



**Evaluation of Scores on Doors Pilot Program**

**Research Report**

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NSW Food Authority

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## 1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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### Summary of approach

- TNS Social Research was commissioned by NSW Food Authority to conduct two focus groups discussions in order to briefly evaluate the Scores on Doors (SOD) Pilot Program in December 2010.
- The groups comprised Sydney residents selected from different participating council areas, and those exhibiting some awareness of the program.
- Subsequent response to the program was relatively consistent across both groups.

### Key findings

- Food outlet visitation and food safety knowledge: Respondents frequency of food outlet attendance varied according to taste, circumstance and lifestage, with mentions ranging from daily to monthly. Most respondents did however, consider themselves as fairly knowledgeable regarding food safety in terms of preparation, handling and storage.
- Knowledge and understanding of SOD program: Degree of understanding regarding the program and its workings ranged. Most at least knew it as some form of rating scheme for food outlets concerning maintenance of hygiene standards (but without knowing exactly what types of food outlets were included/ excluded). They had a fair idea as to which stakeholders were involved (i.e. NSWFA, councils and food outlets) but only a few were aware that the program was still in pilot phase and/or how long it was due to run for. All were however, in favour of state-wide roll out and ideally, mandatory rather than voluntary participation, as they believed this would enhance the credibility of the program.
- Perceived purpose and benefit of program: Overall reaction to the program was generally favourable, with most seeing it as a positive initiative that would benefit both themselves as consumers, as well as the industry in general by raising hygiene and food quality standards and potentially generating business for smaller or local outlets. Respondents believed that the program would provide assurance of outlet compliance in terms of hygiene and act as an aid to selecting restaurants, especially if in a new area.
- Source of awareness/ exposure: Most had first been exposed to the program via the press (with mentions of TV, print, radio and online). Some had noticed the grading certificates placed outside an outlet. Only very few had however, been exposed to the program via other consumer materials i.e. internally placed card holders and cards.
- Suggested improvements: In order to maintain confidence in, and integrity of, the program respondents requested maintenance of regular, random inspections and rotation of inspectors. This was to avoid complacency of outlets, or inspectors, and to reassure consumers that the grading received was current. Other suggestions included clarification of the grading scheme – and the P specifically. Although there was some preference for a star-grading, as opposed to letter-grading system, it was acknowledged that this was likely to cause confusion with existing restaurant rating systems which focussed on food quality, whereas this system indicated cleanliness and hygiene standards.



## 2 BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

NSW Food Authority (NSWFA) commissioned TNS Social Research (TNSSR) to undertake research to evaluate the Scores on Doors (SOD) Pilot Program.

The aim of the SOD Program is to inform NSW consumers about how well their local food outlets are obeying food safety rules. The program is voluntary and a number of businesses have signed up to date (and as summarised further below).

The aim of this research was to assess the success of the pilot and to determine what improvements can be made to the future program when it is permanently rolled out.

### Business Types:

Business Type	No. signed up	No. inspected	Results			
			A	B	C	P
Restaurant	84	68	50	10	6	1
Takeaway shop	84	79	58	15	5	1
Café	35	27	24	4	0	0
Club	10	7	6	1	0	0
Bakery	9	9	8	1	0	0
Pub	5	2	2	0	0	0
Hotel	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>227</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>2</b>

### Participating Councils:

Council	No. of businesses signed up	Council	No. of businesses signed up
Blacktown	62	Goulburn	7
Sydney	46	Tumbarumba	6
Penrith	30	Mosman	6
Kogarah	27	Cessnock	6
Taree	26	Waverley	5
Holroyd	16	Warringah	3
Newcastle	14	Ashfield	3
Randwick	13	Upper Hunter	0
Parkes	10	Forbes (starts Oct)	0
Parramatta	8	Wyong (starts Oct)	0
<b>Total</b>		<b>321</b>	

### 3 METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLE

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A qualitative methodology was adopted, comprising a total of two focus group discussions. This was in order to facilitate exposure to the program materials, followed by appropriate discussion and exploration amongst the target market (whilst remaining within budget).

Both groups were recruited to comprise a mix of males and females from the general community, aged 18+ years. Then, to ensure relevance of the conversation, only those displaying some familiarity with the program were invited to participate in the research.

In terms of location, respondents were drawn from a mix of participating councils. In order to maintain costs (and due to lower numbers and distances between councils) groups were limited to metro locations.

No criteria were imposed in terms of respondents' frequency of visitation to a particular food outlet or local food outlets in general. A natural fall out was allowed. Similarly, no criteria were imposed with regard to ethnicity. Respondents were merely screened to ensure they would be comfortable engaging in English within a group scenario.

Groups comprised between 6 and 8 respondents each and were of 1½ hours duration. Within each group, discussion started broadly and to initially establish respondents' spontaneous reactions to the program. This was followed by prompted responses after exposure to various program materials. A copy of the discussion guide used in both groups is provided in the Appendix.

The research fieldwork was conducted during the week of 13 December 2011, as below.

Group no.	Date and time	Location	Respondents	Moderator
1	Tues 14 Dec 6.30pm	Metropolitan NSW (i.e. Sydney, Kogarah and Randwick)	Males/ females aged 18+ years	Laurette Douglas
2	Wed 15 Dec 6.30pm	Regional NSW (i.e. Penrith, Blacktown and Parramatta)	Males/ females aged 18+ years	Laurette Douglas

## 4 MAIN FINDINGS

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### 4.1 Introduction

Groups commenced with a brief introduction from respondents as to their name, age, occupation and family structure. Respondents in group one (as recruited from the Sydney, Kogarah and Randwick council areas) ranged in age from 25 to 47 years, whereas respondents from group two (as recruited from the Penrith, Blacktown and Parramatta council areas) ranged from 20 to 33 years.

#### 4.1.1 Food outlet visitation

Respondents were then asked to summarise their food outlet purchasing behaviour, and specifically the types of places they often buy food (other than groceries) outside the home (e.g. take-away stores, restaurants, pubs, cafes, bakeries and fast food outlets).

