unit does routine inspections of premises where food is prepared to ensure regulations are met.

Case Study

Butcher guilty again

A Sydney butcher, who was found guilty in 2003 of selling meat containing the preservative sulphur dioxide, was successfully prosecuted a second time in 2006 by the Authority for the same offences.

Food Safety Officers conducted field tests at the butcher shop and detected two mince samples that appeared to contain preservative. They also took samples of fresh sausages to determine if they complied with the levels of preservative permitted.

Further testing showed that the two mince samples contained sulphur dioxide, a preservative that is not permitted in minced meat. The sausage sample also returned a positive result for sulphur dioxide above the acceptable limit of 500mg/kg.

Sulphur dioxide can cause severe allergic reactions and other symptoms in consumers and its addition to food products is tightly controlled.

Because of the serious nature of the offences, the Authority prepared a prosecution brief and took action against the manager for adding the preservative, as well as action against the licensed owner of the retail butcher shop. The manager pleaded guilty and was fined a total of \$2000.

In September 2006, after a protracted defended hearing, the court found the owner also guilty of all four offences. He was also fined \$2000. The Authority pursued re-imbursement of professional costs and was awarded \$90,000.



A training program was implemented to increase further the knowledge and skill of staff within the unit. All audit staff have now qualified as Level 4 auditors under the National Food Safety Auditor Scheme, accredited by the Registrar Accreditation Board Quality Society of Australasia (RABQSA). They were the first group of government auditors in Australia to obtain this accreditation. This training will continue to ensure skills are continually improved. Staff are now being trained as skill examiners under this scheme.



Labelling and advertising

The Authority's Labelling and Advertising Investigations unit is responsible for monitoring whether industry and food retailers comply with the labelling provisions of the Food Standards Code and the NSW *Food Act 2003*. The unit processed an average of 15 labelling complaints and 20 enquiries per month. In conjunction with the Science and Policy Branch, it also surveyed segments of the market for compliance with the labelling legislation including manufacturers who made inaccurate sodium statements on packaged food products.

Over the past year, the unit concentrated on health claims. As part of the prioritised work program of the Authority, the milk and milk product market was extensively investigated by enforcement unit officers and significant corrective action was taken by industry following issuing of warning letters. Investigations into the labelling and advertising claims of so-called super

juices are continuing. A number of direct marketers are using illegal health claims in their promotions of these foods.

Compliance and Inspection

The Compliance and Inspection unit handles all complaints received by the Consumer and Industry Contact Centre, as well as conducting audits and inspections of low-risk licensed premises. Other activities of this unit include ensuring all food premises in NSW are notified on the National Food Information Safety System (NAFSIS) and comply with the requirements of the Food Standards Code. The unit assists other sections of the Authority by providing field resources for large surveys or enforcement projects.

During the year, its key activities were investigation of consumer and industry complaints (see case study page 50) and continued monitoring of meat products to ensure illegal preservatives were not being used.

Enforcement Unit

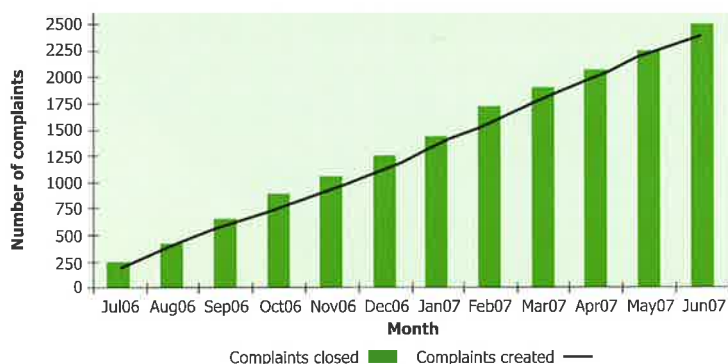
The Enforcement Unit is responsible for the investigation of more serious and complex breaches of the NSW *Food Act 2003*.

The offences listed under this Act and other regulations vary greatly in seriousness and a range of penalties and enforcement options are available. Penalties of up to \$550,000 and/or two years' imprisonment apply to breaches of the NSW *Food Act 2003*.

In enforcing the law, the unit applies the Authority's Compliance and Enforcement Policy, which aims to ensure that food is safe and correctly labelled, empowering consumers to make safe and healthy food choices.

Enforcement officers routinely conduct investigations and take action where complaints are supported by evidence of breaches of regulatory requirements. They also provide guidance to Authority staff in the drafting of prosecution briefs, investigation strategies, enforcement options and provide general enforcement training.

NSW Food Authority Complaint Statistics for 2006-07



Note: 2492 general complaints closed 2006-07 (Cumulative by month)

The unit conducted investigations in all food sectors during the year. The majority of breaches that required the involvement of an enforcement officer, related to either an unlicensed operation or non-compliance with a Prohibition Order.

As a result of its investigations, the Authority issued 183 Penalty Infringement Notices with fines totalling \$96,910 this financial year. There were 16 completed prosecutions involving 70 offences. The courts imposed fines totalling \$138,950, with costs of \$224,000 awarded to the Authority. Three of the 16 prosecutions were defended and all resulted in a guilty verdict.

One case involved an egg producer who was processing traditional Chinese egg products in unhygienic conditions. The producer failed to comply with an Improvement Notice and subsequently failed to comply with a Prohibition Order. The Authority seized and destroyed 202 barrels containing 2920kg of salted eggs and 2520kg of century eggs. The eggs were valued at around \$60,000. It also issued a Penalty Infringement Notice. As a result the processor moved the operation to suitable premises.

A successful prosecution was initiated in the NSW Supreme Court. This matter arose from a complaint lodged by the Liquor Merchants' Association and the Scotch Whisky Association. The investigation found a product labelled Old McTavish Scotch Whisky sold by a liquor manufacturer/wholesaler did not comply with the Food Standards Code. This Standard for Spirits clause protects descriptions of quality, reputation and other characteristic of a spirit which are essentially attributable to its geographic origin. In this case the laws that define "Scotch Whisky" in Scotland apply.

The analysis of the product found it was not Scotch whisky, because it did not have the minimum 40 percent of alcohol content required by the geographical indication for Scotch Whisky of the Scotch Whisky Order 1990. The investigation could not determine the origins of the product or where it was manufactured.

The defendant company was fined \$30,000 on two charges and \$80,000 in costs was also granted to the Authority.

Foodborne illness investigation

The roles of the NSW Department of Health and the NSW Food Authority in joint investigations of outbreaks of foodborne illness are defined by a Memorandum of Understanding. Epidemiological investigation of potential food sources is undertaken by NSW Health. Environmental investigations of outbreak settings, including inspection of food premises and collection plus testing of samples, are conducted by the NSW Food Authority.

The Authority seized and destroyed 202 barrels containing 2920kg of salted eggs and 2520kg of century eggs

In 2006-07, the NSW Food Authority's Foodborne Illness (FBI) Investigation Unit received 430 notifications of disease affecting two or more people. In addition there were a total of 551 individual cases of alleged food poisoning. (See case study page 42.)

The vast majority of single case FBI complaints were sent to local councils in NSW for follow-up where required. The integrated approach taken in FBI investigations has significantly improved cooperation between state and local levels in NSW. Local councils also assisted the FBI Investigation Unit in regional areas with collection of food samples and hygiene investigations.

The FBI Investigation Unit was particularly busy in 2006-07 with several outbreaks of local and national significance occurring. A range of foodstuffs was implicated including

chicken, eggs, fresh produce, imported seafood, and the inadvertent use of sodium nitrite.

Salmonella continues to be the organism of most concern with several outbreaks connected with eggs, poultry, kebabs and rockmelons. A large outbreak that affected approximately 350 people was found to originate from the consumption of contaminated pork and chicken rolls from a bakery. Hygiene problems at the bakery had led to mayonnaise prepared on the premises being contaminated with high levels of *Salmonella*. As a result of the outbreak the bakery was closed to prevent further cases of illness.

A national survey is being conducted to determine the extent of businesses using mayonnaise produced without any treatment or preservatives to render it safe. Advice on alternatives to raw egg mayonnaise is being provided to businesses that use this type of product.

Officers from the FBI Unit assisted with fresh cut salad and sushi surveys. Further planning and preparation was undertaken for a national gastroenteritis survey in partnership with the Commonwealth. This survey will help determine the baseline level of foodborne disease in the community as well as gauge the effectiveness of the Authority's efforts to prevent illness associated with food.

In July 2006, an international benchmarking exercise was undertaken to evaluate the effectiveness of foodborne illness investigations in NSW compared with overseas jurisdictions. Enhancements to the NSW system were identified and included routine use of DNA fingerprinting of bacteria to assist with rapid identification of outbreaks, and greater national coordination of environmental investigations.

Since this study there has been a good uptake of DNA fingerprinting in NSW, and a routine system will be implemented by late 2007. The Authority is also chairing a national working group on consistent principles for environmental investigation of foodborne illness.

Case Study

Rockmelon linked to *Salmonella* outbreak

Investigating a large increase in the number of reported cases of *Salmonella* Saintpaul, NSW Health discovered a link between the illness and the consumption of rockmelons. The Authority immediately notified Commonwealth and other state and territory governments through the National Food Incident Response Protocol.

During September 2006, approximately 25 cases of *Salmonella* Saintpaul infections were notified over a two week period. Usually there are one to two cases of this type of *Salmonella* infection per month. Interviews of affected people strongly implicated consumption of rockmelons as the source of illness.

A large trace-back investigation was undertaken by the Authority's FBI Investigation Unit involving major retail supermarket chains and several small fruit shops, where infected people had reported purchasing rockmelons. All the rockmelons were sourced to vendors at Flemington Markets in Sydney.

OzFoodNet alerted other jurisdictions and a national investigation commenced. The investigation identified several cases where people had consumed rockmelons prior to becoming ill. The Authority trace-back indicated that the rockmelons came from Queensland.

An environmental investigation was conducted by officers from Queensland Health on farms in the region where the rockmelons were harvested. On the farms, a range of hygiene shortcomings was detected, including the use of untreated water for washing rockmelons. *Salmonella* was detected in a number of water samples from the farms and was also found in fruit at retail level. However, none of the types of *Salmonella* found were Saintpaul.

One rockmelon, purchased in a shop in Victoria, did test positive for *Salmonella* Saintpaul. It came from a farm in the Northern Territory. However, investigations on the farm failed to find any trace of Saintpaul, although other types of *Salmonella* were detected.

While the exact source of illness remains unclear, the epidemiology and problems identified on farms suggest that rockmelons were the food vehicle for *Salmonella*. During the investigation, DNA fingerprinting of clinical *Salmonella* isolates was

successfully used to separate cases related to the outbreak from background cases that had no exposure to rockmelons.

The outbreak also raised concerns about the potential impact of the drought on safe farming operations. A lack of potable water for washing fruit prior to packing was a contributing factor in the outbreak. These concerns would extend to any farming or processing where water is used to wash or rinse the final product before consumption.

This investigation was groundbreaking in terms of the use of new technology. The coordination of the investigation was the first real test of the National Food Incident Response Protocol, and it was the first time that rockmelons had ever been implicated in an outbreak in Australia.

It adds weight to evidence that fresh produce is increasingly linked to foodborne illness in Australia and overseas. As a result of its handling of the outbreak, the Authority is now at the forefront of improving national coordination of future outbreaks of foodborne illness. An information package has been developed for distribution to local government and consumers.



