

Food for Thought

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Introduction

Welcome to the 8th Issue of the Food Unit's Food for Thought Newsletter. October has been a very busy month for the Food Unit and this newsletter outlines some of the achievements and topical issues that were addressed during this quarter.

WA Egg Survey



A state wide survey titled Survey of Egg Based Sauces and Salmonella was coordinated by the Western Australian Food Monitoring Program and conducted by local government from April to August 2010. The survey is now completed and a report is pending.

A total of 25 local government authorities assisted with the survey by collecting samples of egg based sauces and spreads made on-site from a range of food businesses.

A survey was also conducted at each premise to document information pertaining to food safety management, hygiene practices and egg details including type, storage and source.

A total of 124 samples of egg based sauces including aioli, hollandaise sauce and caesar dressing were taken from various restaurants, cafés and burger outlets.

The samples were submitted for routine ready-to-eat testing which included aerobic plate count, *E. coli*, Coagulase positive staphylococcus, *Salmonella*, *L. monocytogenes* and *Campylobacter*. The Food Standards Australia New Zealand *Guidelines for the Microbiological Examination of Ready-to-eat Foods* was used as a guide to assess the test results. The vast majority of test results were satisfactory with the exception of five marginal *E. coli* test results and six unsatisfactory test results for aerobic plate count.

The information and data collected will be used to evaluate whether products containing raw eggs are a significant source of *Salmonella* contamination (and whether the main cause of contamination relates to preparation practices).

Food Act 2008 Updates

Food Safety Programs in WA

The adoption of the *Food Act 2008* (the Act) into Western Australia (WA) has resulted in significant changes to our food regulatory system. One of those changes has been the introduction of mandatory Food Safety Programs (FSP) for food businesses captured under Standard 3.3.1 (Food Safety Programs for Food Service to Vulnerable Persons) of the *Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code* (the Code) and the subsequent need for a regulatory food safety auditing system.

As of the 23rd October 2010 local governments will need to advise food businesses in their district of their priority classification and subsequently set the audit frequency for these businesses.

Food businesses covered by the Standard 3.3.1 include acute care hospitals, nursing homes for the aged and hospices. Under the *Food Regulations 2009*, the CEO of the Department of Health is the appropriate enforcement agency of the Standard within state health facilities for the purposes of the *Food Act 2008*.

This role is delegated to the Food Unit of the Environmental Health Directorate, and as such, has the role of auditing and enforcing the provisions of the Act and the Code.

The current status of the state health facilities, visited by Food Unit Staff in October, varied with the majority having moved towards a fully documented food safety program. Some of the more remote establishments will require further assistance to achieve the required standard which will be realised within the next few months.

Local councils are responsible for private hospitals, day care centres, aged care ,hospices, same day chemotherapy and renal dialysis services and child care centres where food is provided.

Please visit the [Auditors webpage](#) for access to guidance documents for local government enforcement agencies regarding the implementation of food safety programs in Western Australia.

Labs and Analysts

Section 82 of the Act outlines the approval of laboratories by the CEO of the Department of Health.

For more information, or to view; the application for approval of a laboratory/analyst, the list of the currently approved laboratories, or details of a Certificate of Analysis, please visit the [Labs and Analysts webpage](#)

Publication of Names of Offenders

A review and update of the Publication of Names of Offenders Policy was carried out on the policy and related documents, following a 12 month period from its original approval. Please visit the [Publication of Names of Offenders webpage](#) to view these documents.

Animals in Alfresco Areas

A Regulatory Guideline has been developed and approved by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Department of Health under section 120 of the Food Act 2008 to clarify and ensure the consistent application of clause 24 of the Code by all local government enforcement agencies.

It aims to outline the food regulatory position in relation to the presence of animals in the alfresco dining areas of food businesses in WA

For a copy of the Guideline, the letter to local government CEOs and relevant fact sheet, please visit the [Animals in Alfresco Areas webpage](#).

Food Act 2008 Reporting Requirements

Gentle Reminder

The Food Unit would like to remind local governments that the reporting requirements, outlined within Section 121 of the *Food Act 2008* (the Act), are due to be submitted to the Chief Executive Officer of the Department of Health WA by the **31 December 2010**.

The reporting period for 2010 is **24 October 2009 until 30 June 2010**.

The response so far has been positive and an even distribution between metropolitan and rural local governments.

Thank you to those local governments who have reported so far.

Please visit the [Reporting Requirements webpage](#) for all relevant information concerning the reporting requirements of local governments, including an electronic reporting template.

Pam Digby has retired!

Pam Digby has retired after five years working in the Food Safety Branch and Food Unit, Environmental Health Directorate.

Pam started her working career as a Cartographic Draftswoman in the mining sector, State and Commonwealth governments. After 11 years and a complete change of direction Pam graduated in the post graduated degree of Dietetics in 1984.

Pam spent 20 years as a Dietitian in her own consulting business. The desire to go down the health promotion track, lead her to be involved in develop training packages for the childcare industry and Meals on Wheels organisations for the Department of Health. Over a 5 year period Pam delivered training for over 75% of the childcare industry (Long Day and Family Day Care) and Meals on Wheels organisations across the state.

Pam worked in the Nutrition and Physical Activity Branch (Royal Street) until the restructure of government and then transferred to the Food Unit (Grace Vaughan House) in 2005.

In the Food Unit (pictured above) Pam supported the implementation of the *Food Act 2008* through the food service industry, specifically focussing on using the well recognised Gold Plate Awards to promoting healthy and safe menus for children in restaurants. Pam has also brought to the Food Unit a source of nutrition expertise to represent WA Health nationally.

Pam celebrated this exciting milestone with a morning tea on her last day at the Food Unit, 28 October 2010. It was a very enjoyable occasion and many of Pam's previous work colleagues also attended. The Food Unit wishes Pam all the best in her retirement and thank her for her time with us. Good luck Pam!!



Welcome and Congratulations!



Welcome Mark!

The Food Unit would like to extend a warm welcome to Mark Fallows, the newest member of the Food Unit, Policy Team.

Mark joined the Food Unit in August after working in local government environmental health for approximately 8 years, both in Western Australia and Victoria.

Mark has a particular interest in adopting risk based environmental health practices, particular in the application of the *Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code* (the Code). As a result, Mark has coordinated and participated in a number of projects for individual local governments in the fields of nutrition, food safety education, air quality, stormwater, safe alcohol practices, community engagement and policy.

Mark is currently working on a number of policies including:

- Compiling the *Food Act 2008* Reporting Requirements data
- Reviewing the Food Business Risk Profiling guideline
- A guideline to assist local government with the management of temporary and mobile businesses

Please feel more than welcome to contact Mark should you have any queries on the application of the *Food Act 2008* and the Code.

Congratulations Christina!

Dr Christina Pollard was recently awarded a five year Health Promotion Research Grant by Healthway.

These grants fund research projects that lead to the prevention of ill health and promotion of health in Western Australia.

Christina's project, titled Food Law, Policy and Communications to Improve Public Health, aims to develop health eating interventions by addressing:

- food choice among WA adults
- consumption consistent with dietary guidelines
- trends and knowledge among adults in WA in relation to nutrition interventions
- messages to promote good nutrition
- food and menu labelling options, and
- policy instruments to identify priority options to improve nutrition.

This is an innovative and current area in health and we look forward to viewing the projects' outcomes

For food enquires please contact the Food Unit on:

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Thoughts, comments and topic suggestions are also welcomed.