Although food outlet attendance ranged according to lifestage, circumstance and taste, most mentioned fairly regular visitation of restaurants, cafes and takeaways, with frequency ranging from daily to weekly to monthly.

*'Depends on the kids but try to get out a couple of times a month.'* G1

*'I usually buy my lunch from a café near work, café or shop ...and on the weekends I usually eat out dinner every night at restaurants.'* G1

*'We usually go out for breakfast every Saturday morning to a café and we eat out at a restaurant at least once a week.'* G2

#### 4.1.2 Food safety attitudes and knowledge

Towards the end of the group discussion, respondents were briefly asked about food safety and the extent to which they think about it and whether they had been affected by unsafe food. Broadly speaking, female respondents were more likely to express concern about the issue. However most, if not all, had experienced a bout of food poisoning.

*'I always think about it, I think every time I eat some food that I haven't prepared myself.'* G1

In terms of concern about the hygiene in particular outlets, some felt that smaller outlets posed the greatest risk. Not because they were any more likely to ignore food safety requirements but because of slower turnover and the potential for food to 'sit around' for longer.

*'The food courts...I think the food often sat there for a while and particularly small places, you don't go in, because I think you never see people go in there, that food's sat there all day regardless of whether it's at the right temperature or not. There's no through put of the food at all.'* G1



Most consider themselves appropriately knowledgeable in terms of food safety (preparation, handling, storage etc.) and knowing what is and isn't safe behaviour, and tend to give others the benefit of the doubt.

*'I'd say average, but my expectation would be that most people have a pretty good understanding of basic food hygiene. I think most people know you don't have raw meat with you know, you don't chop your chicken and your vegetables at the same time and you wash your hands.'* G1

*'Some more than others... They know but whether or not they do it is two different things, what people do in their own home is different to what you expect.'* G1

*'I have refused to take a sandwich know that the person making my sandwich has previously touched money with the same glove.'* G2

*'Basic understanding but by no means and expert.'* G2



## 4.2 Spontaneous reaction to SOD program

Discussion then progressed onto the Scores on Doors program. However, in order to gain individual, unbiased responses, all respondents were required to initially undertake a self-completion exercise, requiring them to write down their personal understanding of the program, before discussing it.

### 4.2.1 Perceived workings of program

Across both groups varying degrees of understanding regarding the workings of the program emerged. These ranged from brief mentions of 'a rating system for restaurants' and references to maintenance of 'hygiene standards' to more detailed and accurate descriptors of the program. Overall however, group one emerged as somewhat more knowledgeable about the program.

*'I assume it's related to the inspections that the council does, so they want to see if there is any evidence of pests or rodents, make sure they've got hand soap near sink, make sure the hand washing is separate to where they prepare the food. I'm just trying to think on the Name and Shame website the reasons that people had fines, oh, keeping food at the appropriate temperature, refrigeration.'* G1

*'I was under the opinion there was a trial period and that it was up to them to volunteer to go ahead with this and to see how it works within this trial period.'* G1

*'Currently it is a 6 month trial program that grades outlets on their cleanliness and OH&S. The score is visible for the customers. This would make any customer more at ease when eating in an A grade outlet.'* G1

*'Displays rating of food and safety and hygiene of food outlets on their front doors. Shames poor performer into action, rewards good hygiene practices. Any food outlets can register and only certain councils have begun a pilot program in Sydney.'* G2

### 4.2.2 Perceived length of trial

There was general confusion about how long the program had been running for, as well as how long it was due to continue for. One respondent within each group referred to a 6 month trial. In group one most admitted encountering the program for the first time a few months ago, and in group two mentions ranged from a few weeks to a few months ago.

*'Yeah, I think it's a 6 month trial where inspectors are coming down to inspect the premises, if the premises themselves have requested or have volunteered.'* G1

*'I think it was a 6 month pilot going on at one of the councils but I'm not sure where.'* G2

Vs.

*'I thought they got inspected every 12 months. And I thought it might only go for about 3 years, because it's not in every state.'* G1



*'I know that if there is a non-compliance issue, the restaurant has the opportunity to correct it and then call the inspector again after some sort of notice period is up, I think it's about a month or so.'* G1

#### **4.2.3 Perceived stakeholders**

There was broad awareness of who the exact parties involved in the program are i.e.

- Food outlets (but not sure what this encompasses or excludes),
- Councils (but not aware which currently participating or not) and
- NSWFA (some specific awareness vs. assumed government body involvement).

*'I thought it was a government thing. I don't think there was any solid backing to it? I think it was just scores?'* G1

*'The council? In NSW it's the Food Authority or something. I think it's State Government.'* G1

One or two respondents incorrectly guessed at NSW Health as the government department involved in the program. Similarly, there was varying levels of awareness about who decides on the grades. It was assumed by some to be council inspectors, although one respondent was under the impression it was a consumer rated initiative.

*'The inspector, the person who actually inspects the premises. And if they met all the criteria they get the top mark, but obviously some of it is passable but not the best quality, obviously A is they meet all of the criteria and are very good at it, whereas the next one down maybe they could improve on stacking dirty dishes too close to a sink or something.'* G1

*'The government food health place? I don't know, I really have no idea.'* G1

*'Consumer rated food outlets on their service, hygiene, food quality and presentation and rate the actual outlet on cleanliness and appearance.'* G2

#### **4.2.4 Perceived purpose**

It was described as a reassurance measure of outlet compliance in terms of hygiene, and an aid in deciding whether to visit a particular outlet or not. Respondents also believed that the program could lead to an improvement of the quality and/or standard of food provided by food outlets.

*'I think it gets everyone to comply better, obviously if it's on your front door you don't want to have a bad mark. (And comply better) with the regulations regarding hygiene and food preparation and all that.'* G1

*'I think it's there to help the restaurants reassure their customers they are clean and tidy. So I don't imagine many of the people that have got it have dirty restaurants.'* G2

*'It is a system... to reflect the hygiene and presentation of the food outlet.'* G2

*'For the everyday person who goes to a food outlet like this to feel more at ease when you see the score or the grade of that outlet.'* G1

*'It help you make the decision on what you're going to eat knowing that it's all healthy and that it's clean what you're getting.'* G2

*'I would have thought the overall objective would be to increase the quality overall by publicising those that don't basically (comply). I wasn't sure of the quality of food but the quality of how good the food outlet is?'* G1

#### **4.2.5 Source of awareness of program**

It was subsequently found that initial awareness of the program was gained through a mix of sources including:

- on-site exposure (although more likely to be to exterior grading certificates rather than internal materials or information cards), and
- press (including the SMH and other newspaper articles as well as radio, online and TV).