NSW Shellfish Program

The NSW Shellfish Program is responsible for the administration of 37 local estuary programs and 75 shellfish harvest areas along the NSW coast.

This program ensures that oysters and mussels produced in the State are safe for human consumption by implementing the Australian Shellfish Quality Assurance Program. The program meets the requirements of the national Seafood Primary Production and Processing Standard and the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service for export-listed areas.

The program monitors designated test sites to ensure water quality conditions are suitable for the harvest of shellfish. When conditions are unsuitable, due to factors like heavy rainfall or sewage spills, a harvest area can be closed.

All oyster and mussel harvest areas in NSW, except for four late starters, have completed the process of classification. This involves a comprehensive sanitary survey of the area, including a shoreline survey to identify potential pollution sources that may affect the safety of shellfish.

Where there is excellent water quality and little potential for pollution, the harvest area may be classified as "conditionally approved", allowing for the direct harvest of shellfish. Other areas may be classified as "conditionally restricted", requiring harvested shellfish to be kept in sterilised seawater for 36 hours prior to being sold. Areas with significant pollution problems are classified as "prohibited" for the harvest of shellfish.

A program to classify wild harvest shellfish areas has started with the classification of 20 pipi harvesting beaches scheduled for completion by 2010.

Compliance and Enforcement Statistics

Activity	Actual 06-07
Audits	6139
Failed audits	556
Inspections	2257
Failed inspections	106
Investigations of unlicensed businesses	86
Complaint investigations	3847
Investigations of foodborne disease incidents (single case)	551
Investigations of foodborne disease incidents (involving two or more people)	430
Investigations of food labelling complaints	339
Improvement notices	739
Prohibition orders	16
Product seizures	13
Show cause notices	0
Written warning	252
Licence cancellations	0
Prosecutions	70 against 16 defendants
Penalty notices	183
Use of emergency orders	0
Voluntary food recalls (nation-wide)	84
Voluntary food recalls (NSW manufacturers)	34
Shellfish harvest area openings	451
Shellfish harvest area closures	519

Licence Numbers

Business	Type Number of Licensed Facilities (eg. Premises, Vehicles and Vessels)
Dairy farm	931
Dairy farm (goat)	12
Farm milk collectors	95
Milk factories	11
Unpasteurised goat milk producers	7
Dairy product factories	93
Goat dairy product factories	9
Red meat abattoir	47
Poultry abattoir	47
Game meat processing plant	164
Meat processing plant	314
Animal meat processing plant	17
Knackery	7
Meat retail premises	1811
Rendering	8
Fishery	969
Oyster farmer	303
Seafood processing plant	270
Non-shellfish aquaculture	52
Plant products processing plant	44
Animal food store	47
Food store	
(dairy, meat, poultry, seafood and plant products)	637
Food transportation	
(dairy, meat, poultry, seafood and plant products)	7154
Total number of licensed facilities	13,036



Service Group 4

Communication & Coordination with other Government Services

Highlights

- **Local councils have embraced the NSW Food Regulation Partnership between the Authority and local government. Legislation has been prepared to implement the program and 143 of the 152 councils (94 percent) in NSW have committed to doing routine inspections of food retailers in their areas.**
- **Working under its memoranda of understanding (MOUs) with NSW Health, NSW Department of Primary Industries and NSW Police, the Authority focused on major strategies including emergency food management and bioterrorism.**
- **The Authority participated in Operation Trident, a long term enforcement operation with the NSW Department of Primary Industries and NSW Police, designed to curb theft and black market sales of oysters.**
- **The Authority signed separate MOUs with two international agencies: the New Zealand Food Safety Authority and the Beijing Food Safety Administration.**

The underlying purpose of this service group is to maximise the effectiveness of the Authority's services by developing and maintaining relationships with similar or complementary services provided by local government and other NSW, Australian and international agencies. This service group contributes to all five of the lower-level intermediate results.

Key activities and achievements

The activities of this group fall into four categories.

- The development and maintenance of broad MOUs or strategic liaison arrangements with other NSW government agencies, which have complementary and/or overlapping responsibilities.
- The development and maintenance of operational agreements with Commonwealth or inter-state regulatory agencies.
- Coordination with NSW's 152 local government councils, all of which are prescribed enforcement agencies under the *Food Act 2003*.
- The development of MOUs or strategic liaison arrangements with counterpart international agencies to provide a framework for collaboration, cooperation and/or mutual assistance.

NSW Memoranda of Understanding

MOUs are used to help structure the Authority's relationship with NSW agencies, such as NSW Health, the NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI) and NSW Police. Senior-level strategic liaison groups have been appointed to oversee joint operations and deal with potential issues.

This year, emergency management and bioterrorism were among areas which



Operation Trident was launched by the Authority, the DPI and NSW Police Force in April 2007. The joint operation is designed to address the rise in thefts of oysters

the Authority worked on in terms of its MOUs with NSW agencies. Other key focuses of the partnerships were foodborne illness, policy and standards development and consumer education and health promotion.

The strategic liaison group for the MOU with DPI continued to oversee work initiatives. The functions of the work groups have evolved in the light of ongoing issues and developments. Major achievements include operational coordination in areas such as seafood traceability and oyster black market operations, and methods to enable better detection and comparative analysis of dioxin contamination. DPI and the Authority completed a strategic planning exercise on a coordinated approach to future emergencies.

An incident response debrief was held jointly by NSW Health and the Authority. The meeting used recent food-related incidents as case examples to develop an improved understanding of each agency's internal processes to incident response, including authorisation of risk management and risk communication action. The debriefing also reviewed the impact of the National Food Safety Incident Response Protocol on these processes.

Regular meetings with NSW Health have focussed on roles and responsibilities in relation to foodborne illness outbreaks plus both internal and external communications.

Operational Agreements

For agencies that have less frequent or comprehensive dealings with the Authority, a less formal strategic liaison arrangement is sufficient. This may involve senior officers meeting occasionally to discuss activities of mutual interest and agree on common action where appropriate.

The Authority continued informal relationships with other NSW Government departments and agencies such as the Office of Fair Trading and the Department of State and Regional Development on matters of overlapping or contiguous responsibility.

Operational agreements cover more specific regulatory or other operational cooperation. For example, the Authority undertakes inspection of some export-registered food businesses on behalf of the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service under an operational agreement.

The Bellinger River was classified as prohibited and closed to shellfish harvest in April 2006. The pollution identified in the sanitary survey is diffuse pollution associated with runoff from animal farms and septic tanks. A multi-agency working group was set up by the NSW Premier's Department to address the pollution issues affecting the river. Significant progress was made throughout the year with water quality

Above: The Authority is responsible for monitoring shellfish harvesting areas in NSW. It is also involved in Operation Trident, aimed at curbing oyster thefts.

results showing a notable improvement. If the trend of improved water quality continues the prohibited classification will be reviewed with a view to reopening the area for harvest.

A taskforce within the NSW Premier's Department continues to coordinate a whole-of-government response to sewage contamination of shellfish harvest areas in Tilligerry Creek. This taskforce included the Authority, Port Stephens Council, the DPI and the NSW Department of Lands.

Operation Trident was launched by the Authority, the DPI and NSW Police Force in April 2007. The joint operation is designed to address the rise in thefts of oysters from farmers' leases and the growing black market in potentially unsafe shellfish. Stolen oysters may come from restricted, closed or prohibited harvest areas. These oysters may not be purified in sterilised water or filtered to flush out potentially dangerous toxins, so could pose a serious health risk to consumers.

Operation Trident is a long-term operation involving both covert and overt operations on the NSW coast. It will utilise state-of-the-art surveillance equipment, including lasers and infra-

Case Study

Study shows 94 percent of councils will do food inspections

A survey by the Authority's new Local Government Unit showed that 143 (94 percent) of the 152 councils in NSW intend to play an active role in enforcing food regulations. They will take up this responsibility as part of the NSW Food Regulation Partnership.



When the the draft *Food Amendments Bill 2007* takes effect, it will be compulsory for councils to make regular food inspections. Depending on their capacity, councils will be able to elect one of three levels of participation in enforcing food regulations.

Category A councils have minimum capacity and can respond only to food emergencies or recalls. Category B councils will be able to do this plus routine inspections of retail businesses, investigations of food complaints and enforcement of regulations. The councils that elect to be involved in the highest level, Category C, will be able to undertake all the retail regulatory

roles, and can negotiate with the Authority to perform inspections of food manufacturers and licensed wholesalers.

The unit's preliminary survey of 152 councils showed that 136 (89 percent) would list in Category B and seven (5 percent) in category C. Nine councils (6 percent) intended enlisting in Category A for emergency responses and recalls only. The Authority is now conducting a pilot with 30 of the Category B councils to ensure that when the legislation is gazetted adequate operating procedures are in place.

The partnership will make a significant contribution towards realising the vision of through-chain food regulation in the State.



Food
Regulation
Partnership™

Together towards safer food

red cameras to gather intelligence. The three agencies will share intelligence on the theft and sale of oysters. Members of the public and the food industry have been urged to ring Crime Stoppers or the Authority's contact centre to report thefts or suspicious sales of oysters. The operation will continue next year.

Local government support and coordination services

The NSW Government allocated \$1.58 million in July 2006 for the implementation of the NSW Food Regulation Partnership (FRP) model, which aims to boost food safety in NSW and enable authorities to respond more quickly to food emergencies.

The partnership will enable local governments to play an expanded role in food regulation. It will define the respective roles of councils and the Authority and provides a dedicated program to support and assist councils in food regulatory activities. It is anticipated that the Government will introduce the necessary amendments to the NSW *Food Act 2003* to implement this partnership program.

The new legislation will provide a mechanism whereby councils can recover costs from retail food shops and food services that are inspected. It will ensure all 152 councils in NSW undertake a food regulatory role according to their capacity and resources.

In terms of the new legislation, councils can elect to participate at one of three levels, depending on their capacity. High-risk, licensed food manufacturing, processing and wholesale businesses will continue to be monitored by the Authority. The legislation will also allow the Authority to recover the full costs for inspecting un-licensed wholesale businesses.

To roll out the implementation of the FRP model, a special six-member Local Government Unit was established by the Authority in July 2006. It provides advice, training and support on an equitable basis to all councils.

In anticipation of the new legislation, protocols and guidelines have been drawn up by the Authority on how councils will carry out the new food regulatory duties and these have been distributed to all councils. The protocols outline the responsibilities of councils, including requirements during emergency responses.

The unit introduced a 24-hour technical advice service, so council officials can get immediate support and assistance. For example, during the Hunter region floods, councils in affected areas sought advice on food risk identification procedures. The Authority also sends out a regular e-newsletter *Food Safety News for NSW local councils*.

As part of its communications strategy, the Authority has established a database of around 460 council staff involved in food inspection or regulation. It sends out regular emails to them from a dedicated computer server whenever food safety issues crop up. For example, with food recalls, every council in the State could receive details within half an hour. This will be extended into a "real time" food emergency SMS alert system.

There was extensive consultation between the Authority and local governments to arrive at a blueprint for the partnership. Sixteen regional food groups and the NSW Food Regulatory Liaison group continued to meet regularly and give input to the partnership. The Authority's comprehensive consultation model has been held up as an example to be emulated for similar state and council partnerships.

This year, special Food Regulation Partnership co-branding was developed to give the partnership its own identity. Its logo shows a pair of hands encircling a plate. This is seen as an integral part of promoting the partnership.

