

Summary of meeting outcomes

NSW Vulnerable Persons Food Safety Consultative Committee

8 June 2016

The NSW Vulnerable Persons Food Safety Scheme Consultative Committee held a meeting in Sydney on Wednesday, 8 June 2016. Specific issues considered by the Committee at its meeting are detailed below.

Food safety program compliance report (July to December 2015)

The food safety compliance report for the vulnerable persons (VP) sector during the period 1 July 2015 to 31 December 2015 was presented. During this period around 900 audits had been conducted, with 884 acceptable rated audits (91% A rated, 8% B rated and 1% C rated); and 17 failed audits (1.8% failure rate). It was noted that the VP sector has continued to maintain a high level of compliance of 98.2% during the current reporting period. This is an excellent result for the sector.

The top three items receiving Corrective Action Requests (CARs) at audit during the period were in relation to process control, food safety programs and pre-requisite programs. This involves issues such as failure to accurately complete monitoring records and manage temperature control.

A report on enforcement activities in the VP sector during the reporting period was also noted. No prosecutions were conducted and no penalty notices or warning letters were issued to businesses during this period; only 27 improvement notices were issued, indicating that the VP sector is a very compliant industry.

Unannounced facility verification inspection program

The committee received an update on the Food Authority's facility verification program which was implemented in late 2014 in which around 10% of VP facilities across the state receive random unannounced inspections each year which focus on hygiene and processing operations. During the current reporting period, 75 unannounced inspections were conducted resulting in 10 unacceptable inspections and a 13% failure rate which is higher than at audit. The main issues found were with monitoring records, temperature control, hygiene and sanitation, and inadequate pest control. Changes in management at facilities can also affect these results and it was noted that HealthShare is building in a program of succession plans for its facilities.

Recall programs for very small businesses

The committee noted a paper regarding work by the Food Authority to develop a simplified generic template with a step by step guide to assist small food businesses to have a food recall program in place. A copy of a two-page generic template developed to enable businesses to recall product effectively was attached for information. This template is available to businesses in multiple languages on the Food Authority's web site.

It was noted that all trials using the template so far have worked well and over time this will be rolled out to other food safety schemes. This template has also been shared with other jurisdictions.

Audit and Inspection Factsheets

Factsheets prepared by the Food Authority that will be given to businesses receiving unacceptable audit or inspection outcomes were tabled for information and noted.

These were developed to ensure that businesses are aware of enforcement actions that would be implemented if they fail to rectify defects and also to answer any questions licensees may have. These are also available on the Food Authority's web site.

Food Safety Program guidance

A revised Retail Food Safety Program guidance document recently developed by the Food Authority for retail meat businesses was tabled for information and noted. This was prepared to assist businesses to comply with food safety requirements. The revised guidance document is outcomes based with 14 specific outcomes in which butchers will need to demonstrate compliance. A targeted implementation program is being planned in which the Food Authority's auditors will explain the document to licensees on an individual basis and so far the feedback has been very positive. Whilst this guidance document is retail meat business focussed, the outcomes based layout will allow for this to be rolled out across other food safety schemes including the vulnerable persons sector. The document is available on the Food Authority's web site and will also be made available in multiple languages.

Third Party Auditor (TPA) workshop

It was noted that the Food Authority will be hosting a two day Third Party Auditor (TPA) workshop on 24 & 25 August 2016. This workshop will enable the Food Authority to update TPAs on developments in the vulnerable persons and dairy industry sectors where most of the TPA audits are conducted, as well as provide a forum for discussion on industry trends, and provide ongoing professional development for auditors.

Central Production Unit (CPU) project update

The Committee received an update on a project commenced by the Food Authority in July 2015 to examine the policies and procedures currently in place to control food safety risks in Central Production Unit (CPU) facilities. All 11 CPU facilities licensed with the Food Authority were inspected using a comprehensive checklist comprising nearly 100 questions. Copies of the inspection reports were provided to all facilities and feedback from industry has been very positive. Results of the inspections are currently being analysed for trends and issues, and the project is due for completion at the end of June 2016. A meeting will be held with all the CPU facilities when the final report is completed to discuss the findings and recommendations.

Bettamaid prosecution

A report was tabled for information on the prosecution of Bettamaid wholesale bakery for supplying unsafe food to Illawarra Retirement Trust's central kitchen for distribution to ten aged care facilities in the Illawarra area in January 2015 which resulted in a *Salmonella* outbreak and the death of two residents in those facilities. The corporation operating Bettamaid was sentenced in April 2016 for 10 offences relating to the handling and sale of unsafe food and breaches of food safety standards, and was convicted and fined \$63,000 and ordered to pay \$20,000 in professional costs. Further charges against the director are currently proceeding.

Communications update

An update was tabled on work the Food Authority's communications team has been doing since the last meeting in relation to the vulnerable persons sector, including the issue of *Foodwise* v40 in May 2016, Fact sheets and guidance documents, and a refreshing of the Food Authority website.

The next meeting of the NSW Vulnerable Persons Food Safety Scheme Consultative Committee will be held on 9 November 2016.