*'I read an ad in the paper quite a few months back or maybe it was on the internet. I think paper. I come from a retail background so I was quite interested.'* G1

*'Saw it on the door of a café in Sydney and I must have read about it in the paper because I saw it and knew what it was.'* G1

*'I saw it because of part of the report of the Name and Shame and they had different options for policing food hygiene and Scores on Doors was another one. I think it was channel 9, Current Affairs.'* G1

On asking whether they had found the press coverage they encountered to be of a positive or negative nature, it was generally considered in favour of the program.

*'I think it wasn't specifically around the program but it was more that there is a bunch of terrible restaurants and that Sydney needs to lift its game on hygiene and then at the end it was, oh, we're coming up with this program. But they were supportive with the program, the initiative, the inspections but then they just wrapped it up the bundle of here is some horrible restaurants.'* G1

*'I remember it was a quick on why they're doing it and what we can expect to get out of it. I think it mentioned that other countries have employed the system and found it to be successful so they wanted to try it out.'* G2

One respondent commented that the press had focussed on fast food outlets such as KFC and McDonalds and food courts rather than restaurants, and had exposed outlets that had not met criteria set for hygiene or quality but without expanding on what the breach had entailed.



#### **4.2.6 First impressions of program**

When asking respondents to think back to their first exposure to, or experience with, the program, most recalled having responded positively to the concept. They considered it a good initiative and one that would help improve food safety standards (expressed more commonly as cleanliness and hygiene).

During the self-completion exercise conducted at the start of the discussion all but one respondent within each group rated their overall reaction to the program as either very or quite positive. Those less familiar with the program were more likely to rate it as neutral.

*'Very positive. I would keep an eye out from now on.'* G1

*'Love it. A poor score would turn me away instantly. I eat out all the time so it's a fantastic system.'* G2

## 4.3 Prompted awareness and evaluation of program

### 4.3.1 Prompted recall of materials

#### Information cards (internal placement)

Respondents were exposed to the information cards and holder (illustrated below). However, most respondents across both groups, admitted not noticing these within outlets before.



*'Doesn't look familiar, Never saw that, That would have to be next to the till or you wouldn't notice it, would you? You would think I would be with the achievements, you know, some restaurants and outlets have achievements on the wall, you would think it would be an achievement for the outlet and I would be looking for it in that area of the restaurant.'* G1

On subsequent probing, group one were somewhat critical of the perceived quality and durability of the materials.

*'I do think this is a bit gimmicky for a restaurant. Just having worked in a restaurant while going through college, I don't think much attention would be focussed on this in a restaurant. I think it's just a bit flimsy, a bit gimmicky. Cheap and tacky comes to mind. I think they would get broken straight away.'* G1

Group two were more favourably disposed towards the materials but debated its effectiveness in informing consumers about the program. This was due to the limited time one was likely to spend at the front counter or cash register, thereby not providing an opportunity to notice or read through the materials and contribute to their understanding of the program or grading system.



*'If I didn't know what it was, I'd think I get the opportunity to actually score (like a feedback questionnaire. When you first see it, obviously the colours are great but then when you look at the cards, it's quite busy and you don't want to pick it up while you're waiting for your food, it's a bit too detailed.'* G2

*'If it's at the cash register area you only got that time from when you go to pay your bill till they service you to quickly look at it, cause most people probably wouldn't pick it up.'* G2  
*'Perhaps this needs to be at the door with the larger sign to give you an understanding, ok A is excellent but what does that actually mean other than excellent.'* G2

### **Grading certificates (external placement)**

Respondents exhibited higher levels of familiarity with the grading certificates (example of P grading certificate illustrated overleaf), which some had seen displayed outside certain outlets. However, within discussion a general request arose for provision of more information about the meaning of the grades. For example, group two requested having the grading information posted outside alongside the respective grade, rather than inside the outlet where it could be missed, or when it was possibly considered too late or embarrassing to walk out.

*'I think it's a good idea to have a card that explains it, but you've actually got to have gone inside to get that and if you don't know a whole lot about what the program is, all you got to go off is this one sign and you might not understand what the gradings are. Whereas if there was something similar to that accompanied on the front door or wherever they're going to display it then you'll know what it's about and whether you're going to go in or not.'* G2



# Scores on doors Food Safety Result

P

**A**  
EXCELLENT

**B**  
GOOD

**C**  
ACCEPTABLE

**P**  
GRADE PENDING


## GRADE PENDING

Business name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Inspection date \_\_\_\_\_ Expiry date \_\_\_\_\_

Issuing council \_\_\_\_\_



Food Regulation Partnership  
Together towards safer food

© NSW Food Authority  
The grading presented on the scorecard of the premises is a rating based on a food safety assessment carried out by an authorised officer of (insert name) council on the date indicated. The grading is given in good faith but is intended as a general guide only. You should not rely solely on the general nature of the rating. The council makes no representation, gives no warranty and will not be liable for any negligent act or omission in connection with the rating, the condition of the premises, the quality of food or food safety standards of the food business on the date indicated or at any time in the future.

### 4.3.2 Perceived benefits of program

There was general consensus that the program was likely to be of most benefit to consumers, although of potential benefit to all – as it would help raise the quality of food outlets overall.

