



New changes to food shop inspection fees

Council has recently completed its first 12 month Food Regulation Partnership with the NSW Food Authority. This partnership has built upon Council's existing Food Premises Inspection Program which has been running for the past 20 years.

During this time fee payment requests for food premises inspections have been issued to food businesses in the Shoalhaven on an annual basis. These payment requests were issued around August each year and incorporated an annual inspection and administration fee. Council Environmental Health Officers then carried out inspections to ensure compliance with the Food Standards Code.

During the past 12 months of the partnership Council has received numerous enquiries and feedback about the program and has consulted with

various representatives within the food industry. Of particular concern to food businesses was the issue of inspection fees. As a result of this, Council reviewed the risk rating of food premises, the frequency of inspections and its fees and charges.

Factors taken into consideration by Council when determining the risk category of a food premises include;

- The type of food business, eg Bed and Breakfast, Café, Take-Away or Restaurant etc.
- The size of the food business, eg level of food production and number of food handlers etc.
- The history of each food business in regard to compliance with Food Safety Standards during past food shop inspections.

How does this new program affect Food Shop Fees?

Food shop inspection fees will now be applied (invoiced) on a per inspection basis together with an annual (one-off) administration fee. This means that businesses will receive an invoice after the inspection has been completed rather than in August each year. The higher the risk category, the more frequent Council will inspect the premises. This ensures a more equitable situation with higher risk food businesses that take longer to inspect and require more inspections per year being charged accordingly. Conversely, those food businesses which are considered to be low risk are now inspected less frequently.

The following table outlines the various categories of food premises and the rates at which they are inspected and charged respectively.

Risk Category of Food Premises	Number of primary inspections per year	Inspection Fee*	Administration Fee
Level 0 (Incident Only)	No Inspection (Unless complaint received or food re-call)	N/A (unless inspection undertaken for complaint or food re-call)	N/A (unless inspection undertaken for complaint or food re-call)
Level 0 (Low Risk)	1	\$115	\$60
Level 1 (Medium Risk)	1	\$115	\$80
Level 2 (High Risk)	2	\$115	\$120
Level 3 (High Risk)	3	\$115	\$120

* A reinspection fee of \$52 applies in circumstances where further inspections are required to ensure all non-compliance issues have been rectified satisfactorily.

How do the food premises in the shoalhaven rate?

From April 1st to June 30th this year, Council inspected 330 food premises in the City. The following pie charts compare the status of food premises for the past three months to that of the previous three month period from January to March.

During this latest period to June, the percentage of premises rated as poor increased from 11% to 19%. The main reason for this increase is the higher level of scrutiny Council Environmental Health Officers are paying to critical food handling practices during inspections in accordance with NSW Food-Authority Criteria.

The most common non-compliances with critical food handling practices identified during this period include;

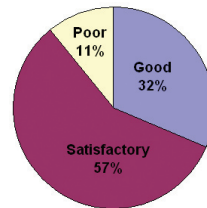
- Temperature control. In particular potentially hazardous foods not being kept refrigerated at less than 5°C;
- Inadequate hand washing provisions with no hand soap or paper towel available to food handlers;
- General poor cleaning and sanitisation of equipment and surfaces used

to prepare food;

- The control of pests such as cockroaches and rodents. The following item; "Take Steps to Prevent Pests" outlines measures that can be taken to prevent the infestation of pests within a food premises.

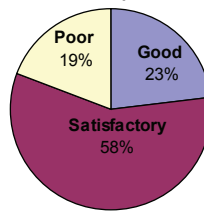
Status of Food Premises in the Shoalhaven from 1/1/09 - 31/3/09

Total number of inspections - 357



Status of Food Premises in the Shoalhaven from 1/4/09 - 30/6/09

Total number of inspections - 330



The period ending June 30th, 2009 also concludes Council's second six monthly report to the NSW Food Authority. During this period Council inspected a total of 687 food premises. Several of the key points identified include;

- 156 warning letters were issued to food premises in the Shoalhaven;
- 6 Improvement Notices were issued requiring various improvements to food premises;
- 2 Prohibition Orders were issued requiring food premises to close until necessary rectification works were carried out;
- 5 Penalty Infringement Notices were issued to food premises which had clear breaches of critical food handling practices
- A total of 29 complaints were received by Council concerning a variety of food handling issues relating to alleged food poisonings, general food hygiene and some instances where foreign objects were present in food for sale.

Take Steps to Prevent Pests

Controlling and preventing the entry of pests is a common problem in food premises. As pests carry diseases it is critical that food handlers are aware of steps they can take to prevent the entry of pests and how to identify and respond to a pest infestation.

Some simple steps you can take to control, and manage pests in your food premises include:

1. Seal all cracks and crevices. Take time to check for any cracks and crevices within the food business as these may provide an entry point for pests.
 2. Reduce clutter. Dispose of any unused items such as cardboard boxes and other miscellaneous items as these provide warmth and harbourage for pests.
 3. Clean those hard to reach places. Whilst many food businesses regularly clean their premises, it is important to remember those hard to reach places,
4. Keep a look out for evidence of pests. Regularly check the premises, particularly in warm, quiet places such as behind the refrigerator or hot water system.
 5. Regularly engage the services of a qualified pest controller. Organising a regular pest inspection or arranging an inspection when evidence of pests is identified can assist in preventing and controlling a pest infestation. In many instances it may take more than one pest treatment to fully control the situation. Therefore if you engage a pest controller to undertake work and there is still a pest problem, you should promptly discuss the matter with the pest controller to arrange for a follow-up treatment.

such as under food preparation benches, behind equipment and around electric components and motors etc. Remaining food waste may attract and provide food for pets.

If you have any comments, suggested items or would like to receive future editions of 'Food News' via email please contact the Environmental Services section by emailing council@shoalhaven.nsw.gov.au or visit our website www.shoalhaven.nsw.gov.au

Environmental Services Manager
Kelie Lowe - 4429 3501

Environmental Health Officer
Trent Swan - 4429 3465

