

THE Grill

Introduction to the team

We are sad to say that Environmental Health Officer (EHO) Crystal Merlow left council in late 2025. Our Environmental Health (EH) team has expanded with the arrival of two new experienced EHOs. Please welcome Keith Rogers and Melanie Holgate who join Hazel Chappell as your local Environmental Health Officers. We are here to help you understand and meet your obligations under the Food Act 2006. We also manage licensing, public health concerns and complaints and implement the Environmental Protection Act 1994 at the local level, so we are a busy bunch!



We are here to help you!

Contact your EHO early...

Prevention is easier than enforcement!

Your EHO Team

Hazel Chappell - Principal EHO

Started working in EH in Brisbane in 2000 working as an EHO in Food safety and environmental protection. Worked in Policy for a year and was seconded to QUT to teach EHOs for a year during this time. Joined Livingstone in November 2021, paradise!

Interests: Ocean biodiversity and reef health, wildlife carer (bats), walks on the beach and enjoying the natural environment.

Keith Rogers - EHO

Started as a Trainee EHO in Sydney in 2007 and has worked as an EHO and Food Safety Auditor in NSW, ACT and QLD. Also worked as a QLD Workplace Health and Safety Senior Inspector before coming back to EH in Central QLD.

Interests: Keith loves to get out in nature and spends many weekends away with family touring, camping and enjoying the QLD weather. He moved to CQ for the beauty of the beaches and islands and has never looked back!

Melanie Holgate - EHO

Started working in EH in 2008 working across CQ, with Councils and Queensland Health before taking a detour into a governance role. In late 2025 returned to EH bringing new perspectives and enthusiasm for all things Environmental Health in our region.

Interests: Melanie enjoys long walks on the beach, spending time with family, gardening, and reading. She also proudly identifies as a findologist - someone with a knack for discovering lost items, hidden details, or just the right solution when it's needed most.

You've got 'Guts'

Running a food business takes courage, but we're talking about a different kind of guts.



Your gastrointestinal tract is home to millions of good bacteria that help with digestion and overall health. But when harmful bacteria are ingested, it can lead to food poisoning.

Food Standards Australia New Zealand estimates there are around 4.7 million cases of foodborne illness in Australia each year, nearly 1 in 5 Australians.

Your Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) are here to help reduce the risk to your business. Follow these simple steps:

- **CLEAN** – Wash hands with soap and warm water before handling food and after handling raw foods or waste. Regularly clean utensils and use food-grade sanitiser.
- **CHILL** – Keep fridges at 5°C or below. Refrigerate leftovers promptly and use within 3 days or freeze.
- **COOK** – Cook poultry, sausages and minced meats to 75°C in the centre. Use a thermometer to check core temperatures.
- **SEPARATE** – Prevent cross-contamination between raw meats and ready-to-eat foods.

- **DON'T WORK IF YOU HAVE GASTRO** – Staff must be symptom-free for 48 hours before returning to food handling duties (FSANZ, 2023).

If a food poisoning complaint is received, your EHO will investigate to ensure appropriate food safety controls are in place.

Most foodborne illness is preventable with good food safety practices.

Food Safety Always Matters

Foodborne illness remains a significant public health issue in Australia, with millions of cases and over 30,000 hospitalisations occurring each year (FSANZ).

1. Food safety isn't just compliance - it's about protecting your customers, your reputation, and your livelihood. One slip. One customer. One bad review.
2. If it's not clean, cold, hot, or recorded - it's a risk.
3. Safe food isn't luck. It's systems.
4. Every shift, every meal, every customer - food safety matters.
5. What you don't control can contaminate.
6. Strong food safety protects customers, businesses, and reputations.
7. Food safety is everyone's business.

High-Risk Foods – Where Problems Start

Temperature danger zone: between 5°C and 60°C, bacteria can double every 20 minutes (FSANZ, 2022). If left in the danger zone, a single salmonella bacteria can easily become billions within 24 hours – YES, BILLIONS!

Certain foods are more likely to support the growth of harmful bacteria if not handled and stored correctly:

- Cooked meats and poultry
- Ready-to-eat foods
- Seafood
- Dairy-based foods
- Foods containing eggs
- Cut melons and pawpaws

Food Safety Facts

- A sick or unhygienic food handler can contaminate large volumes of food during one shift and have caused outbreaks in Australia infecting hundreds of people.
- Food can look and smell normal but still contain harmful bacteria.
- Proper handwashing will significantly reduce the risk of food contamination.
- Most food safety issues identified during inspections are simple to correct once identified.

Common Issues Identified During Inspections

Based on routine inspections undertaken by your EHOs, common issues include:

- Inadequate temperature control of potentially hazardous food
- Poor cleaning and sanitising practices
- Incomplete or missing food safety records - If it's not written down, it didn't happen
- Handwashing facilities not fully equipped
- Cross-contamination between raw and ready-to-eat foods

Formal food safety training is mandatory for all food handlers

DoFoodSafely

The Livingstone Shire Environmental Health team recommends *DoFoodSafely* – a free, non-accredited online program that helps you understand safe food handling practices in commercial settings. Complete the seven modules and assessment to receive a Certificate of Completion recognised across Australia.

Scan the QR code to get started ▶



We're here to help...

To maintain strong food safety outcomes



- **Train staff regularly**
 - All food handlers require formal training, we suggest [DoFoodSafely](#)

- **Maintain effective cleaning and sanitising systems**
 - Remember to only use food grade sanitisers for surfaces that come into contact with foods



- **Monitor and record temperatures**
 - We provide basic Food Safety Record Templates to assist businesses, these can be [downloaded here](#).



- **Let us know of significant menu changes or alterations to your premises**
 - Email us with details and we'll advise if any forms are required or fees apply.
 - Health@livingstone.qld.gov.au or [on our website](#).

- **Ask questions before problems arise**

**Food safety isn't about passing an inspection
it's about doing it right, every day.**



Food Safety Tips

Keep a copy of your Food Safety Supervisor qualification on display with your Food Business Licence.

Customers like it, staff know who to talk to about food safety, and it saves time looking for it every time your EHO conducts an inspection.

Your poultry doesn't need a bath.

Recent research shows that one in two adults (51%) who cook whole raw chicken usually wash it before cooking.

Despite what you've been told (or seen on social media) never wash any raw poultry, including turkey, before cooking, as this will likely spread bacteria throughout your kitchen, increasing the risk of foodborne illness.

Poultry already undergoes washing during processing so further washing in your kitchen is not necessary, and problematic (Food Safety Information Council, 2025).

Assistance... Where do I go?

The Council's Environmental Health Officers are there to ensure food business 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.

References

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) 2023, Foodborne illness hospitalisations, Australian Government, Canberra.
Department of Health and Aged Care 2020, Food safety and foodborne disease, Australian Government, Canberra.
Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) 2018, The incidence and cost of foodborne illness in Australia, FSANZ, Canberra.
Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) 2023, A guide to the Food Safety Standards, FSANZ, Canberra.
Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) 2022, Safe food handling practices, FSANZ, Canberra.
Queensland Health 2022, Food safety compliance and guidance, Queensland Government, Brisbane.
World Health Organization (WHO) 2020, Five keys to safer food manual, WHO, Geneva.