#### Outlet standards

*'When you go out to eat or get takeaway you expect high quality, it's what you should be getting and it's only the places that don't adhere to the rules, it will cast those guys out.'* G1

*'Because it is such a strict program the restaurant owners themselves they would have to keep up the high standards so that would encourage customers to keep coming back, in a way they're deciding their own fate by how clean their restaurants are, that encourages them to be clean to encourage customers to come. And not knowing if there is an expiry date approaching, ok, you better prepare and be that little bit more cleaner than what we normally are but if there are just random checks they've got to be on the ball all the time.'* G2

*'I think the main benefit of this is basically it lifts the game of the restaurants as a whole, so if you see A, B or C you know it's safe and if you go into that restaurant you're not going to get food poisoning and if you see this you basically just avoid the restaurant.'* G1

#### Consumers

*'I think it's to the general consumer knowing that what they are about to eat or order is going to be prepared or cooked in a clean environment.'* G2

*'Everyone's gotten food poisoning at one time or another so hopefully it'll prevent people getting sick.'* G1

#### Local industry

*'I think it might encourage consumers to go to local businesses as well because if the general consumer is just walking down the street seeing a tiny little restaurant they might not think much of it but if they could see an A on it they might respect it a little bit more and might say, oh, yeah, let's try it out, they quite clean, let's give it a go. So, it might encourage the local industry I think.'* G2

### 4.3.3 Past usage and impact on behaviour

The program was not considered to be sufficiently widespread or well known, to have impacted on their behaviour as yet. For some it had however, been reassuring to see that an outlet that they frequented had been graded highly. It thus reaffirmed their choice.

*'I just thought, oh, that's good, cause I bought my lunch here a few times, so I'm glad it was an A.'* G1

When asked whether the program was likely to have any impact on their behaviour in the future, there was generally positive agreement. Some admitted personally grading outlets, and were likely to look out for the program, now that they knew more about it.



*'Absolutely, yeah. Even I started looking at my local chicken shop thinking, mmhh, I don't know', 'I was in Chinatown the other night and I went through the restaurant past the kitchen to the bathroom and when I came out I thought they would have failed every single one.'* G1  
*'Don't want to pay for substandard food', 'You don't want to just be thinking what if, you want to be certain and sure that it has proper hygiene standards', 'That's not certainty but it gives you a higher degree of comfort that you're not going to get sick.'* G1

Respondents agreed that if the program was to be implemented everywhere in NSW, it could very well have an impact on their behaviour. Although they would still consider many things in their decision making process (price, choice, location, familiarity etc), it was felt that the program could facilitate decisions. For example, if having to choose one outlet over another in an unfamiliar area, or when encountering an outlet consistently graded P.

*'Especially in an area you're not a local in, that's pretty much the only thing you've got to go off, there might be an eating guide from the locals or whatever but you might go to a caravan park and there's a list in there of the restaurants, but that's someone's subjective opinion of what restaurants they are giving. If you are out in the streets you can go, yeah, alright, I'm confident to go there.'* G2

*'I know if it was put in place by law and everyone had to do it, if 2 years down the track I saw a restaurant with a P on it still I wouldn't be going there. I would be asking questions.'* G2



## 4.4 Grading

Respondents were exposed to the grades and their meanings at various points throughout the discussion. However, in order to understand spontaneous associations with each (and before 'contamination' via other more knowledgeable respondents) they were first asked to write down what they thought each meant.

# What do the scores mean?

Scores on Doors is a food safety grading system for food outlets.  
The program informs customers about the standard of food safety in food businesses.

<p style="font-size: 2em; color: #90ee90;"><b>A</b></p> <p style="color: #90ee90; font-weight: bold;">EXCELLENT</p>	<p>The business can be proud of this accomplishment. It achieved the highest level of food safety standards.</p>
<p style="font-size: 2em; color: #90ee90;"><b>B</b></p> <p style="color: #90ee90; font-weight: bold;">GOOD</p>	<p>The business has good food safety practices. Some minor areas where standards were not met will need to be addressed.</p>
<p style="font-size: 2em; color: #90ee90;"><b>C</b></p> <p style="color: #90ee90; font-weight: bold;">ACCEPTABLE</p>	<p>The business has an acceptable standard of food safety performance. A number of areas, although not serious, need to be corrected.</p>
<p style="font-size: 2em; color: #90ee90;"><b>P</b></p> <p style="color: #90ee90; font-weight: bold;">GRADE PENDING</p>	<p>The business did not achieve an acceptable level of food safety performance in a number of areas. The business will be inspected again to ensure the problems are rectified.</p>
<p style="color: #90ee90; font-weight: bold;">PARTICIPANT</p>	<p>The business is waiting for the initial inspection and is yet to receive a grade.</p>

If there are serious safety concerns the business can be required to stop trading until the concerns have been resolved.



#### 4.4.1 Spontaneous associations with grades

There was some confusion and debate about the real meaning of a P grade. Respondents were unclear as to whether it meant failed, pending inspection or pending outcome of inspection.

**P = Pass, Poor, Pending, Pending decision or final grading.**

*'No idea, but when I saw it, I thought the same thing, that it's pending evaluation.'* G1  
*'I wrote down decision pending ...as if it was a participant waiting to get a grading. I didn't think it was they'd been graded and they weren't good and they needed to be graded again.'*  
G2

Either way, it was likely to impact negatively on their propensity to visit the respective outlet. Most would approach it with caution, and enter it only to purchase non-perishables or if no other option in close proximity. Others would compromise, and give the outlet the benefit of the doubt, especially if a local favourite. It would also depend on what type of outlet it was. Respondents were less likely to compromise if the outlet in question was expensive.

*(Would you enter a P rated outlet?) 'Depending on what it actually means, because if it was really bad, wouldn't they shut it down? Depends on how bad it was.'* G1  
*'Only if you buy something that they haven't prepared or if you just want to buy a can of drink or something.'* G1  
*'I suppose it might be a local place that you've eaten there for years and you might think, well I've never been sick before, it can't be that bad. It might be the only place open, it might be a late night.'* G1  
*'I guess if it was an expensive place you would go no way, but if you're starving and it's really cheap.'* G1  
*'Knowing at the moment that this is only voluntary I would probably go into a pending restaurant because they have taken the initiative to say we're not hiding anything or they're not trying to hide anything.'* G2

Varying levels of expectations surrounded **A, B and C gradings**. This also varied by outlet and circumstance. High expectations were however apparent, with many demanding no less than an A!