Collaboration with councils has extended the Authority's ability to do State-wide research. A total of 25 councils participated in the Authority's sushi survey and 50 volunteered to participate in its survey of new bakery products using products like meat. The NSW Food Regulatory Liaison group

worked with the Authority to develop uniform *Food handling guidelines for temporary events*. Councils involved in the sushi survey helped develop *Guidelines for handling sushi*.

The unit also provided training, technical and regulatory advice workshops for local government environmental health officers (EHOs). With a large number of these officers due to retire, the Authority has developed a career support program, including providing scholarships at universities in NSW. It collaborates with the Australian Institute of Environmental Health in career promotion and supports its annual food surveillance schools. Through these programs, the Authority is trying to assist in addressing an expected EHO shortage.

The unit introduced a 24-hour technical advice service, so council officials can get immediate support and assistance.

Through the partnership, the Authority has:

- raised the profile of food regulation in councils
- improved food regulation consistency across the state
- increased councils' involvement in food regulation
- improved food safety in the retail sector resulting in community benefits.

International Memoranda of Understanding

Food regulatory issues are increasingly global in nature and there is much for the Authority to learn and share with its international counterparts. Collaboration on common issues, sharing of information, and staff exchanges bring in new ideas and approaches and avoids repetition.



This year the Authority signed two key MOUs with overseas agencies.

- In September 2006, the Authority signed an MOU with the New Zealand Food Safety Authority and annual plans for active collaboration and support in six subject areas were jointly established. The agencies have regular teleconferences, are working together on a number of issues and have arranged staff exchanges and visits.
- The NSW Food Authority has had a strong working relationship with China for a number of years, notably through the Authority's invitation to provide expert advice to the Beijing Olympic organisers on how to prevent food-borne illness during the 2008 Olympic and Paralympic Games. A MOU was signed in November 2006 to formalise the relationship between the NSW Food Authority and the Beijing Food Safety Administration.

Under the MOU, the Food Authority and the Beijing Food Safety Administration will share and exchange information on food safety or on related areas, work together on programs, and arrange staff exchanges and visits.



Service Group 5

Public Information & Education

Highlights

- **The Food Safety During Pregnancy campaign successfully promoted food safety messages to pregnant women.**
- **The group effectively delivered targeted consumer educational information on severe food allergies and labelling.**
- **The Authority conducted special training workshops for Hong Kong government officials about risk communication on food issues. The course was highly rated by participants.**

Public information and education is an important means to achieve the Authority's objective of ensuring the safety of food supply for NSW consumers. The Authority educates consumers about a range of food safety issues.

It uses information on foodborne illness trends, developments in food policy consumer tracker research, an analysis of calls to the Helpline and consumer feedback to determine the focus areas for the year ahead.

The Authority carries out campaigns on pregnancy, labelling and allergies, and continues to make use of editorial opportunities to raise awareness of food safety issues. Its website is a key resource in supporting public information and education, with information on specific campaigns.

Key activities and achievements

The Authority takes a targeted approach for effective communication. It maximised existing resources by concentrating on priority risk areas among vulnerable populations. The delivery of specific food safety messages was enhanced by a range of partnerships with key stakeholders.

In September 2006, for instance, the Authority worked on food safety information for school canteen managers and volunteers as part of NSW Health's Fresh Tastes@School program. The program distributed the factsheet to all NSW school canteens.

Food Safety During Pregnancy Campaign

The Food Safety During Pregnancy Campaign was a major focus and work effort in 2006-07. The campaign promoted food safety messages to pregnant women and was successful in increasing awareness of risks and safe eating.

The multifaceted campaign targeted pregnant women and those planning pregnancy and delivered food safety and nutrition information. Women were reached through existing channels by building relationships with health professionals (obstetricians, GPs, midwives and dieticians), retailers,



The Authority's website is a key resource in supporting public information and education, with information on specific campaigns

consumer organisations and the media. Campaign material was included in the Bounty Bag samples kit, distributed through medical practitioners. The Authority created a matching website portal on pregnancy, and an array of print materials including brochures, fridge magnets and posters.

Royal Easter Show

The Public Information and Education program is responsible for the Authority's ongoing presence at the Sydney Royal Easter Show. The Authority's stand was once again situated in the high-traffic Woolworths Fresh Food Dome, which attracted approximately 900,000 visitors during the two-week event. In 2007, the stand focused on improving consumer understanding of food labels, and included:

- an innovative interactive quiz, which tested consumer knowledge of common food labelling issues
- oversized packaging, which consumers could pick up and explore.

Top: With a bewildering array of product information, the Authority has focused on educating consumers about food labelling, allergy prevention and the right foods to eat in pregnancy.

Case Study

Pregnant women get the message

The key messages of the Authority's Food Safety During Pregnancy campaign are to consume folate and vitamins; to avoid food that might be contaminated with *Listeria monocytogenes* and to eat fish wisely – obtaining omega-3 but minimising mercury.

Before the campaign, independent research found 50 percent of pregnant women felt there was insufficient information available on pregnancy diet and food safety. They were confused over which fish should be limited to reduce mercury intake. Alarming, only 51 percent were aware that *Listeria monocytogenes* is a food safety issue for pregnant women. *Listeria monocytogenes* is a foodborne bacteria that can infect babies in the womb and lead to miscarriage, stillbirth and infection of newborn infants.

Following the campaign, market research found that 32 percent of pregnant women now felt there is insufficient information available on diet and food safety (down 18 percent). When prompted, 71 percent of pregnant women were aware of the *Listeria monocytogenes* hazard (up 20 percent).



Of those who received campaign material, 76 percent said it would affect what they ate during pregnancy. Changes in eating patterns included being careful about which fish was eaten, taking folic acid supplements and avoiding high risk foods. So the three key messages of the campaign had been effectively delivered.

Case Study

Century eggs contaminated

Traditional Chinese salted and century or thousand year old eggs were among the specialty egg products surveyed by the Authority over five months in 2006.

The purpose of the survey was to gain a greater understanding of the microbiological and chemical status of these products, as well as the processing methods and food handling practices employed.

The results showed that 37 percent of salted eggs, produced domestically, had unsatisfactory levels of microbial contamination and five percent had unacceptably high levels of *Escherichia coli*. None of the imported salted eggs were contaminated.



Chemical analysis of salted egg products did not reveal any illegal use of additives or processing aids. However, high levels of lead were detected in century eggs from one Australian processor. Testing of the processing brine used by this producer also revealed high levels of lead.

Further investigation revealed the use of lead oxide, which is not permitted as a food

additive or processing aid under the Food Standards Code (FSC). Because of these transgressions, the Authority immediately issued a prohibition order against the processor.

The survey highlighted a number of areas that the industry needs to address to ensure compliance with the FSC, including the use of appropriate additives and processing aids, improved handling and processing practices and increased knowledge of the correct labelling of the finished product.

- An eight-minute DVD loop explaining basic facts on food labelling. The program included interviews with consumers around food labelling and detailed explanations on how consumers can better use the information provided on food labels, for example to help manage allergies.

Authority staff answered questions about food safety from the general public. The Minister for Primary Industries, the Hon Ian Macdonald, once again participated in celebrity food safety cooking shows.

The Authority also sponsored the Champion Regional Food Exhibit award at the Sydney Royal Fine Food Show in August 2006.

Consumer brochures

To support its information campaigns, the Authority produced a range of new consumer publications that were launched at the Royal Easter Show. The titles include: Food labelling (brochure), Using nutrition information panels (wallet card), MSG and Trans fats (consumer fact sheets), Food allergy and intolerance (brochure) and Food safety and pregnancy (brochure) plus three children's word search activity puzzles on labelling and allergies.

The Authority also promoted Food@Your Library month in April 2007 by distributing bookmarks, in return for the distribution of the Authority's new consumer resources across NSW state libraries.

Allergy Awareness

Collaboration with stakeholders to drive food safety messages is integral to the way the Authority works. It sponsored the production of a range of allergy information cards for Allergy Awareness Week, about the risk of severe allergies in the most common allergy food groups. The cards were produced by and co-branded with Anaphylaxis Australia and Food Standards Australia New Zealand.

In November 2006, the Authority produced postcards to assist consumers in understanding allergy-related

requirements for food and the role of the Authority in dealing with alleged breaches. The postcards were inserted into show bags at the Allergy Expo.

International risk communication workshops

The NSW Food Authority was commissioned by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region to conduct two two-day workshops entitled Food Safety Risk Communication in November 2006.

NSW Food Authority was commissioned by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region to conduct training workshops

The first workshop was attended by 56 senior managers from the FEHD, government laboratory, Advisory Council and Expert Committee. The second workshop was attended by more than 50 frontline managers from FEHD.

Catrin May, Consumer Education Manager and Adrian Bradley, Public Affairs Manager, delivered the workshops in Hong Kong giving over 32 hours of training in four days.

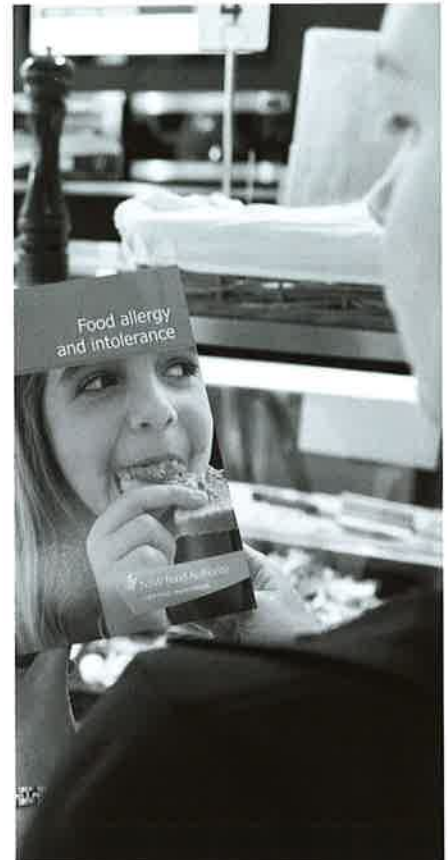
The overall evaluation of the workshop was extremely positive with:

- 82 percent of senior managers and 90 percent of frontline managers rating the workshop as either very good or outstanding.
- 100 percent of participants from both groups rated the workshop as good, very good or outstanding.

Website enhanced

The Authority's website structure, content and look were significantly enhanced early in 2007. The resulting site takes its lead from the NSW Government's revised standards for websites. It is designed to be more accessible, usable, engaging and adaptable and is a vehicle for the Authority's rapidly expanding content.

The website is maintained by specialist staff from the Consumer and Industry Helpline and is a major resource for consumers, food businesses and others interested in food policy and regulation. It facilitates access to a wide range of information the Authority is unable to publish in print form. The site also supports the public information and communication activities of many groups within the organisation. Not least of these is the Helpline itself, with staff actively assisting callers to immediately access more detailed information in response to enquiries.





Service Group 6

Consumer & Industry Helpline

Highlights

- The group handled an average of 1540 calls a month, an eight percent rise in transaction volume for the year, whilst increasing single call resolution rates.
- It successfully piloted processes for the Food Regulation Partnership and the subsequent expansion of the pilot.

The Consumer and Industry Helpline receives and manages diverse communications coming into the Authority. The Helpline staff deal with phone calls, emails, letters and faxes.

Approximately 60 types of communication are handled by the helpline team, which attempts to resolve as many calls as possible during the first interaction. Examples of contacts received during a typical day could include:

- a consumer asking about correct cooking temperature of meat
- an owner of a start-up food business inquiring about her food safety obligations
- a consumer, who speaks a language other than English, needing to access a certified telephone interpreting service
- a retail butcher ordering the Authority's food safety observations diary
- a consumer complaining about a foreign object found in packaged food
- a local government officer requesting specialist advice from one of the Authority's experts
- a licensed shellfish processor inquiring whether an estuary is open for harvesting.

