

# Summary of meeting outcomes

## Food Regulation Forum

---

Date: 10am, 25th November 2021

The Food Regulation Forum oversees the work of the Food Regulation Partnership (FRP). The latest meeting was held via teleconference due to continuing COVID-19 pandemic restrictions.

Attendees: Paul Braybrooks OAM (Chair), Cr Marianne Saliba (Local Government NSW), Angus Crichton (Environmental Health Australia), Erin Hogan (Environmental Health Australia), Fiona Stalgis (Development and Environmental Professionals' Association), Lisa Hughes, (Environmental Health Australia)

Guests: Andrew Davies (NSW Food Authority), Josie Rizzo (NSW Food Authority), Katherine Gash (NSW Food Authority)

Apologies: Lisa Szabo (NSW Food Authority), Peter Day (NSW Food Authority), Cr Ruth Fagan (Local Government NSW), Cr Phyllis Miller (Local Government NSW), Ms Yael Lang (Development and Environmental Professionals' Association)

---

### National working groups

Forum members were provided an update on the Local Government Unit's contribution to two national projects as part of the national Foodborne Illness Reduction Strategy 2018-2021+.

The Food Safety Culture working group seeks to develop a shared understanding of food safety culture across the food regulatory system and in food businesses. The NSW Food Authority will implement some of the resources through a training program for local councils to assess allergen food handling practices in retail food businesses. By focussing on this critical element of food handling, environmental health officers (EHOs) can apply food safety culture principles to the business and recommend improvements if they are needed. This project has been delayed due to COVID-19 and will be implemented in 2022.

Food Safety Management Tools - FSANZ has prepared Proposal P1053 to consider whether to amend the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code to mandate the use of these food safety management tools in the food service and retail sector. Working group members have agreed on the draft wording and additions to the Code in addition to the draft implementation guide which will open for consultation from December 2021.

### State Liaison Group (SLG) meetings – Minutes from 14 September 2021

Forum members were provided an update on the latest SLG meeting. The main points of discussion were:

The FRP update, which included:

- Food Regulation Forum
- Retail Information Sessions
- Inaugural local government Managers' Forum, held 22 June 2021

### Food Regulation Forum

Secretariat: NSW Food Authority, 6 Avenue of the Americas, Newington NSW 2127  
Telephone: 1300 552 406 Fax: 02 9741 4888

- Review of FRP Roles & Responsibilities, Protocols and Advisory Guidelines, of which a report on this review will be provided to the Food Regulation Forum in due course
- FRP & LGU Survey
- COVID-19
- Mouse plague
- Council Activity Reporting 2020-2021
- Training & networking update including:
  - RFG training
  - Food Notification Survey
  - Authorised Officer Training 2021
  - Authorised Officer Online Training course
- EHO support programs, which include:
  - Annual student prizes at WSU
  - Attendance to the FRP Workshop 2021/22
  - DRNSW NSW Scholarship
  - EHO exchange/buddy program proposal

There was also a presentation provided by the DPI on illegal slaughter in NSW to inform SLG members of the work of this unit and how it relates to the work of local councils.

### **Managers and Contractors Forums 2021**

Forum members were advised of these new initiatives which have been implemented to extend the reach of the Local Government Unit's Food Regulation Partnership engagement.

### **Authorised Officer training – online delivery**

Forum members were provided a summary of the latest progress for this project. In 2020 work began on developing an online version of the Authorised Officer (Local Government) Food Surveillance training course.

A first draft of all modules has been completed which are being reviewed by subject matter experts presently. It is expected the training will commence on 1 July 2022 with an initial offering to 30 participants annually. There will be a Certificate of Recognition or Attainment (yet to be determined) upon participants successfully completing the course.

### **FRP Workshop 2021/22**

An update on the status of the FRP Workshop was given to members. The event has been rescheduled to March 17-18, 2022 with the same venue and speakers. The theme remains "*Building Resilience and Working together*". Delegates have been informed and communication will steadily increase to promote the event over the next few months.

The FRP Champion Awards have been determined with a presentation ceremony to take place at the conference. The NSW Food Authority is supporting two EHOs to attend the conference.

An invitation has been extended to all Forum members to attend all or part of the conference.

### **Regional Food Group Meetings held 2021**

Forum members were informed that the recent rounds of meetings were held on-line due to the ongoing COVID-19 situation.

Professional development for Round 2 (July-September) focussed on the Food Notification Survey. The aim was for volunteer councils to undertake food surveillance activities to identify and inspect low visibility 'dark' kitchens in their local government area who are not notified as they are required to do. There are currently 22 local councils indicating participation in the survey.

The professional development training for Round 3 (currently in progress) is Pest Control in light of the recent and ongoing mouse plague. The intent with this training is to raise awareness of the pest control provisions of the Food Standards Code and ask EHOs for additional vigilance when inspecting retail food businesses.

All training materials, including recorded webinars are available on the FRP portal.

### **FRP LGU Survey 2020**

The report '*Where to from here – your feedback, our vision*' was developed as a result of the Local Government Unit seeking feedback from EHOs on the Food Regulation Partnership and the services provided by the NSW Food Authority to support local councils.

There were 217 respondents that were representative of all 16 regional food group regions. This report enabled the NSW Food Authority to gain an understanding of how EHOs feel about the FRP and its services. Furthermore, it aimed to identify what is working well and where improvements can be made, with a view to continually improving the partnership.

The report was recently finalised and a copy given to Forum members for their information. Members were advised the report was also distributed to all local council General Managers and is available on the FRP Portal for EHOs to access too.

Members discussed the ongoing issue of perceived inconsistency in the approach to food inspections between local councils.

### **Retail and Food Service Information sessions for 2022**

Members were appraised of the program of Retail Information Sessions (RIS) for 2021/22. Due to COVID-19 only one RIS was held in Maitland in May 2021, with Mosman and Snowy Valleys Councils rescheduled until 2022.

Six expressions of interest have been received to co-host a RIS in 2022.

The locations for the 2022 RIS were proposed as:

- Mosman Municipal Council – 22 February 2022 with a Forum meeting being held afterwards
- Snowy Valleys Council – May 2022
- Wollondilly Shire Council – August 2022
- Lake Macquarie City Council, Cessnock City Council and Port Stephens Councils will be held back-to-back during October/November 2022, with final dates currently being determined. All three councils are in a similar locality to each other which is why the last three events will be held consecutively.

### **Local Government food surveillance activity reporting 2020-21**

Forum members were provided with the latest food surveillance activity report for the period 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021.

Food businesses and enforcement agencies have continued to be significantly impacted during 2020-21 with many communities experienced floods, bushfires, a mouse plague and COVID-19. The retail and food service sector were particularly affected with a succession of COVID-19 Public Health Orders placing restrictions on those businesses and consequently this limited enforcement agencies ability to implement their routine food surveillance activities.

Despite this the overall compliance rate of retail food businesses was 97% with local councils still able to inspect 80% of high and medium risk fixed food businesses.

It was remarked a need for more councils to participate in Scores on Doors, with a renewed public awareness campaign needed to increase the general population's knowledge of the program.

The NSW Food Authority will consider a renewed initiative to increase participation and awareness of the Scores on Doors program.

### **Date of the next meeting**

The date of the next Food Regulation Forum meeting will be held face-to-face in Mosman on the 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2022, subject to any COVID-19 restrictions.