**C = Average**

*'I thought major changes, but it obviously doesn't mean that. Not great but ok.'* G2  
*'I take C to mean it's acceptable that you're not going to get sick, that your food is saleable food and everything like that. So it's fine enough to eat.'* G2

Outlets graded as C were likely to be approached, albeit with some caution or conditions e.g. if not too expensive, if no other choice. Interestingly, one group felt that a C grading was acceptable for major chain restaurants, whereas the other group were of the opposite opinion.

*'I'd probably be careful, I'd just have stuff that you know wouldn't make you sick, you know that was maybe freshly cooked or couldn't have sat there.'* G1

*'If there were no choices and that was the food I wanted to eat. If it was next to an A and it was the same food, I'd go A.'* G2

Vs.

*'You would rest on the fact that someone has inspected it and said, right this is acceptable and that's probably a professional who inspects these places.'* G1

### **B = In between excellent and average**

*'Good, but not perfect.'* G1

*'Satisfactory but some improvement.'* G2

*'I thought it was ok, but still had minor changes to be made.'* G2

*'Satisfactory.'* G2

All agreed that they would be happy to enter a B graded outlet.

### **A = Excellent, top rating, best level, very good.**

Some respondents thought that only restaurants, or at least expensive restaurants, should be expected to achieve an A grading. Others within group one however, felt that all types of food outlets should comply, as food safety was of equal importance regardless of type of outlet or type of food served.

*'But you would expect at restaurants say \$50 and above to definitely have an A.'* G1

*'All the top end restaurants where you're paying premium prices for the quality of the food.*

*You would expect them to have high hygiene standards.'* G2

Vs.

*'I wouldn't compromise with anything other than A. If I'm going out to eat, I'm paying the money to buy the food and it should be a high quality. I wouldn't go, ah, it's alright, I'll eat here.'* G1

*'I think they should all do it, the food courts are just as dodgy, probably more so. A lot of the take away places they have the food sitting there for a couple of hours before people go in for lunch and you want to know that it's been kept at the right temperature before you buy it.'*

*'I think high risk food businesses should have and A as well, so when they're serving raw food, like sashimi or salad.'* G1



*'The clubs as well, not just your restaurants, knowing that you're going to an RSL or something like that, knowing that they need to have the high standard as well.'* G2

Interestingly, and as mentioned earlier, group two believed that larger chains of outlets should find it easier to achieve and maintain an A grading – as they were more likely to already have systems and standards in place, as well as the manpower to enforce hygiene standards.

*'Maccas, the larger chains. So the higher the price or the premium and the larger chains because they already have regulations.'* G2

*'Yeah, all the big chains where you know that they get high turnarounds and they do get a crowd, knowing that if they get 4000 people in day that you know you're still going to get the same food at 9 in the morning and that you would at 9 at night. Same standard.'* G2

#### **4.4.2 Reaction to grading criteria**

Although only few were able to verbalise what they thought inspectors might be looking for when deciding on a grade, it was assumed to cover basic health and safety compliance.

*'Obviously hygiene, the way it's prepared, even the way that say meats and things are stored, their freezer conditions or the cool room conditions.'* G2

*'I'd expect them to check if they are using tongs or if they're handling. Actually touching food, touching money, touching customers hands, wiping down tables and then making a sandwich with those hands.'* G2

On subsequent viewing of actual scoring sheets (Food Premises Assessment Report), most respondents were surprised to see reference to 'reputable suppliers'. Overall however, all elements included on the sheet were considered to be both relevant and important, as opposed to unfair or over demanding.

*'The reputable suppliers, I didn't realise they'd go into that much detail. I would have thought their suppliers would have their own similar assessments.'* G1

*'They're not overly strict, looking at floors are able to be effectively clean, they're not saying you have to eat off the floor but they're giving them a reasonable standard to live up to.'* G2

## 4.5 Suggested improvements to enhance program

### 4.5.1 Spontaneous suggestions

Throughout the discussion respondents were asked for suggested improvements to the program.

#### Clarification regarding grading system

There was request to clarify the grading program, and especially regarding P.

*'Get rid of the P. The pending I think was a confusing one for everyone.'* G1

*'This grade pending is actually a bit of false economy, because if you read what pending actually means, it's the business did not achieve an acceptable level of food safety, ...but it sounds like they just haven't rated them yet. It's misleading. And if I just saw the word pending I'd go, oh, they are still yet to have an inspection and eat at the outlet and then I would be quite shocked to find out that actually they didn't pass.'* G1

#### Clarification of grading criteria

There request from some to expand on why an outlet had been marked down, or what justifies a particular grading.

*'What gives you an A? I think they should publish at least a summary of the latest results, so you know what the score and where they fell over. Basically the criteria, where they got ticked and where they got crossed. And if a restaurant changes hands, then they probably want it checked with the new owners?'* G1

On further discussion (and once exposed to the grading sheet used by inspectors), most were however, satisfied with just being provided with the final grading, rather than exposure to the factor causing non-compliance.

#### Currency of gradings

Although confidence levels about the program being well run were high, it was apparent that confidence in the program hinged on the currency of inspections and subsequent gradings.

*'What is the expiry date on gradings? If they're inspected today would it be valid for a year or six months or three months?'* G1

*'I think you have to keep the scores relevant as well. So, they should be at least updated say quarterly. Otherwise there's no point in going to place that has been rated last year.'* G1

*'It can't lapse. If their inspection date was up until whatever date it can't lapse.'* G2

#### Randomised inspections

To ensure integrity (via frequent and randomised inspections), some respondents suggested rotation of inspectors over time to minimise familiarity, bias or complacency.

*'When the restaurants get inspected it should be a random, the restaurants shouldn't know when it's going to run out and then they can just plan or tidy up.'* G1

*'Being in the industry and going to the same restaurant you're obviously going to get to know the people, not having this "Hey mate, last month I did this for you, can you just give me a tick on..."'* G2

Respondents were however, reassuringly optimistic in this regard.