To ensure its ongoing effectiveness, the Helpline is closely integrated into the core operations of the Authority. When callers require more specialised information, Helpline staff enlist the assistance of qualified personnel from other areas of the Authority. The helpline service is open to the public from 8:30am to 5:30pm on weekdays with interpreter facilities available. Staff monitor service levels on an ongoing basis.

Key activities and achievements

Information dissemination

The Consumer and Industry Helpline assists in distributing brochures, guidelines and other resources. In individual cases, this means sending copies of printed material to callers who cannot access online versions or who prefer a printed format. Included among these were 20,000 *Food safety during pregnancy* brochures sent in response to requests from hospitals, doctors, ante-natal clinics and midwives who were responding to the Authority's campaign. (see Service Group 5: Public Information and Education)

Improved food business complaint handling

During 2006-07, Helpline management worked closely with operational groups to implement an updated policy for food business complaints. The new policy provides an explicit guide on service levels required for receipt, referral and investigation of complaints. Frontline public staff, including those on the Helpline, received training to further enhance their customer service skills.

Above: Staff at the Authority's Consumer and Industry Helpline handled more than 18,000 enquiries in 2006-07.

To ensure its ongoing effectiveness, the Consumer and Industry Helpline is closely integrated into the core operations of the Authority

Case Study

Integrated referral of food complaints

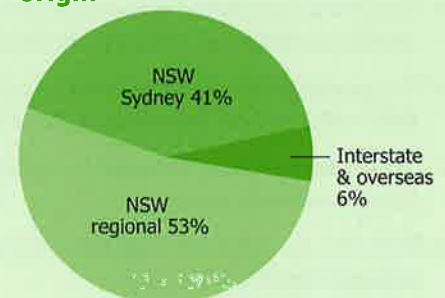
In the later part of 2006, the Consumer and Industry Helpline assisted in piloting processes to handle food complaints under the new Food Regulation Partnership. Under the pilot scheme between the Authority and local councils, food complaints are referred to the appropriate organisation for investigation, no matter which agency first receives the complaint report. The decision as to which complaints are to be dealt with by a council versus the Authority is made systematically according to pre-defined criteria.

By dealing directly with the service centres of local councils, the Helpline team made sure that complaints were handled by the agreed organisation without further imposing on callers making the reports. For example, individual complainants did not have to explain the same details to several agencies. Complainants were kept informed about referral processes so they always knew which organisation was dealing with their report.

The lessons from the pilot were used to design systems that could be progressively rolled out to all councils, depending on the level of involvement which they elected to have under the partnership.

In the first half of 2007, the pilot was expanded to include triple the number of participating councils. The Helpline uses the new systems to manage food complaints originating from anywhere in the State. It does this by working in coordination with the customer service staff of various councils. So a key service provision of the Food Regulation Partnership has been fitted into place.

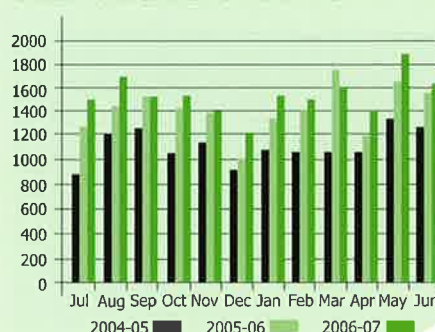
Helpline calls by geographic origin



Helpline complaints/ reports received



Helpline inbound communications volume



Helpline first call resolution



Service Group 7

Internal Services

Highlights

- The group handled a major internal reorganisation process. It will be implemented later without the loss of any positions.
- The group took action to reduce occupational health and safety risks for field officers and frontline staff at the Taree and Newington offices.
- The group led food surveys to enhance the evidence base for national food standards setting.
- Skills for Success, an organisation-wide management development program was introduced.
- The group embarked on a major IT infrastructure project for the implementation of the Authority's business continuity and disaster recovery plans.

Corporate services

The Corporate Services group provides support in three key areas: information management, human resources and administration.

Key activities and achievements

Information management

Information management is critical to the Authority's ability to regulate the 55,000 food businesses across NSW. The Authority has a relational database system called BYTE, which is used to manage licensing, audit and inspection data for the 13,000 licensed businesses.

During the year, 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

Staff numbers by category in 2006-07

Occupation Group	2006-07	2005-06	2004-05	2003-04
Administration	46	42	49	37
Technical/food safety officers	72	71	68	68
Total staff (non-SES)	118	113	117	105
Senior Executive Service	1	2	4	3

Staff by EEO groups 2006-07

EEO groups in 2006-07	Number
Total staff (non-SES)	118
Male	58
Female	60
Staff who are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders	1
Staff who have a disability	7
Staff of racial, ethnic and ethnic-religious minority groups (REM)	13



The Authority completed its Blueprint for Organisational Change strategy, filling positions in line with government policy

information service delivery; wireless access for auditors; and access for local government and private sector auditors.

The group began implementing the business continuity and disaster recovery plans which it developed for the Authority.

Human resources

On 30 June 2007, the Authority had 118 staff including one senior executive service (SES) officer.

The Authority has a Service Partnership Arrangement with the Central Corporate Services Unit of the NSW Department of Commerce to conduct payroll and leave processing and part of the recruitment process. The Employee Assistance Program is facilitated by an independent external provider.

The Authority also has consultative arrangements with the Public Service Association, an agency-specific Food Safety Officers Award, and flexible working hours agreements for field staff and administrative and clerical staff.

Organisational change

The Authority completed its Blueprint for Organisational Change strategy, filling positions in line with government policy. It began detailed consultation on aligning its structure with the Results and Services Plan and with the NSW

Government priorities. The process resulted in the proposed restructuring of the organisation with seven service groups condensed into three, without any loss of positions.

All the Authority's functions were aligned with the three planned service groups. The employee relations aspects of the process were successfully facilitated by the Departmental Joint Consultative Committee, comprising management and union representatives. The Authority intends to complete the process later in 2007.

The objective of the Authority's realignment process is to give it greater focus on addressing larger strategic goals and better capacity to solve future challenges. Adding impetus to those goals, the Authority formed a Think Tank in April 2007 to apply innovative solutions to issues which it has to deal with now and in future.

Comprised of staff from across the agency, Think Tank members consider broad-ranging issues and explore novel solutions, feeding back recommendations to the Authority's executive. The Think Tank develops creative approaches to organisational problems and enhances the leadership skills of individual group members.

Staff development

There was a review of the Goal Setting, Review and Development (GSRD) System, which focuses on individual

Above: Science plays an important part in informing the Authority's decisions and contributes to its overall mission.

staff development and encourages a constant dialogue between staff and managers. As a result the first stage of a major management development program, the Skills for Success Program was introduced to supplement individual GSRD development activities. The second stage, a structured Leadership Program, will commence in September 2007.

Working with the Central Corporate Services Unit, the Authority began introducing an Electronic Self Service arrangement for some aspects of leave administration in the next financial year.

Exceptional movements in wages, salaries or allowances in 2006-07

On 16 February 2005, the NSW Industrial Commission made the Crown Employees (Public Sector – Salaries Award 2004) Award by consent between the Public Employment Office and the Public Service and Professional Officers Association (PSA). In terms of the award, the third annual four percent increase in salaries and related allowances was implemented in July 2006.

A MOU between the Government and the PSA provided for a further four percent increase from the first full pay period on or after 1 July 2007.



Equal employment opportunity

The Authority continued to support the principles of equal employment opportunity. Women now comprise 50.5 percent of the organisation compared to 36 percent in June 2004.

The Authority is now focusing on getting more women into senior roles.

While the Authority completed its major reorganisation over the last year, the Departmental Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) successfully continued to monitor the application of the Blueprint for Organisational Change. The JCC monitored fair and equitable

procedures during the process. It was also involved with the alignment of the organisational structure to reflect the Authority's Results and Services Plan.

A project entitled Building a Stronger Workplace was conducted during the year with the assistance of a consultant. The project incorporated the ideas of four focus groups, representing over 30 percent of staff and managers. The Authority aims to improve further its strong values-based culture by implementing the project's recommended actions during the next reporting year.

The Skills for Success management development program was conducted in two series over the year. It included units on interview and selection skills; EEO awareness; diversity and equity; grievance and dispute resolution. A fundamentals of management unit covered principles of equity in employment.

In terms of overall learning and development, 545 training days were completed, with each staff member attending an average of 4.5 training days.

Aboriginal Affairs Committee

In 2006, the Authority formed an Aboriginal Affairs Committee, which is chaired by the Director-General.

The Authority is currently reviewing the composition of its Ministerial Consultative Committees with the aim of promoting diversity and, in particular, increasing representation from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

It has developed a test program which, if implemented, would enable the indigenous community of Twofold Bay to harvest and sell wild-grown mussels.

The Authority also ensured that the Australian Government's National Delivered Meals Organisation Food Safety Strategy included the development of an appropriate resource to promote awareness, acceptance and application of food safety for remote indigenous communities.

Other initiatives include a permanent flag display to be mounted in the Newington foyer with Australian, NSW, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags and the use of protocols of Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country to introduce appropriate Authority events.

EEO staff groups by level (\$ earnings in 2006-07)

Level	Total staff (non-SES)	Female staff	ATSI staff	Staff with a disability	REM staff
< \$33,910	1	1	0	0	0
\$33,910 - \$44,537	6	5	0	0	0
\$44,538 - \$49,791	6	6	0	1	0
\$49,792 - \$63,006	23	19	1	1	6
\$63,007 - \$81,478	33	13	0	1	1
\$81,479 - \$101,849	41	13	0	3	3
> \$101,849 (non SES)	8	3	0	1	3
> \$101,849 (SES)	1	0	0	0	0
Total	119	60	1	7	13

EEO staff groups by employment basis in 2006-07

Employment Basis	Total staff (non-SES)	Female staff	ATSI staff	Staff with a disability	REM staff
Full-time	108	50	1	7	12
Part-time	10	10	0	0	1
Casual	0	0	0	0	0
Total	118	60	0	0	13

Occupational health and safety

The Authority is committed to ensuring the health, safety and welfare of all its employees at work and has a dedicated Occupational Health and Safety Committee. OH&S Status Reports are submitted to monthly executive meetings as a standing agenda item.

For 2006-07, the Authority reported no work-related injuries, illnesses or prosecutions under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2000*.

Assisted by a consultant, The Authority continued the development of its OH&S management system. The process has involved a review of policies and practices; focus group workshops; fire alarm upgrade and the development of new incident and hazard report forms. It also involved safety audits and risk assessments at the Taree Office and

the reception area at Newington. A comprehensive OH&S training plan is being developed for all staff during 2007-08.

Motor vehicle accidents and dealing with hostile clients have been identified as major risks for injury of staff. This mainly affects field officers and frontline staff at the Taree Office and receptionists at Newington. The Authority continued with stage two of defensive driver training for all field staff and other staff members that use agency vehicles. Refresher training for dealing with aggressive and potentially violent behaviour was conducted for all field and frontline staff in October 2006.

There are protocols in place for Operations Branch staff for dealing with potentially violent behaviour, including a Memorandum of Understanding with NSW Police, and a system for flagging potential hazards on the BYTE information technology system.

