

NSW Vulnerable Persons Food Safety Scheme Consultative Committee

The primary objective of the VPCC is to contribute to the Authority's goal of ensuring that food provided to vulnerable persons is safe and suitable for these people, by advising on policy and practices introduced into the vulnerable persons food safety scheme and developed through a consultative process. The VPCC has the function of consulting with the Authority and providing advice on food safety schemes relating to the vulnerable persons industry. Other government agencies may seek to use the broad expertise and experience of the Committee members to obtain advice on matters beyond the scope of the provisions of the Vulnerable Persons Food Safety Scheme Consultative Committee.

Summary of outcomes

NSW Vulnerable Persons Food Safety Scheme Consultative Committee

25 February 2026

The NSW Vulnerable Persons Food Safety Scheme Consultative Committee met via video conference on Wednesday, 25 February 2026. The issues considered at the meeting are detailed below.

Attendees:

NSW Vulnerable Persons Food Safety Scheme Consultative Committee: Lisa Cranham (Institute of Hospitality in Healthcare), Alex Drysdale (The Frank Whiddon Masonic Homes of NSW), Anne King (Aged and Community Care Providers Association), Sharla Seckold (Western NSW Local Health District, NSW Health), Sheryl Smith (NSW Meals on Wheels), Fifi Spechler (HealthShare NSW), Michelle Warton (HACCP Australia), Justin Wilshaw (Estia Health).

NSW DPIRD – Biosecurity & Food Safety: David Cusack, (Manager, Food Standards & Programs), Andrew Davies – Chair (Acting - Director, Food Safety & CEO NSW Food Authority), Eric Davis (Manager, Food Policy & Partnerships), Meher Gregorian (Senior Policy Officer), Patrick Phillips (Acting Manager, Regulatory Operations Unit).

Apologies: Melanie Frost (HealthShare NSW), Kirsty Hope (Health Protection NSW, NSW Health), Craig Kirkpatrick (Uniting NSW ACT), Kate Lewis (Food Safety Culture), Craig Shadbolt (Principal Food Safety Scientist), Sheryl Smith (NSW Meals on Wheels), Gillian Van Someren-Hurley (Safe Food Australia).

Conflict of interest declaration

Members confirmed that they had no conflicts of interest.

Industry updates

Members provided updates on the following key and emerging issues in their respective industry sectors:

- Fifi Spechler raised the issue of a possible lack of clarity in Figure A1.1 (Clearance program flowchart) of [Appendix 1](#) (Microbiological testing) of the Food Safety Schemes Manual regarding the continuing need to notify the Food Authority of an unacceptable test result when that result emerges during the batch testing phase. Patrick Phillips pointed out that yes, notification obligation still applies, which is summarised in the ‘Reporting of failures’ section of the [Manual](#) (see page 6). It was agreed that the Food Authority would look at adding wording that would clarify the need for notification during the corrective action process.
- Alex Drysdale raised the issue of whether stand-alone handwashing units, which cannot heat water but instead provide it to users at ambient temperatures, are compliant with relevant regulations and the Food Safety Scheme. The Food Authority confirmed that it's important that the stand-alone units comply with Clause 14 of Standard 3.2.3 (Food Premises and Equipment) in the [Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code](#) which requires food businesses to provide accessible, clean, and well-maintained handwashing facilities.

1) Matters raised relating to the Vulnerable Persons Food Safety Scheme

Food Safety Compliance Report

DPIRD Compliance and Integrity Systems Unit provided an update on the vulnerable persons (VP) industry compliance activities for the July to December 2025 period. 99% of licensed Vulnerable Persons businesses recorded an acceptable audit and/or inspection result, exceeding the 95% target compliance rate. A total of 563 audits and inspections were conducted during this period, with a combined total of 22 regulatory interventions (improvement notices, prohibition orders, or warning letters).