*'I don't think the Councils or the Government or the Food Authority afford to get caught out on something like this, and if they put forward a project there's a lot of protocols that the Government has to follow before they can implement any of these sorts of programs.'* G2

### **Expanded outlets**

Others recommended expanding the program to include any form of food outlet as well as extending it to include delivery of food to and from an outlet.

*'I think it could even spread out beyond just food outlets and restaurants like delis and butchers.'* G1

*'I'm assuming if they do this and it's legislation they would do school canteens, hospital cafeterias, places like that, cause nobody has touched on that.'* G1

*'The take away service might be clean in the restaurant but then the vehicles they use to transport the food or the way they drive it might not be hygienic. Well, if the restaurant offers delivery, then you'd expect that delivery also to be hygienic.'* G1

#### 4.5.2 Prompted improvement suggestions

As an additional exercise, respondents were required to evaluate different formats of the grading i.e. replacing the letters with stars.

##### Stars vs. letters grading format

Group one – some preference for stars (as letters in current form still leave room for confusion).

Group two – preference for letters (as stars too similar to food rating/ accommodation grading scheme).

##### Letters confusing

*'I still think it's quite misleading A, B, C, P. I think the stars and numeric grading is probably easier for your average person in a restaurant, with A, B, C, P you have to look but if you see five stars you know it's good. You don't have to think about it, you just know.'* G1

*'I like the stars as still got the same question about the P rating, it's confusing.'* G1

Vs.

##### Stars confusing

*'We use stars, like there's 5 star restaurants at the moment so how would that work? They use stars on these food and edibility and those food review websites to rate quality of the food and the dining experience rather than just the hygiene.'* G1

*'5 star to me I think the food might be fantastic, their food might be great but their cleanliness? I'd go in expecting something else with the 5 stars.'* G2

*'With the stars if there is one star missing, maybe if they explain what part of the safety aspect is missing then it would be of benefit otherwise I don't see the point.'*

*'I think it goes towards that hotel chain system, their rating.'* G2

##### Letters easier to spot

*'I don't like the stars, because you can't see it from a distance, I prefer just a big letter, so when you're walking down the street it's easy to see.'* G1

*'In a busy street with restaurants and cafes, being able to see the big A and the colour as well. I prefer letters, it's much easier to spot from far away when you're walking down the street. You see an A in the window it's staring you in the face opposed to how many stars, you got to count them.'* G2

##### Stars vs. outlines grading format

Although the star grading system was not consistently preferred above the letter grading system, when presented with the option of solid stars only versus solid stars plus star outlines both groups opted for stars with outlines. The primary reason for this was that it made it easier to quickly count the score out of 5.

*'Definitely the outlines because you need to know what the maximum achievable number of stars is.'* G1



*'Cause it's giving you that little bit to see they're one off being a 5 star place. I think it opens your eyes a little bit more.'* G2

### **Current vs. proposed wording for grading**

When exposed to the current vs. proposed wording describing the various letter gradings, both groups one and two expressed a preference for the current wording, whilst acknowledging that the proposed wording was more likely to encourage outlet participation in program.

	<b>Current wording</b>	<b>Proposed wording</b>
<b>A</b>	Excellent	Excellent
<b>B</b>	Good	Very good
<b>C</b>	<i>Acceptable</i>	<i>Good</i>
<b>P</b>	Grade pending	Grade pending

*'With the word acceptable you're like, well, you're acceptable but you've got some work to go, I think that'll push businesses to be clean and encourage them to actually work towards something better.'* G2

*'For me the word acceptable means more that they would have been checked off against something, like good, yeah it was good, does that mean it met standard, but where the word acceptable to me brings up more connotations they must have had something to check off against and it was acceptable to that listing, wasn't the greatest, but they did meet the minimum requirements.'* G2



## 4.6 Planned implementation

### 4.6.1 Voluntary vs. mandatory implementation

There was general preference for the program to become mandatory, and in order to enhance credibility of and engagement with the program.

*'If it was made legislation then everyone would be on a level playing field, every take away, every other restaurant, then it would work. There's no point in just having a few people do it.*

*It has to be the whole or no-one.'* G1

*'Especially if it's McDonalds and those sort of places that really take it on board first up, the broader community will realise that it's out there very quickly.'* (G2)

The concerns surrounding a voluntary program were potential lack of take-up by outlets and limited accountability, if not comprehensively enforced.

*'You would need to have nearly full coverage, everyone in that council area actually participating..., because if one restaurant is participating with a C and next door isn't participating then you're surely better off not putting up your C if the place next door doesn't*

*have to.'* G1

*'Depends on what the penalty is, if you got a bad rating, what's the cost of putting it up versus not putting it up? So, if the fine was a couple of hundred bucks that's insignificant in the scheme of things, you'd wear the couple of hundred bucks and not put a bad rating up.*

*But if it was more significant like being shut down then you wouldn't do that.'* G1

### 4.6.2 Future communication preferences

#### Central vs. local council websites

Most were responsive to the idea of obtaining information regarding a particular food outlet's grading online. Given the option, there was preference for this to be hosted by a central website rather than on local council sites, although some suggested offering both.

*'A central website, who looks at council websites?' G1*

*'Some local government websites are pretty slack in updating anything.'* G2

*'Can't see why you couldn't do it on both. If the councils are the ones checking they could easily pass on that info to the Food Authority website.'* G2

#### Linked/ interactive websites

There was further suggestion of incorporating sophisticated search engines and linking up with other related sites e.g. Eatability, Google maps, and offering multiple search variables.

*'Most people when they get to an area they don't know to do Google maps. That's what I use to find restaurants, and they should also integrate with restaurant review websites, sites like*



*Eatability. They should provide data to Eatability as well, so when you're reading a review you could have a map and it could show different areas and a street with the scores. So, integrated with Google maps.' G1*

Some also suggested offering interaction opportunities on the site, by allowing consumers to update details or report extreme cases.

*'Should be able to report restaurants though, say you go to a restaurant and it's obvious they've changed proprietor or it's obviously horrifically unhygienic and it says an A on the website, you should be able to report that.' G1*

### **Detailed information/ examples**

Respondents ranged in the degree of detail of preferred. It was however, agreed that the official website should offer consumers the choice – by providing access to detailed information and explanation for those who wanted it.