The Authority also arranged vaccinations for influenza and Q fever – a serious, notifiable disease which people can contract from infected animals, especially cattle, sheep and goats.

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 118 staff, more than 70 are located in the head office in Newington, with around 40 in regional locations across NSW. There are nine 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.

Financial management

Financial operations

The Finance Section is responsible for managing all of 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; management and reporting 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

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 efficiency and effectiveness of financial processes through continuous process review and improvement. With a view to catering for significant increases in the Authority's licensee stakeholder numbers, the Authority is also focusing on further implementation of electronic service delivery and related technology.

During the 2006-07 financial year, the Authority developed a Corporate Risk Management Plan based on Australian Risk Management Standard AS/NZS 4360:2004. The purpose of the plan is 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 2007, the Authority's capital asset base totalled \$10.1 million, including its head office building at Newington in Sydney and a regional office on the mid-north coast of NSW at Taree as well as various other assets. The Finance and Licensing Branch undertakes certain asset management functions in relation to the Authority's assets, including management of its motor vehicle fleet; maintenance of the asset register; development of the assets management plan and coordination of the annual stocktake of fixed assets.

Policy and Science Services

The Policy and Science Branch provides support in strategic issues management, ministerial liaison and laboratory management.

Strategic issues management

A strategic issues management (SIM) group, consisting of a cross-section of staff from key functional areas, meets weekly to review national and international developments and to recommend action. Immediately after each meeting, the SIM chair reports to the executive to assist it respond quickly and effectively to current and emerging strategic issues.

Key issues considered during 2006-07 included:

- Response by the Authority to the outbreak of foodborne illness at a bakery in Flemington, Sydney.

Case Study

APEC link in bakery closure

The Consumer and Industry Helpline received a complaint that a large wholesale bakery in Sydney was not complying with hygiene requirements. As a result, the Authority sent a Food Safety Officer to investigate.

The officer found multiple breaches of food safety laws at the premises. The contraventions ranged from inadequate hygiene controls to the presence of vermin. She noted the serious nature of the breaches and the effect these might have on the food safety of customers purchasing products from the bakery.

In addition, the officer discovered the bakery was providing products to a city hotel, which would be accommodating delegates to the Asia-Pacific Economic Conference (APEC) in September 2007.



Within 24 hours of the start of the investigation, the Authority issued a Prohibition Notice against the bakery, ordering it to cease operations immediately.

The notice stated that no product was to be sold until all non-conformities had been rectified and the NSW Food Authority granted permission to re-open the business. The

bakery remained closed for several weeks until all the problems were rectified.

After issuing a certificate of clearance allowing processing operations to recommence, the Authority increased the level of inspections of the bakery to ensure it continues to meet food safety requirements.

The Authority has prepared a prosecution brief against the bakery for contravening the regulations.

- Assessing the implications of reports of chemical residues in seafood imported from China.

- Supporting Operation Trident, an operation of the NSW Police and Department of Primary Industries, aimed at curbing increasing rates of theft of impure oysters.

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:

- chemical residues detected in food for sale in NSW
- identifying foods that pose a significant risk of causing illness, such as increasing incidence of *Salmonella* linked to eggs
- reviewing action taken on labelling of foods, including enforcement action taken in health claims
- reviewing and recommending action as a result of data gathered for Food Authority surveys, including surveys conducted on sushi, trans-fatty acids and gluten.

In addition, the Chief Scientist can appoint external experts when necessary, for example an expert panel on dioxins.

Ministerial Coordination Unit

The Authority reports to the Minister for Primary Industries. To ensure that the minister and the NSW Government are provided with accurate and appropriate advice and information on food regulatory issues, a Ministerial Coordination Unit, located within the Policy and Science Branch, facilitates communication with the Minister's Office.

The Policy and Science Branch also coordinates advice to the Minister in relation to his role as Lead Minister for NSW 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 and enforcement of standards, including the promotion of consistency and harmonisation. (See also Service Group 1.)

Laboratory management

Laboratory analysis is essential for the Authority to conduct its regulatory requirements and support activities such as foodborne illness investigation, enforcement activities and complaint investigation. Laboratory data collected through surveys is essential for informing our regulatory process and decision-making.

The Authority contracts the Institute of Clinical Pathology and Medical Research's 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.

During the year, DAL analysed over 2100 samples for microbial contamination with 8800 tests being conducted on behalf of the Authority. Included in this analysis were 1960 samples which underwent 11,600 different analytical tests for chemical composition or contamination.

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.

Research and development

Science plays an important part in informing the Authority's decisions and contributes to its overall mission. It assists us with industry and consumer

education, compliance and enforcement activities and is integral in our interaction in the national, policy setting environment.

We obtain scientific information through our involvement with other organisations, through peer-reviewed literature and consulting scientific experts. Where information is not available the Authority is involved in research activities in collaboration with other groups and organisations.

The Authority is involved in the coordinated food survey plan of the Implementation Sub-Committee of the Australia New Zealand Food Regulatory Ministerial Council. The plan aims to encourage national participation in food surveys and enhance the evidence base for food standard setting. Under this plan, the Authority led a survey on the microbiological quality of sushi. It also participated in two surveys, coordinated by other jurisdictions, into the microbiological quality of spices and the microbiological quality of raw and ready-to-eat fresh produce. The latter provides data to inform the primary production standards-setting process in the horticulture sector.

Surveys serve as useful tools for the Authority to interact with and educate food businesses and provide support for the activities undertaken by local councils through the Food Regulation Partnership. Within NSW, the nationally coordinated survey into the microbiological quality of sushi was conducted in conjunction with local councils' environmental health officers. Local councils also played an integral role in a survey on the microbiological quality of bakery products.

Surveys are also used as evidence for our program development and evaluation projects. Among surveys conducted to support these projects were specialty eggs and red meat baselines.

The Authority conducted follow-up surveys in response to issues that emerged through other forums. This year it covered areas such as fresh cut vegetables and trans-fatty acid content of foods.



The Authority continued to work proactively and share intelligence on *Salmonella* environmental isolates and infections in humans with the poultry industry and NSW Health. This information will form the basis for setting food safety objectives in poultry processing. The process will probably be undertaken in partnership with the New Zealand Food Safety Authority.

The Authority continued collaborating with the Institute of Clinical Pathology and Medical Research at Westmead Hospital NSW to develop a comprehensive DNA-typing system for *Salmonella*. This is intended to enhance the speed and success of foodborne illness investigations. We also began collaborating with University of Sydney to develop a fast screening method for toxic algal species associated with paralytic shellfish poisoning. This is being co-funded via an Australian Research Council Linkage Project Grant.



Our other activities



Top: Buyers bid for seafood at the Sydney Fish Market. The Authority's responsibility extends from opening and closing shellfish harvesting areas to educating pregnant women on which fish are safe to eat.

Executive presentations

These are the presentations given by the Authority's executive during 2006-07.

George Davey, Director-General

"The NSW Approach: Targeting Risks and Building Partnerships", New Zealand Food Safety Conference, Auckland, New Zealand, 1 November, 2006.

"The NSW Food Authority at a glance", Dairy Food Safety Regulatory Agencies Forum, Melbourne, 23 April, 2007.

Dr Lisa Szabo, Chief Scientist, Policy and Science

"Food Standards, ISO 2200 and Global Trade", Quality and Standards Conference, Singapore, 17 October, 2006.

"Sprout safety: NSW's approach", Australia-New Zealand Sprouters meeting, Sydney, 14 November, 2006.

"Outbreaks associated with fresh produce", Industry and government meeting on rockmelons, Sydney, 29 November, 2006.

"Overview of the NSW Food Authority, priority risk classification, benchmarking gastroenteritis, *Salmonella* typing" (with Catherine Bass and Dr Craig Shadbolt), for visiting delegation from Fuzhou University, China, at Authority headquarters, Sydney, 8 December 2006.

"Food standards and conformance: enablers of global trade and business growth", The Regional Impact of Trade Policy on Food Safety Issues in China, University of Technology, Sydney, 8 March 2007.

"*Clostridium botulinum*: bioterrorist, beauty therapist and bad bug", AIFST Green Book Series, Brisbane, 4 April 2007.

"Food regulation in Australia: outcome-focused and evidence-based", University of Sydney, Faculty of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources, Sydney, 4 May 2007.

"Dioxins in seafood – a case study in risk analysis" (with Edward Jansson), 40th Anniversary AIFST Convention, Melbourne, 26 June 2007.

Craig Sahlin, Executive Director, Policy and Science

"NSWFA – some key directions", AFGC Scientific and Technical Committee, Sydney, 8 November 2006.



Presentations by Authority staff

Officer's name	Date	Title of presentation	Name of conference/meeting & location
Phillip Bird	26 June 2007	Critical food handling practices workshop for council Environmental Health Officers (EHOs)	North-West Regional Food Surveillance Group, Walgett
David Miles	21 June 2007	<i>Listeria monocytogenes</i>	Meat Standards Committee, Sydney
Corey Stoneham	19 June 2007	Critical food handling practices workshop for council EHOs	Illawarra Regional Food Surveillance Group, Nowra
David Hook	13 June 2007	Critical food handling practices workshop for council EHOs	Murray Regional Food Surveillance Group, Corowa
Corey Stoneham	6 June 2007	Critical food handling practices workshop for council EHOs	Mid-North Coast Regional Food Surveillance Group, Kempsey
Corey Stoneham	5 June 2007	Critical food handling practices workshop for council EHOs	Northern Rivers Regional Food Surveillance Group, Murwillumbah
Edward Jansson	23 May 2007	The role of the NSW Food Authority in nutrition information	Nutrition Society of Australia, Sydney
Phillip Bird	18 May 2007	NSW Food Regulation Partnership – what are the implications for local government	EDAP Regional Conference, Katoomba, NSW
Corey Stoneham	15 May 2007	Food labelling workshop for council EHOs	South-East Sydney Regional Food Surveillance Group, Queanbeyan
David Miles	15 May 2007	Food microbiology and food safety	University of Sydney, School of Molecular and Microbial Biosciences lecture, Sydney
Corey Stoneham	9 May 2007	Food Act seizure workshop for council EHOs	South-East Sydney Regional Food Surveillance Group, Liverpool, Sydney
Corey Stoneham	3 May 2007	Temperature control workshop for council environmental health officers	South-East Sydney Regional Food Surveillance Group, Hurstville, Sydney
Corey Stoneham	2 May 2007	Food complaints investigations for council EHOs	Northern Sydney Regional Food Surveillance Group, Pittwater, Sydney
Corey Stoneham	1 May 2007	Temperature control workshop for council environmental health officers	Central Sydney Regional Food Surveillance Group, Sydney

