

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

15 July 2026

The NSW Vulnerable Persons Food Safety Scheme Consultative Committee met via video conference on Wednesday, 15 July 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), Denise Chapman (NSW Meals on Wheels), Rebecca Campbell (Aged and Community Care Providers Association), Neil Franklin (Health Protection NSW, NSW Health), Craig Kirkpatrick (Uniting NSW ACT), Sharla Seckold (Western NSW Local Health District, NSW Health), Fifi Spechler (HealthShare NSW), Michelle Warton (HACCP Australia), Justin Wilshaw (Estia Health).

NSW DPIRD – Biosecurity & Food Safety: Andrew Davies – Chair (Director, Food Safety & CEO NSW Food Authority), Jaime Garcia (Secretariat), Melisa Norris (Acting Manager, Food Policy & Partnerships), Humad Naeem (Acting Manager, Regulatory Operations Unit).

Apologies: David Cusack, (Manager, Food Standards & Programs), Melanie Frost (HealthShare NSW), Kirsty Hope (Health Protection NSW, NSW Health), Anne King (Aged and Community Care Providers Association), Kate Lewis (Food Safety Culture), 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:

- Justin Wilshaw spoke about the requirements outlined in Part 6, “Cook Chill Foods,” of the Guidelines for Food Service to Vulnerable Persons. He proposed an amendment to include wording or reference “For a Central Processing Unit (CPU) under the Vulnerable Persons Food Safety Scheme, testing every 20 batches applies to specific ready-to-eat (RTE) foods, with exact microbiological limits and parameters outlined in the [NSW Food Safety Schemes Manual](#)”. It was agreed that this feedback would be forwarded to the appropriate team for consideration.

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

Food Safety Compliance Report

DPIRD’s Compliance and Integrity Systems Unit provided an update on the compliance activities related to vulnerable persons (VP) for the financial year 2025-26. During this period, NSW DPIRD regulated 586 licensed VP facilities, which include hospitals, aged care homes, respite services, meal delivery organisations, and central processing units. An impressive 99% of licensed vulnerable persons businesses achieved an acceptable result in audits or inspections, surpassing the target compliance rate of 95%. In total, 1,051 audits and inspections were conducted, resulting in 22 regulatory interventions, which included improvement notices, prohibition orders, and warning letters.

Additionally, members were informed that three VP projects have been approved for the 2026-27 financial year. It is anticipated that audit and inspection activities will increase as these projects commence. Currently, there are 30 accredited third-party auditors (TPAs) who completed 959 audits during the reporting period, playing a crucial role in delivering the program and ensuring consistent oversight across the state.

The Compliance and Integrity Systems Unit held a two-day workshop with Third Party Auditors (TPAs) to discuss common issues and ensure a consistent auditing approach. A key question addressed was about the regulation of on-site cafés at VP facilities. In response, NSW DPIRD has developed a guidance statement for clarity on this matter.

When an on-site cafe is operated by the same legal entity as a licensed vulnerable persons facility, food safety oversight and regulation fall under NSW DPIRD (via the NSW Food Authority), and the cafe is included as part of the facility's routine audits. If it's operated by a Separate Legal Entity, it is treated as an independent retail food business and regulated by the relevant local council under the local government unit.

This has been shared with DPIRD's Licensing and Local Government Team and will soon be communicated to all relevant stakeholders, ensuring everyone is informed.

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.

Updated NSW Guidelines for food service for vulnerable persons

Members were informed that the Guidelines for food service for vulnerable persons were recently updated. A schedule of amendments is being prepared for distribution.

The date for the next meeting of the NSW Vulnerable Persons Food Safety Scheme Consultative Committee is to be advised.