*'Very detailed, show their report, show photos.' G1*

*'One way is to show them what a food audit actually looks like and how that translates into a grade. So, just show a few examples to say that if you're x and you've got all these scores, that translates to an A. On the website or at the restaurant, either way. But if they don't want to publish all the details of the restaurant, at least have a few examples. They could advertise it if they really want everyone to know what it means.' G1*

### **iphone application**

One respondent suggested offering an iphone application in order to help quickly look up whether a particular outlet had been graded, or graded correctly. This could be developed off the back of an existing application showing local outlets.

*'If you can't find the score or you think the score on the door isn't actually the real one, just use your phone and have a quick look. Some sort of verification, so if they publish the whole thing on the web, you could just quickly search the restaurant.' G1*

*'There is actually an iphone app, where it goes to your location and it shows you all the nearest food outlets and if they received a fine. So they could use something like this.' G1*

### **Increased publicity**

There was a request for more publicity and promotion of the program to increase public awareness and participation. In addition to word of mouth, local press was seen as an effective medium to achieve this.

*'Paper press and then word of mouth from there. The local courier for the restaurants that advertise in your area.' G1*

*'I think we'll become more and more aware of it, it will increase it's validity.' G2*



*'Every time you go to a restaurant you see this thing, curiosity will make you find out anyway?' G1*

#### **4.6.3 Name and Shame Register**

**The Name and Shame Register is an online list of businesses that have breached or are alleged to have breached NSW Food Safety Laws. This is published to give consumers more information to make decisions about where they eat or buy food.**

Although many respondents were familiar with the Name and Shame Register, prior to reading out the above description, they were unclear as to how it compared with the Scores on Doors program, and whether it was run by a different organisation.

*'That (N&S) only lists the violations or the fines, so it lists the specific fine and the amount. Anyone can get on there.'* G1

On asking them to select a preference between the two, and to specify which was likely to provide more reliable information, there was a slight preference for Scores on Doors, as it provided a more holistic and balanced view of food outlet performance, rather than just listing offenders.

*'I noticed that it was 1 point for not having a thermometer and there were some big restaurants that got named and shamed for not having a thermometer and got fined whereas if they were on this program they would have still gotten an A. So, I guess it's fairer in determining levels of compliance rather than just putting everyone on the list, whether you have cockroaches running wild or you just forgot to put hand soap out or something like that.'*

G1



## APPENDIX: DISCUSSION GUIDE

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### Group Discussion Guide 29573 Knock Knock (NSWFA Scores on Door Program) FINAL as at 141210

The main aim of this research is to assess the success of the pilot and determine what improvements can be made to the future program when it is permanently rolled out.

Specifically, this research will attempt to evaluate:

- How valuable consumers find the program
- Consumers' understanding of how the program works
- Consumers' understanding of, and sentiments about, the communication materials
- Consumers' exposure to the program and program materials
- Consumers' general sentiments about the program

### INTRODUCTION

**Thanks for agreeing to participate, then explain:**

- Self and TNS: Work for TNS, which is an independent research organisation that does groups/ surveys/ consultations for a number of government departments and public service providers.
- Selection criteria: Have been recruited from local area of residence and selected based on the responses given. Will be speaking to different groups of people.
- Confidentiality: Reassure that are audio recording only in order to facilitate listening back to finer points, as may not be able remember everything. Answers won't be linked back to individuals but amalgamated and reported back on a group level.
- Purpose: Is to help develop and refine a new program to benefit consumers and improve their awareness and knowledge within a particular subject area.
- Format: Is an informal discussion, no right or wrong answers. Doesn't matter if don't know everything about the topic, just want honest opinions.
- Tasks: May ask you to write down responses to a particular question. It is important when we are doing the written tasks that you don't discuss your thoughts with each other. Will then be allowed the opportunity to discuss.

### WARM UP

**Brief introduction around the group**

- First name and age
- Family setup/ household type
- Occupation
- And a bit about they types of places you often buy food (other than groceries) outside the home for example take-away stores, restaurants, pubs, cafes, bakeries and fast food outlets. Let's call these types of businesses: food outlets.

### EVALUATION OF SCORES ON DOORS PROGRAM

Let's discuss the Scores on Doors program now. You would have been asked whether you had any knowledge of this program when you were first contacted about this survey.



## **Spontaneous awareness and understanding**

Around the group:

### **HAND OUT SELF COMPLETION**

#### **DISCUSSION**

- **Tell me what you can remember about your first experience encountering the Scores on Doors program?**
  - Where did you first see it?
  - What did you think of it?
  - How did you feel about it?
  
- **What do you understand by the term Scores on Doors. Tell me everything you know about it.**
  - How does it work?
  - What is its purpose?
  - For how long will it run for?
  - Who is involved?
  - Who decides on the grades?

#### **Branding and communications**

- Have you ever seen or heard anything about the program in the press or other sources?
- If so, what was been the general reaction, and did you agree or disagree with it?

#### **Prompted awareness and evaluation**

### **EXPOSE SCORECARDS AND CONSUMER INFORMATION CARDS AND HOLDERS**

- Which of these materials have you seen before?
- How familiar are you with each (i.e. seen vs. read vs. noted).
- How often have you seen them?
- **What were your first impressions about them?**

### **HAND OUT MATERIALS TO INDIVIDUAL PARTICIPANTS – EXPLAIN HOW THEY ARE INTENDED TO BE DISPLAYED**

- Looking at them more closely now, how do you feel about them?
  - Do you think they are clear enough?
  - **Do they tell you what you want to know?**
  - **If not, what else should they say?**
  - Is there anything you change about them?