Presentations by Authority staff *continued*

Officer's name	Date	Title of presentation	Name of conference/meeting & location
Dr Craig Shadbolt	24 April 2007	Microbes in infection	University of Sydney, Masters in Public Health lecture, Sydney
Corey Stoneham	24 April 2007	Temperature control workshop for council environmental health officers	Northern Regional Food Surveillance Group, Tamworth
Bill Porter	23 April 2007	Food forensics	UNSW, School of Food Sciences, Sydney
Dr Craig Shadbolt	17 April 2007	Rockmelons: the lessons learnt	AIFST Fresh Produce Summit, Brisbane
Corey Stoneham	3 April 2007	Food complaints investigations for council EHOs	Central-West Regional Food Surveillance Group, Orange
Corey Stoneham	27 March 2007	Temperature control workshop for council environmental health officers	North-West regional Food Surveillance Group, Bourke
Corey Stoneham	22 March 2007	Food complaints investigations for council EHOs	Murrumbidgee regional Food Surveillance Group, Cootamundra
Corey Stoneham	20 March 2007	Temperature control workshop for council environmental health officers	Illawarra regional Food Surveillance Group, Wollongong
David Hook	15 March 2007	Kebab shop inspections for council EHOs	Murray Regional Food Surveillance Group, Culcairn
Brett Campbell	14 March 2007	Poster reporting <i>C. perfringens</i> outbreak investigation (awarded best poster for scientific validity)	Communicable Diseases Network, Australia National Conference, Canberra
Phillip Bird	13 March 2007	Food complaints investigations for council EHOs	Hunter Regional food Surveillance Group, Wyong
David Miles	7 March 2007	Controlling microbes in food service	Introduction to Food Microbiology, AIFST and IHH workshop, Sydney
Edward Jansson	7 March 2007	Microbiological limits – legislation, suppliers and your business	Introduction to Food Microbiology, AIFST and IHH workshop, Sydney
David Hook	7 March 2007	Food complaints investigations for council EHOs	Mid-North Coast Regional Food Surveillance Group, Macksville
David Hook	6 March 2007	Temperature control workshop for council EHOs	Northern Rivers Regional Food Surveillance Group, Ballina
Christine Turney	22 February 2007	NSW Food Authority NSW PRCU presentation	NSW Police Rural Crime Investigators Conference, Dubbo
Catrin May	12 December 2006	Food Safety for NSW Breakfast Clubs	Independent Breakfast Club Forum, Red Cross HQ, Sydney
Phillip Bird	5 December 2006	Food complaints investigations for council EHOs	Murray Regional Food Surveillance Group, Barham
Phillip Bird	30 November 2006	Food complaints investigations for council EHOs	Northern Regional Food Surveillance Group, Tamworth
Phillip Bird	29 November 2006	Food labelling workshop for council EHOs	Hunter Regional Food Surveillance Group, Maitland
Dr Craig Shadbolt	29 November 2006	<i>Salmonella</i> Saintpaul: NSW Traceback summary	Joint industry/government meeting, Sydney
Phillip Bird	28 November 2006	Food complaints investigations for council EHOs	North West Regional Food Surveillance Group, Narromine
Phillip Bird	23 November 2006	Food labelling workshop for council EHOs	Mid-North Coast Regional Food Surveillance Group, Port Macquarie
Josie Rizzo	22 November 2006	Food safety regulatory requirement	Wesley Mission Residential Aged Care meeting, Sydney
Phillip Bird	21 November 2006	Food complaints investigations for council EHOs	Northern Rivers Regional Food Surveillance Group, Mullumbimby

Presentations by Authority staff *continued*

Officer's name	Date	Title of presentation	Name of conference/meeting & location
Phillip Bird	16 November 2006	Temperature control workshop for council EHOs	Northern Sydney Regional Food Surveillance Group, Warringah, Sydney
Dr Craig Shadbolt	14 November 2006	Salmonella molecular typing and through-chain work	Barriers Poultry Operations Conference, Sydney
Phillip Bird	14 November 2006	Food complaints investigations for council EHOs	Central Sydney Regional Food Surveillance Group, Marrickville, Sydney
Phillip Bird	9 November 2006	Food Regulation Partnership blueprint	Illawarra Regional Food Surveillance Group, Shellharbour
Phillip Bird	8 November 2006	The NSW Food Regulation Partnership model	AIEH National Conference 2006, Sydney
Craig Sahlin	8 November 2006	The NSW Food Authority – some key directions	AFGC Scientific & Technical Committee, Sydney
Peter Sutherland	6 November 2006	Food Traceability in NSW	Presentation to Beijing FDA, Sydney
Phillip Bird	1 November 2006	Food Regulation Partnership blueprint	Murrumbidgee Regional Food Surveillance Group, Wagga
Josie Rizzo	31 October 2006	New Scheme Development	Presentation to visiting delegation from Chinese Ministry of Agriculture, Sydney
Marianne Tegel	31 October 2006	Investigation of foodborne illness in NSW	Presentation to visiting delegation from Chinese Ministry of Agriculture, Sydney
Dr Craig Shadbolt	31 October 2006	Overview of the NSW Food Authority	Presentation to visiting delegation from Chinese Ministry of Agriculture, Sydney
Dr Craig Shadbolt	31 October 2006	Listeriosis: What can and does go wrong	AIFST meeting, Sydney
Phillip Bird	31 October 2006	Food labelling workshop for council EHOs	Central-West Regional Food Surveillance Group, Bathurst
Josie Rizzo	27 October 2006	Food safety and aged care	Retirement Villages Association, South Coast Managers Seminar, Bargo
Bill Porter	24 October 2006	Regulatory environment	Allergen Control and Management Seminar, Sydney
Bill Porter	17 October 2006	Outcome-based regulations and innovative food processing	3rd Innovative Foods Centre conference, Melbourne
Michelle Keygan & Jane Verwoerd	5 October 2006	Food safety in retirement villages	Aged and Community Services Retirement Villages Conference, Sydney
Bill Porter	28 September 2006	Food allergens	Australian Institute of Environmental Health Annual Food School, Sydney
Peter Yankos & Alan Edwards	27 September 2006	Food substitution	Australian Institute of Environmental Health Annual & Food School, Sydney
Josie Rizzo	21 September 2006	Food safety regulations – food service	Christian Camping International member development food day, Sydney
Phillip Bird	21 September 2006	Food Regulation Partnership blueprint	Murray Regional Food Surveillance Group, Tumbarumba
Michelle Keygan	21 September 2006	Food regulatory requirement	United Care Ageing Meeting, Sydney
Phillip Bird	19 September 2006	Food Regulation Partnership blueprint	Central-West Regional Food Surveillance Group, Forbes
Phillip Bird	12 September 2006	Food Regulation Partnership blueprint	Illawarra Regional Food Surveillance Group, Kiama
Phillip Bird	5 September 2006	Food Regulation Partnership blueprint	Northern Sydney Regional Food Surveillance Group, Willoughby, Sydney

Presentations by Authority staff *continued*

Officer's name	Date	Title of presentation	Name of conference/meeting & location
Phillip Bird	31 August 2006	Food Regulation Partnership blueprint	North-West Regional Food Surveillance Group, Wellington
Phillip Bird	29 August 2006	Food Regulation Partnership blueprint	Northern Regional Food Surveillance Group, Tamworth
Dr Craig Shadbolt	24 August 2006	Methods of attributing illness to foods	OzFoodNet meeting, Brisbane
Phillip Bird	24 August 2006	Food Regulation Partnership blueprint	Mid-North Coast Regional Food Surveillance Group, Kempsey
Phillip Bird	22 August 2006	Food Regulation Partnership blueprint	Northern Rivers Regional Food Surveillance Group, Lismore
Josie Rizzo	11 August 2006	Aged care and food safety	Retirement Villages Association 2006 NSW & ACT State Conference, Port Stephens
Phillip Bird	9 August 2006	Food Regulation Partnership blueprint	Hunter Regional Food Surveillance Group, Cessnock
Phillip Bird	8 August 2006	Food regulation Partnership blueprint	Central Sydney Regional Food Surveillance Group, Concord, Sydney
Michelle Keygan	3 August 2006	Regulation for food service to vulnerable	Neighbourhood Aid Social Support Association, Conference Workshop, Wollongong
Phillip Bird	12 July 2006	Temperature control workshop for council EHOs	Far-West Regional Food Surveillance Group, Broken Hill

Overseas visits by Authority staff in 2006-07

Officer's name/Dates	Purpose	Funding
George Davey 17 – 25 October 2006 31 October – 3 November 2006 6 – 10 November 2006 1 – 10 June 2007	Business meetings and chair of session at the International Dairy Federation World Congress in Shanghai, China. Visit to Beijing Food Administration, Beijing, China. Invited speaker at NZFSA conference, Auckland, New Zealand. Signing of MOU with Beijing Food Administration, Beijing, China. Meeting with Hong Kong Minister of Health. Attended meetings of the International Dairy Federation in France and Switzerland.	Milk Marketing (NSW) Ltd and NSW FA NSW FA/NZFSA NSW FA Milk Marketing (NSW) Ltd
Greg Irwin 6 – 9 July 2006	Presentation at New Zealand Food Safety Authority (NZFSA), Auckland, New Zealand.	NSW FA
Catrin May & Adrian Bradley 7 – 10 November 2006	Present training workshops on food safety risk communication, Hong Kong.	Hong Kong Food & Hygiene Department
Bruce Nelan 18 – 23 March 2007	Presentation at the International Conference on Molluscan Shellfish Safety, Blenheim, New Zealand.	NSW FA
Dr Craig Shadbolt 10 – 25 July 2006	Benchmarking of NSW foodborne illness investigation practices to approaches used by USA food agencies, Atlanta and Minneapolis, United States. Presentation at Priority Setting of Foodborne and Zoonotic Pathogens Conference, Berlin, Germany.	NSW FA
Terry Outtrim 20 – 26 October 2006	Attended the International Dairy Federation World Congress in Shanghai and visited Beijing Food Administration, Beijing, China.	NSW FA
Peter Sutherland 15 – 9 May 2007	Meetings with Beijing Food Administration as part of MOU, Beijing, China. Invited presentations at Third International Forum on Food Safety, Shanghai, China.	NSW FA Conference organisers
Dr Lisa Szabo 16 – 18 October 2006	Invited speaker at 2006 Singapore Quality and Standards Conference Singapore.	SPRING Singapore

Consultants

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

Consultants 2006-07 Financial Year	
Base amount	Description
\$55,975	Doll Martin Associates
\$45,900	Executive Central Group
\$30,488	Food Standards
\$110,985	Taylor Nelson Sofres Aust.

Consultants engaged for less than \$30,000 in cost:
Eight were engaged at a total cost of \$97,507.

Guarantee of service

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

Risk management and insurance activities

The Authority is a member of the NSW Treasury Managed Fund which is a self-insurance arrangement for NSW government agencies. The Authority is fully covered under NSW legislation and is 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 issue management is carried out as part of its routine operation. The Authority schedules tape backups for IT servers. Tapes are stored off site at the Government Records Repository to enable restoration of lost data from backup. A disaster recovery process is in place for all computer servers.

Disclosure of controlled entities

The Office of the NSW Food Authority is a division of the Government Service, established under the *Public Sector Employment and Management Act 2002*. It 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's objective is to provide personnel services to the NSW Food Authority. The Office of the 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.

The Authority's interest in Pacific Industry Services Corporation (PISC) Pty Limited, a subsidiary company of the former SafeFood NSW which undertook laboratory analyses, was sold in 2001-02 to Silliker-bioMérieux Corp (USA). PISC will be wound up during 2006-07.

Milk Marketing (NSW) Pty Limited has continued to function in a limited framework of assistance to the dairy industry. At meetings during 2005-06, it developed policies to promote the quality of NSW milk and the quality and safety of milk and dairy foods. During the year, the company provided financial support to the annual conference of the NSW Division of the Dairy Industry Association of Australia.

Through its liaison with the International Dairy Federation and other international contacts, it is now part of an international network. The company receives regular reports on emerging issues which may have an effect on the NSW 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. 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.

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 NSW community. The Authority's programs cater for the ethnic diversity of the NSW food industry and NSW consumers, and service those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

This assists industry in two ways: firstly, by ensuring access to the Authority's consultation, regulatory programs and advisory services to all food industry participants, and, secondly, by taking ethnic methods of food preparation into account when designing regulatory programs.

