

THE Grill

Building a Strong Food Safety Culture

Food safety is more than following procedures - it's about creating a culture where everyone in the business prioritises safe food practices every day. From owners and managers to food handlers and cleaning staff, every team member plays a role in protecting customers, your reputation, and your business.

A strong food safety culture means staff understand the importance of food safety, take responsibility for their actions, and consistently do the right thing, even when no one is watching. While leadership sets the standard, maintaining food safety requires commitment across the entire organisation.

Why It Matters

Foodborne illness remains a significant issue in Australia, with an estimated 4.7 million cases each year, resulting in around 47,900 hospitalisations and 38 deaths ([Australian National University 2022](#)). Food recalls are also common, often caused by contamination or undeclared allergens.

Many food safety incidents can be traced back to human error, poor hygiene practices, or lapses in following procedures - even in businesses with training and regular audits. These risks are largely preventable when food safety is embedded into everyday workplace culture.

Successful food safety systems rely on people.

By investing in staff knowledge, accountability, and positive behaviours, businesses can reduce risks, protect consumers, and strengthen their reputation.

✳ To learn more, watch food standards introduction to food safety culture video for [food businesses](#) or [food handlers](#).

Read more information on characteristics of a strong culture in our [food safety culture poster](#).

Source: foodstandards.gov.au/business/food-safety-culture

Know your food business

The Know Your Food Business self-assessment tool is provided for small to medium food businesses. This tool can help you to assess whether you meet the requirements of the Food Act 2006 and the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code.

There are 11 topics. Take the [online quiz](#), and to get ideas on how to improve food safety in your food business.

Source: www.qld.gov.au/health/staying-healthy/food-pantry/running-a-food-business/know-your-food-business

Clean Jokes Only! 😂

Keeping the laughs as clean as the kitchen

Why did the egg quit?

Because it cracked under pressure!

Why did the germ walk into the restaurant?

Because he was told it had a great food safety rating, until the hostess told him, "We don't serve bacteria here!"

Why did the chef stop cooking?

He ran out of Thyme

Why did the scarecrow become an Environmental Health Officer?

Because he was outstanding in his field!



Cleaning and Sanitising: Both Are Essential

Keeping equipment, utensils and food contact surfaces clean and sanitary is a legal requirement and a critical part of food safety.

It's important to understand that **cleaning and sanitising are two separate steps:**

- **Cleaning** removes food particles, grease, dirt and other visible matter.
- **Sanitising** uses heat and/or approved chemicals to reduce bacteria to safe levels.

Sanitising is only effective when surfaces have been thoroughly cleaned first. Food residue, grease and detergent left on a surface can reduce the effectiveness of sanitisers.

For businesses without a commercial dishwasher, the **double sink method** must be used to complete the two-step process. One sink should be used for washing and rinsing, and the second sink for sanitising using an approved food-grade sanitiser.

Under the Food Standards Code, food businesses must ensure:

- Eating and drinking utensils are clean and sanitary immediately before use.
- Food contact surfaces are cleaned and sanitised whenever food that will come into contact with a surface is likely to be contaminated.

Effective cleaning and sanitising practices help prevent foodborne illness, protect customers, and support compliance with food safety requirements.

*** Remember:**
Clean first, then sanitise.



Record Keeping Know Your Legal Requirements

Recent inspections have identified that many food businesses are still unclear about the requirements of **Food Standards Code Standard 3.2.2A – Food Safety Management Tools**.

Understanding your obligations is essential to ensure compliance and demonstrate effective food safety management.

Category 1 Businesses

Businesses that process or prepare potentially hazardous ready-to-eat food (such as caterers and food service businesses) must have:

- A certified Food Safety Supervisor (refresher training required every 5 years)
- Food safety training for all food handlers
- Substantiated food safety management, such as records or another approved method that demonstrates food safety practices are being followed

What Counts as a Record?

A record can be kept in **paper or electronic form** and may include:

- Temperature logs and monitoring records
- Completed paper or electronic checklists
- Verified recipes or Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)
- Notes recorded on invoices (e.g. delivery temperatures)
- Data logger reports and graphs
- Photographs or video recordings
- Any other documented evidence that demonstrates food safety practices are being followed

Where records are required, they must be **retained for a minimum of three months** and be available upon request during inspections.



* Need Help?

Council's new [Food Safety Record Booklet](#) can help businesses meet their record-keeping obligations and provide a simple way to demonstrate compliance. Scan the QR Code to access your copy.



Food Safety Tips! Reduce potential food poisoning

- Food Safety Tips! Reduce potential food poisoning
- Clean Hands before handling different foods
- Keep food such as meat, poultry, dairy chilled below 5°C
- Properly cook food - serve food steaming hot
- Separate raw and cooked foods when storing and preparing.



Water quality for food business and sampling

Water and your food business, it is important that if your food business uses non-reticulated water supply such as tank water or ground water (bore) that you:

- Collect water from the most suitable and safest source
- Conduct regular water testing
- Treat water if necessary
- Keep records of chlorination results
- Keep collection sources such as roofs free from extraneous matter
- Install a first flush system and tank openings are screened
- Ensure tanks are regularly cleaned out, all related equipment is maintained, and vermin proof

Council EHO's will on an annual basis take a random water test of food businesses. And a cost of \$170.50 will be invoiced to you.

What happens if we get a positive E coli result?

- All food operations must cease
- Measures must be taken to improve water quality
- A test result meeting the Australian Drinking water guidelines must be obtained after correction measures are taken.
- The business including all food contact equipment benches, utensils plates etc. must be re washed and sanitised prior to reintroducing food

More information and guidance see here: www.qld.gov.au/health/staying-healthy/food-pantry/running-a-food-business/premises-and-equipment/using-non-reticulated-water-in-a-food-business

Formal food safety training is mandatory for all food handlers



FREE Online Food Safety Training

Give your staff the skills and knowledge to handle food safely with this free online training, covering:

- **Safe food handling practices**
- **Preventing food contamination**
- **Cleaning and sanitising procedures**
- **Personal hygiene requirements**

EHO approved and ideal for food businesses looking to strengthen their food safety culture and compliance.

dofoodsafely.health.vic.gov.au



Assistance... Where do I go?

The Council's Environmental Health Officers are there to ensure food businesses comply with the Food Act and Food Safety Standards. They can also provide advice and assistance to Food business owners. Should you require any posters, fact sheets, pamphlets or advice on any aspect of food safety please do not hesitate to contact your Environmental Health Officers for advice on **1300 790 919** or health@livingstone.qld.gov.au.

Important legislative update: From 1 July 2026, seafood served by hospitality businesses must be labelled with its country of origin. This information must be clearly displayed on menus, menu boards or signs. All you need to know [here](https://business.gov.au/products-and-services/product-labelling/seafood-labelling-laws-have-changed-for-hospitality-businesses).

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References

Queensland Government (2021) Using non-reticulated water in a food business:

<https://www.qld.gov.au/health/staying-healthy/food-pantry/running-a-food-business/premises-and-equipment/using-non-reticulated-water-in-a-food-business>

Queensland Government (2024) Know your food business: <https://www.qld.gov.au/health/staying-healthy/food-pantry/running-a-food-business/know-your-food-business>

Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) 2023, A guide to the Food Safety Standards, FSANZ, Canberra.