#### **Perceived benefits**

**HAND OUT INFORMATION SHEETS AND EXPLAIN EXACTLY HOW THE PROGRAM WORKS (I.E. WHO DOES THE INSPECTIONS, THAT IT'S VOLUNTARY, THAT IT'S A PILOT BUT WILL BE ROLLED OUT PERMANENTLY IN JULY ETC)**

- What, if any, do you see as some of the benefits of this program?
  - For self and family
  - For other consumers/ customers
  - For outlet
  - For NSWFA
  - For councils



### **Criticisms/ suggested improvements**

- **What, if anything, do you dislike about the program?**
- Is there anything you don't understand or find confusing?
- Is there anything you expect from a food safety grading scheme, that isn't being achieved by Scores on Doors?
- **What other information do you think should be made available to the public about the program?**
- And how should this be communicated?

### **Usage/ Impact on behaviour**

- **Has the program ever made you change your behaviour? (e.g. are you more or less likely to frequent a certain outlet because of the grade it received?)**

### **Perception of the grade values**

#### **DISCUSS**

- What do you think a P grade means?

#### **DISCUSS MEANING AND ENSURE UNDERSTANDING OF A P GRADE BEFORE PROCEEDING**

- Would you eat at a food outlet that displayed a P Grade?
- **What do you think a C grade means?**
- **Would you eat at a food outlet that displayed a C Grade?**
- What do you think an A grade means?
- Are there any types of outlets that you would expect to display an A grade? (i.e. expensive restaurants)
- **What do you think a B grade means?**
- **Would you eat at a food outlet that displayed a B Grade?**

#### **WHERE PARTICIPANTS HAVE INDICATED THEY WOULDN'T EAT AT PLACES WITH PARTICULAR GRADES, ASK:**

- Are there any particular types of outlets where you would accept that grade (i.e. take-away, bakery, etc)?
- Are there any circumstances where you could imagine you might eat at a place that displayed that grade (for example if you were familiar with the outlet, if you knew the owners, etc)?

### **Understanding of grading criteria**

- What specifically do you think the inspectors look at when they decide on a grade?
- What sort of food safety practices would be a problem in a food outlet?

### **HAND OUT THE SCORING SHEETS, ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS THEY HAVE**

- Compare this sheet to what you have written down. Is there anything you didn't expect to see?
- Do you think all of these requirements are relevant and important?
- Do you think any of these requirements are unfair, or too much to expect from food outlets?

### **Confidence in the program**

- **Do you have any concerns about the reliability of the inspections?**



- **How confident are you that the program will be well run?**
- Do you think that the program, in its current form, would achieve its aims in the future?

**As I mentioned, Scores on Doors is a voluntary program, so food outlets can choose whether they want to participate.**

- **How do you feel about that?**
- **Would you prefer for Scores on Doors to be mandatory?**

Imagine that some food outlets in your local area were displaying a Scores on Doors grade and other food outlets that you frequented, weren't displaying a grade

- Would you be concerned that they weren't displaying a grade?
- **Would you ask those outlets directly why they weren't participating in the program?**

### **Grading formats**

#### **HAND OUT EGs CERTIFICATES USING STAR GRADING FORMATS**

- What do you do feel about using stars to display food safety grades?
- **Which would you prefer, stars or letters?**

#### **HAND OUT EG CERTIFICATES USING STAR GRADING FORMATS WITH OUTLINES**

- **Which would you prefer, the certificates with star outlines or just the stars?**

Imagine you were walking past a café and you noticed that it was displaying a certificate showing a grade of three out of five stars

- Do you feel that is a good achievement?
- Would you eat there?

Now, imagine you were walking past the same café and you noticed that it was displaying a certificate showing a C grade

- Do you feel that is a good achievement?
- Would you eat there?
- Would the type of grading format displayed (i.e. stars or letters) make you feel any differently about the café, even if the grade was the same?

#### **HAND OUT TWO FORMS OF WORDING FOR THE GRADE MEANINGS**

- Do you think there is any real difference between these two forms of wording?
- What do they mean to you?
- **Which option would you prefer to see on the certificates?**

### **FUTURE IMPROVEMENTS**

Let's discuss the planned implementation of the program in the future.

- If the program was implemented everywhere in NSW, do you think it would change your behaviour in the future?
- **Would you look out for the grades?**
- How important would the grades be, compared to all the other things you would think about when making a decision about where to eat?

### **Website options**



- If you wanted to find out what grade a food outlet had received, where would you like to get this information? (i.e. just go past the food outlet, look online, local newspaper, etc)
- **If that information was available online, do you think it would be better to display it on local council sites where the businesses are located, or on a central web site?**
- If there anything particular you would want the online information to do? (i.e. special search functions)

#### **Priority areas for focus**

- **What do you think would help most to improve the program? How should this be done?**
- What would be the key or minimal requirements of a grading program, for it to remain relevant and useful to you?

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS IF THERE IS TIME**

#### **Scores on Doors**

- Are you familiar with the Name and Shame register?

IF NECESSARY, EXPLAIN THAT THE NAME & SHAME REGISTER IS AN ONLINE LIST OF BUSINESSES THAT HAVE BREACHED OR ARE ALLEGED TO HAVE BREACHED NSW FOOD SAFETY LAWS. THE LISTS ARE PUBLISHED TO GIVE CONSUMERS MORE INFORMATION TO MAKE DECISIONS ABOUT WHERE THEY EAT OR BUY FOOD.

If you wanted to find out about the food safety standards of a particular place, would you prefer to use Name and Shame or Scores on Doors?

- Which program do you think would provide more reliable information?

#### **Food safety attitudes**

- I'd like to start broadly and begin by talking about food safety in food outlets and your general feelings about its level of importance.
  - How important do you think it is that food businesses follow practice safe food handling?
  - Have you ever had a bad experience with a food outlet that has served unsafe food? Have you ever been concerned about the hygiene in any particular outlets, if yes, which (below for example only)
  - Have you ever been concerned about the hygiene in particular types of outlets? Which types of food outlets would be the most likely to ignore food safety requirements?

#### **Food safety knowledge**

- How knowledgeable would you regard yourself to be about food safety (preparation, handling, storage etc)?
- How confident are you about knowing what is and isn't safe behaviour?

### **SUMMARY AND CLOSURE**

#### **Closing**

- Ensure that all participants sign register, distribute incentives
- Thank and close