The Authority takes its commitment to improve access to and communication with ethnic communities 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. Fact sheets have been translated into a number of languages, including Arabic, Turkish, Chinese, Greek, Italian, Vietnamese, Korean and Spanish.

The Consumer and Industry Helpline officials and field staff make use of an accredited interpreter service to accommodate callers who speak languages other than English.

Ethnic affairs action plan

STRATEGY	ACTION
Identify ethnic groups within each industry with 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"> • Poultry and Egg • Dairy • Meat • Seafood
Take ethnic/traditional methods of food preparation into account when considering risk management options for particular food products.	Translated industry guidelines/fact sheets cover: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sushi handling • Food business notification • Seafood substitution • Sulphur dioxide • Unpackaged seafood
Translate key fact sheets of relevance to particular communities.	Translated consumer fact sheets published on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allergy and intolerance • Borax • Complaints handling • Mercury in fish • Pregnancy and food safety • Recreational harvest of shellfish
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 NSW Food Authority. A direct number is provided for the interpreter who calls the Helpline.
Target ethnic media with relevant press releases through the Community Relations Commission ethnic media contacts.	Press releases are forwarded to ethnic media. Contacts are also made with specific publications.
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 is being translated into multiple languages and will be distributed via appropriate channels.

Public media statements are distributed not only to the mainstream press but 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 NSW have access to the Authority's services. The needs of the community and industry will be met professionally, equitably and appropriately.

agency, particularly in the food safety officer classification where they have traditionally been under-represented.

Performance and numbers of executive officers

The NSW Food Authority recorded the following details on performance and numbers of senior managers for 2006-07:

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

Director-General, SES Level 6
Remuneration package \$277,954 per annum (includes employment benefits of \$16,515)

Mr Davey has been Director-General of the NSW Food Authority, since its establishment in April 2004, and was Chief Executive Officer of the former SafeFood Production NSW, since its establishment in 1999. Mr Davey has a performance agreement with the NSW Minister for Primary Industries and a

NSW Government action plan for women

Although the Government's formal action plan for women came to a conclusion in 1999, the Authority continues to encourage the career development of women in the

Senior Management for 2006-07

	2006-07	2005-06	2004-05
Total SES positions	2	3	4
CEO level 6	1	1	1
SES level 3	1	2	2
SES level 1	-	-	1
Female SES	-	-	-

five-year contract of employment was completed on 15 October 2004.

Under Mr Davey's continued leadership, the Authority has made considerable progress safeguarding food safety across NSW as outlined in this and previous years' annual reports.

Key areas of progress include the implementation of the Food Regulation Partnership, which is a joint initiative between the NSW Food Authority and local government to harmonise and mandate local government's role in food safety regulation.

The Authority has developed a Priority Risk Classification System which has been adopted to enable all jurisdictions in Australia and New Zealand to use the same method to classify food businesses into risk categories and regulate their activities accordingly. In accordance with priorities identified by this system, regulatory Food Safety Schemes were drafted for hospitals and aged care facilities and the egg industry. These are both due to be gazetted in 2008.

Community accessibility to the NSW Food Authority's communications was improved through a major redesign of the Authority's website. Improved features include easier navigation, a high level of compliance with accessibility standards and translated materials.

Considerable progress has been made in supporting the development of the Authority's staff through the internal culture change exercise, Building a Stronger Workplace. This is designed to ensure the Authority remains an employer of choice, is culturally diverse and harassment-free.

Finally, there were no reported outbreaks of food-borne illness due to systems failures by the Authority.

Code of conduct

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

Annual report production

The *NSW Food Authority Annual Report 2006-07* cost \$22,401 + GST to produce 1,000 printed copies. This report is available for free download from www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au.

Freedom of Information (FOI)

All policy documents of the Authority are published in the *Government Gazette* in the Summary of Affairs, as required under the *Freedom of Information Act 1989*. These documents are available for inspection

at the Authority. Some documents are available free, while there is a fee for larger manuals.

Information about these policy documents can be obtained through the Authority's Consumer and Industry Helpline.
Hours: Weekdays 8:30am to 5:30pm
Phone: 1300 552 406 Fax: (02) 9647 0026
Email: 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. The form together with a

Freedom of Information (FOI) Statistics

SECTION A – NUMBER OF FOI REQUESTS

		Personal	Other	Total
A1	New (including transferred in)	0 (6)	13 (12)	13 (18)
A2	Brought forward	(0)	2 (0)	2 (0)
A3	Total to be processed	(6)	15 (12)	15 (18)
A4	Completed	(6)	12 (10)	12 (16)
A5	Transferred out	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
A6	Withdrawn	0 (0)	3 (0)	3 (0)
A7	Total processed	(6)	9 (10)	9 (16)
A8	Unfinished (carried forward)	0 (0)	3 (2)	3 (2)

SECTION B – NUMBER OF FOI REQUESTS

		Personal	Other	Total
B1	Granted in full	0 (2)	4 (4)	4 (6)
B2	Granted in part	0 (4)	4 (4)	4 (8)
B3	Refused	0 (0)	1 (2)	1 (2)
B4	Deferred	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
B5	Completed	0 (6)	9 (10)	9 (16)

SECTION C – MINISTERIAL CERTIFICATES

		Personal	Other	Total
C1	Number of Ministerial Certificates issued	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)

SECTION D – THIRD PARTY CONSULTATIONS

		Personal	Other	Total
D1	Number of requests requiring formal consultation	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)

SECTION E – AMENDMENT OF PERSONAL RECORDS – RESULTS

		Personal	Other	Total
E1	Amendment agreed	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
E2	Amendment refused	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
E3	Total	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)

SECTION F – NOTATION OF PERSONAL RECORDS

		Personal	Other	Total
F1	Number of Requests for notation	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)

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 *Freedom of Information Act 1989*.

During 2006-07 the Authority received 13 new requests for documents under the FOI Act compared with 18 in 2005-06. Two applications were carried over from the 2005-06 reporting period.

This statistical summary is set out in accordance with the provisions of the *Freedom of Information Act 1989*, the *Freedom of Information Regulation 2005* and the Premier's Department 1994 FOI Procedure Manual. Note that statistics for the previous financial year appear in brackets.

Privacy management

The *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.

The Authority engaged a consultant in the reporting period to undertake a review of its adherence to the information protection principles contained within these three Acts with a view to revising the Authority's Privacy Management Plan.

Freedom of Information (FOI) Statistics *continued*

SECTION G – BASIS OF DISALLOWING OR RESTRICTING ACCESS

		Personal	Other	Total
G1	Section 19 – application incomplete	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
G2	Section 22 (3) – deposit not paid	0 (0)	1 (0)	1 (0)
G3	Section 22 (1) – unreasonable diversion of resources	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
G4	Section 25 (1) (a) – exempt	0 (0)	0 (1)	0 (1)
G5	Section 25 (1) (b) (c) (d) – otherwise available	0 (0)	1 (0)	1 (0)
G6	Section 28 (1) – documents not held	0 (0)	0 (1)	0 (1)
G7	Section 24 (2) – deemed refused over 21 days	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
G8	Section 31 (4) – released to medical practitioner	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
G9	Total	0 (0)	2 (2)	2 (2)

SECTION H – REQUEST COSTS (\$)

		Fees Recieved	Access Costs
H1	All completed requests	1976 (480)	5000 (8250)

SECTION I – DISCOUNTS ALLOWED

		Personal	Other
I1	Public interest	0 (0)	1 (0)
I2	Financial hardship – Pensioner/Child	0 (0)	1 (0)
I3	Financial hardship – non profit organisation	0 (0)	0 (0)
I4	Total	0 (0)	2 (0)
I5	Significant correction of personal records	0 (0)	0 (0)

SECTION J – DAYS TO PROCESS

		Personal	Other	Total
J1	0 – 21 days	0 (1)	4 (5)	4 (6)
J2	22 – 35 days	0 (4)	4 (5)	4 (9)
J3	Over 35 days	0 (1)	1 (0)	1 (1)
J4	Total	0 (6)	9 (10)	9 (16)

SECTION K – PROCESSING TIME

		Personal	Other	Total
K1	0 – 10 hours	0 (1)	8 (5)	8 (6)
K2	11 – 20 hours	0 (3)	0 (2)	0 (5)
K3	21 – 40 hours	0 (1)	0 (2)	0 (3)
K4	Over 40 hours	0 (1)	1 (1)	1 (2)
K5	Total	0 (6)	9 (10)	9 (16)

SECTION L – REVIEWS AND APPEALS

		Personal	Other	Total
L1	Number of internal reviews finalised	0 (0)	2 (0)	2 (0)
L2	Number of Ombudsman reviews finalised	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
L3	Number of District Court appeals finalised	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)

GROUND ON WHICH INTERNAL REVIEW REQUESTED

		Personal		Other	
		Decision Upheld	Decision Varied	Decision Upheld	Decision Varied
L4	Access refused	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
L5	Deferred	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
L6	Exempt matter	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (0)	0 (0)
L7	Unreasonable charges	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
L8	Charges unreasonably incurred	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
L9	Amendment refused	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
L10	Totals	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (0)	0 (0)

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
- gaining National Australian Built Environment Rating System (NABERS) accreditation for office buildings.

Electricity supply to NSW Food Authority offices has been transferred to State Contract Control Board electricity contracts C777 that includes the purchase of six percent green power.

Planning

Accountability and responsibility for energy management has been established by the nomination of an Energy Manager and Energy Coordinator.

Where feasible and cost effective, the Authority will endeavour to reduce energy consumption in buildings and its vehicle fleet.

The Authority is implementing a new initiative to enhance sustainability. A Think Tank was established in March 2007 to explore and develop the ideas and talents of people within the Authority, with a view to thinking creatively about a range of issues. Three core areas are being explored, one of which led to the establishment of a Greener Workplace group.

To encourage staff to reduce energy use and reinforce sustainability, they are sent regular emails and are updated on environmental promotions on the Think Tank page on the intranet.

Major energy fuels purchased during 2006-07

Fuel	Total Energy (GJ)	% of Total Energy Consumed	Annual Cost (excluding GST)	Carbon Dioxide (CO ₂) Greenhouse emissions (tonnes)
Electricity (Black Coal)	1959.5	25.3	\$60,572	520.4
Electricity (Green Power)	90.1	1.2	\$3308	0
Unleaded Petrol	5699.5	73.5	\$190,502	376.2
TOTAL	7749.1	100.0	\$254,382	896.6

Performance

In 2006-07, electricity consumption decreased by six percent for buildings and petrol consumption decreased by 5.7 percent for the vehicle fleet. Total energy cost decreased by seven percent during this period.

An accredited ABGR rating for the head office building in Newington was completed in the last financial year.

A brief presentation on sustainability to create energy awareness was given at a staff conference, and the Authority participated in Earth Hour.

Future Direction

The Energy Management Plan includes the Authority's policy directions; monitoring targeting and reporting mechanisms and energy management strategies. The vehicle fleet is being downsized to use four-cylinder cars and shorter journeys will be made where possible. Upgrading of office equipment to more energy efficient models is another high priority. Staff awareness and participation will be promoted through the Think Tank page in the intranet.

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, due in August 2007.

The Authority policy continues 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 replacement of paper documents with electronic documents, including email, e-newsletters and electronic record keeping. Double-sided printing and copying is also used where appropriate. The Waste Reduction and Purchasing Policy is one of the key areas which the Greener Workplace Group will focus on.