This consistently high level of compliance indicates the maturity of systems in place. BFS Compliance will continue to consider the scope and frequency of its planned activities, taking into account emerging risks and strategic priorities. Complaints, inspections, and investigations involving vulnerable persons businesses will continue to be addressed as needed.

Suggested changes to NSW Vulnerable Persons Guidelines

Justin Wilshaw presented a paper proposing changes to the content of the NSW Vulnerable Persons Food Safety Guidelines, noting that the development of the paper was driven by a desire to highlight the benefits of cooking fresh and of cooking at lower temperatures where appropriate to help preserve nutrients in food served in the vulnerable Persons sector. Justin advocated that alternative approaches should be considered when cooking to 75 degrees, as this temperature often cooks the nutrients out of food or toughens it. Justin has corresponded with the Manager of Food Science at the Food Authority, and they have agreed on the recommended changes to be made to the Vulnerable Persons Food Safety Guidelines.

Recommendation: Amend the [Vulnerable Persons Food Safety Guidelines](#) with the following:

1. Place additional text on page 26 (Appendix 2) to clarify food cooking temperature guidance.

2. Update the Textured modified food section to include food that is texture modified immediately after cooking (i.e. not chilled before texture modification).
3. Add additional words in Table 1 on page 15 to further emphasise that when an egg is cooked until the white is firm that the yolk has started to thicken, the yolk will not be hard.
4. Add information to Appendix 2 (Page 26) about the temperature required to safely cook rolled roasts and similar meats.

3) Other matters raised

Third Party Audits (TPA) Audit reports

The Regulatory Performance Unit presented a paper on Revised audit schedules facilities approved to use TPAs, advising that the NSW Food Authority (NSWFA) will implement a revised annual audit schedule for facilities approved under the TPA program, including VP facilities.

This change aims to improve efficiency for facilities when planning and booking audits with TPAs. The new schedule provides greater flexibility for both licensed food businesses and auditors. Previously, facilities were required to schedule an audit based on the anniversary of their last audit date. Under the revised approach, facilities can complete their required audit at any time between 1 January and 31 December of the relevant calendar year.

This will support better planning, particularly for businesses operating multiple facilities, while maintaining the requirement for annual food safety audits.

Responsibility for arranging the annual audit remains with the company/facility, consistent with existing practice.

What is changing?

- Initial notice (January): NSWFA will issue an initial notice (typically in January) advising the facility that an audit must be completed within that calendar year. This letter will be sent to facilities and an email will be sent to company contacts.
- Reminder (September): If an audit has not been completed by the end of September, NSWFA will send a reminder email to the facility.
- Non-compliance (end of year): If an audit is still not completed by 31 December, NSWFA may conduct an unannounced audit on a full cost recovery basis.
- Facilities that receive an 'A rating' are no longer required to schedule audits in line with their last audit date. The audit only becomes overdue if it is not conducted by the end of the year in which it is due.
- Facilities that receive a 'B or C rating' will need to arrange an audit again as per the normal audit frequency scheduled, commonly 6 months for a 'B rating' and 3 months for a 'C rating'.
- Audits resulting in a 'D or E rating' will be conducted in accordance with the procedure below:
 1. TPA conducts an audit that results in an unacceptable outcome (D or E rating)
 2. TPA will notify the NSWFA of the unacceptable outcome
 3. The facility will receive a follow up inspection from a NSWFA auditor, enforcement action may be taken by the NSWFA auditor.
 4. TPA to conduct a follow up audit in one month

5. If follow up audit is acceptable, facility continues to be TPA audited.

Current communication

- **Third-party auditors:** Approved TPAs have been advised of the revised audit schedule.
- **Facilities:** The changes are being communicated to facilities via Food Wise
- **Timing:** The first initial notice to facilities will be issued in late January / early February. Companies will also receive an email notification of the initial letter for their corresponding facilities

The date for the next meeting of the NSW Vulnerable Persons Food Safety Scheme Consultative Committee is 15 July 2026.