Our Committees

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.

- Australia New Zealand Dairy Authorities Standards Committee (represented by Peter Sutherland)
- Australian Food and Grocery Council Allergen Labelling Forum (represented by Bill Porter)
- Australian Institute of Food Science and Technology Inc, Food Microbiology Group (represented by 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 (represented by Edward Jansson, co-chair)
- Australian Institute of Food Science and Technology Technical Committee for the 41st Annual AIFST Convention (represented by David Miles)
- Australian Shellfish Quality Assurance Advisory Committee (represented by Anthony Zammit)
- 2008 Beijing Olympics Expert Board on Food Safety (represented by George Davey)
- Foodborne and other enteric diseases portfolio (FEDS) (represented by Dr Craig Shadbolt and Marianne Tegel)
- NSW Health/Food Authority Strategic Liaison Group
- Poultry and Egg Industry Committee
- ISC Working Group on Consistent Principles for Environmental Investigation of Foodborne Illness
- ISC Working Group on Enhancing Linkages Between Human, Food and Animal Surveillance Activities
- OzFoodNet
- National Gastroenteritis Survey Project Steering Committee
- Food Communicators Group (represented by Catrin May)
- Food Regulation Standing Committee (FRSC) (represented by George Davey)
- Food Regulation Standing Committee Working Groups:
 - FSANZ Board Appointments Selection Advisory Committee (represented by George Davey)
 - Strategic Planning (represented by Craig Sahlin, Chair)
 - Principles and Protocols (represented by Lisa Lake)
 - Addition of Substances Subgroup (represented by Bill Porter)
 - Food Safety Management (represented by Catherine Bass)
 - Primary Production and Processing (represented by Craig Sahlin)
 - Oversee the Survey of Antimicrobial Resistance in Food (represented by Dr Lisa Szabo)
 - Front of Pack Labelling (represented by Samara Kitchener and Craig Morony)
- Food Regulation Standing Committee Implementation Sub-Committee (ISC) (represented by George Davey and Craig Sahlin)
- ISC Working Groups
 - Consistent Implementation Working Group, Survey Group – Workplan Component 1 (represented by Dr Lisa Szabo)
 - Enhancing Linkages between Human, Food, and Animal Surveillance Activities – Workplan Component 1 (represented by Dr Craig Shadbolt)
 - Chemical Response Plan – Workplan Component 3 (represented by Dr Lisa Szabo, Chair)
 - Consistent implementation (overarching strategy) (represented by Craig Sahlin)
 - Consistent Implementation Sub Group – Food Safety Management Group – Workplan Component 2 (represented by Kelly Collins)
- Consistent Implementation Subgroup
 - Implementation of PPP Standards, Seafood Standard Implementation Group, Workplan Component 2 (represented by Kelly Collins and Edward Jansson)
- Consistent Implementation Subgroup
 - Incident Response Plan – Workplan Component 3 (represented by David Miles)
- Enforcement Policy (represented by Edward Kraa and Christine Turney)
- Environmental Health Officers (EHO) Workforce Shortage Working Group – Workplan Component 4 (represented by David Hook, Chair)
- Food Medicine Interface Working Group – Workplan Component 2 (represented by Michael Apollonov and David Cusack)
- Food Medicine (represented by Michael Apollonov)
- Food Safety Management (represented by Kelly Collins)
- Food Operational, Regulatory and Technical Electronic Web Forum (FORTE) (represented by Bill Porter)
- Government Food Communicators Group – Workplan Component 7 (represented by Adrian Bradley and Catrin May)
- Health Claims Watchdog Working Group – Workplan Component 5 (represented by Edward Kraa and Michael Apollonov) Health Claims Watchdog (represented by Peter Sutherland)
- Incident Response Plan (represented by Chris Chan)
- Intentional interference contact officers – Workplan Component 3 (represented by Christine Turney)
- National Audit Policy Implementation Working Group – Workplan Component 2 (represented by Edward Kraa, Chair, and Kelly Collins and Peter Day)
- Nationally Consistent Principles for the Investigation of Foodborne Illness Working Group – Workplan Component 3 (represented by Dr Craig Shadbolt, Chair)

- National Enforcement Policy Working Group – Workplan Component 5 (represented by Edward Kraa, Chair, and Christine Tumney)
- Performance Measurement Framework Working Group – Workplan Component 8 (represented by Miranda van der Pol)
- Seafood Primary Production and Processing Standard Implementation (represented by Edward Jansson)
- Sprouts Working Group – Workplan Component 3 (represented by Catherine Bass and Michelle Keygan)
- Surveys (represented by Dr Lisa Szabo)
- Egg Industry and Jurisdiction Conference (represented by Peter Sutherland, Chair)
- Food Safety Information Council (represented by Catrin May)
- Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) Standard Development/ Implementation Committees/Working Groups:
 - Food safety programs for catering (represented by Catherine Bass)
 - Poultry (represented by David Miles)
 - Processing aids (represented by Bill Porter)
 - P289 Manufactured and Fermented Meat Advisory Group (represented by Christine Tumney)
- Industry Compliance Committee of Australian Fruit Juice Association (represented by Bill Porter)
- International Dairy Federation Program Coordinating Committee (represented by George Davey)
- International Dairy Federation Standing Committee on Marketing (represented by George Davey, Deputy Chair)
- International Dairy Federation Standing Committee on Physico-chemical Methods of Analysis: Quality Assurance, Statistics of Analytical Data, Sampling and Risk Assessment of Residues and Contaminants (represented by Chris Chan)
- International Milk Promotion Group (represented by George Davey, President)

- Meat Industry Consultative Council (represented by George Davey and Terry Outtrim)
- Meat Standards Committee (represented by Peter Day)
- National Association of Testing Authorities, Biological Accreditation Advisory Committee (represented by George Davey, Chair, and Dr Lisa Szabo)
- National Livestock Identification System Advisory Committee (represented by Peter Day)
- NSW Dairy Industry Conference (represented by Terry Outtrim and George Davey ex-officio representatives)
- NSW Health Anaphylaxis Working Party (represented by Bill Porter)
- NSW Health Regulators Forum (represented by Bill Porter)
- NSW Meat Chemical Residue Consultative Committee (represented by Peter Day)
- NSW Nutrition Network (represented by Catrin May)
- NSW Seafood Industry Conference (represented by George Davey and Terry Outtrim)
- NSW Shellfish Committee (represented by Anthony Zammit and Bruce Nelan)
- Poultry and Egg Industries Committee (represented by George Davey and Terry Outtrim)
- Standards Australia Food Sector Board (represented by George Davey, Chair)
- Standards Australia New Zealand Joint Standards Development Board (represented by George Davey)
- Standards Australia Committees:
 - FT-024 – Food Products (represented by George Davey, Chair)
 - FT-024-00-01 – Food Microbiology (represented by George Davey, Chair, and Catherine Bass)
 - FT-21 Committee – Meat for Human and Animal Consumption (represented by Peter Day)
 - FT-25 Committee – Detergents and Sanitisers in the Food Industry (represented by David Miles)



- FT-032 Organic and Biodynamic Products (represented by Craig Sahlin, Chair)
- Interagency Working Group on Pesticide Management (represented by Craig Sahlin, Jenine Ryle, Peter Sutherland and Kelly Collins)



Our Future

The Authority has developed a three-year Strategic Plan (2007-2010) which clearly outlines its goals and objectives.

The strategic plan identifies seven milestones which should be achieved by June 2008 to enable the Authority to reach its goals set for 2010. These June 2008 Milestones are the Authority's strategic priorities for the coming twelve months.

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

Top: Shop owners and consumers can get information on food safety regulations via the Authority's website, through its publications and from knowledgeable staff at the Consumer and Industry Helpline.

Strategic Plan 2007-2010

June 2008 Milestones

1. Indicative baseline level of foodborne illness in NSW established.
2. Innovative intervention strategies for foodborne illness reduction developed.
3. Third party audit program piloted in nominated sectors.
4. Strategy for Enforcement Program to promote compliant behaviour developed.
5. First round of Building Stronger Workplace initiatives in place.
6. New strategies for consumer education function developed.
7. Strategy for knowledge management developed.

Strategic Pathways

Strategic communications → Science and evidence-based approach → Consultative through-chain compliance strategy



The strategic plan identifies seven milestones which should be achieved by June 2008 to enable the Authority to reach its goals set for 2010

2010 Scorecard

- Decrease in foodborne illness trend.
- Percentage decrease in illness due to targeted pathogens.

2010 Outcomes

Reduced foodborne illness

- Percentage of audit program undertaken by Authority-approved external auditors.
- Percentage of councils undertaking Category B or C food regulatory work.
- Percentage of councils participating in the regional forums.

Local councils and approved auditors are partners in food regulation

- Average rating score for audited/inspected businesses.
- Average demerit points per licensed business.
- Average inspection rating for unlicensed businesses.
- Percentage of products surveyed that comply with labelling regulations.

Industry complies with food safety and labelling requirements

- Percentage of consumers aware of hygienic food handling.
- Percentage of consumers who know how to interpret a food label.

Empowered consumers make safe and healthy food choices

- Authority advice/information included in media coverage of all major food safety issues.
- Percentage of advice-seeking calls to Consumer and Industry Helpline.
- Number of visits to fact sheets on website.

Trusted source of food information

- Effective representation and targeted leadership in national forums.
- Effective participation in international forums.

Nationally influential and internationally engaged

- Percentage of staff engaged in training and development programs.
- Percentage 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 implemented.
- Agency revenue is sufficient to meet capital and recurrent expenditure requirements.

Secure and diverse funding

→ Evaluate and enhance agency performance → Optimise funding sources → Proactive role in relevant forums → Workforce development and support → Consumer focus



Strategic pathways

Strategic communications

- Open and responsive communications practices
- Communicate changes in 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.

Science and evidence-based approach

- Foodborne illness data analysis feeds back into program design and priorities
- Food Safety Schemes supported by current science and best practice
- Base issues management on risk assessment
- Survey program targeting problem areas
- Maximise use of laboratory services
- Build science partnerships.

Consultative through-chain compliance strategy

- Regulatory intervention based on risk and consistent through the chain
- Consult proactively with industry and other stakeholders
- Build partnerships with local government and approved auditors
- Ensure effective Authority intervention through verification and enforcement action
- Encourage responsible business behaviour.

Evaluate and enhance agency performance

- Use Results and Services Plan to drive Authority performance
- Authority's planning documents reflect State Plan priorities
- Link workforce development and review framework to Results and Services Plan
- Evaluate and review Authority programs.

Optimise funding sources

- Appropriate industry and Government funding balance
- Explore additional funding sources, including fee-for-service opportunities
- Agency culture includes focus on commercial opportunities.

Proactive role in relevant forums

- Participate actively in national regulatory forums, focussing on areas relevant to 2009 targets
- Participate actively in FSANZ processes
- Coordinate input from relevant NSW agencies
- Tap into Australia's work in international forums
- Enhance Authority's network in regional NSW.

Workforce development and support

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

Consumer focus

- Consumer needs considered within entire Authority work program
- Agency culture includes focus on consumer needs
- Strengthen relationships with relevant consumer organisations
- Maximum leverage of events for consumer education.



Glossary

AFSC	Australian Food Standards Committee
ANZFA	Australia New Zealand Food Authority
ANZFAC	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 NSW Food Authority
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
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
PIN	Penalty Infringement Notice
SDAC	Standards Development Advisory Committee of Food Standards Australia New Zealand (see FSANZ)