

Local businesses continue to shine

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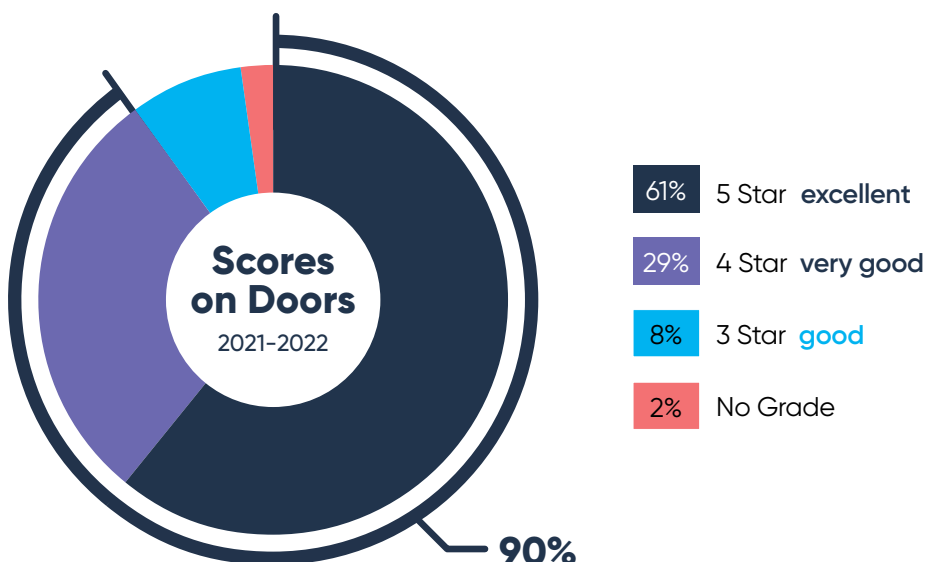
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This year has continued to pose significant challenges to food businesses with difficulties procuring staff and ongoing COVID-19 impacts all hampering efforts to get back to business. Despite these challenges, food safety continues to be a strong focus with over **90%** of businesses receiving a Score equivalent to Very Good or Excellent during their annual inspection.



City of
Newcastle

Reduced salmonella rates in NSW

Following record numbers of Salmonella infections and food poisoning outbreaks reported over the 2010–14 period, the City of Newcastle commenced a targeted education campaign within our cafes and restaurants who handle fresh eggs. The education campaign formed part of the statewide Food Safety Strategy 2015–2021 developed by the NSW Food Authority, which aimed to reduce foodborne salmonellosis by **30%**.

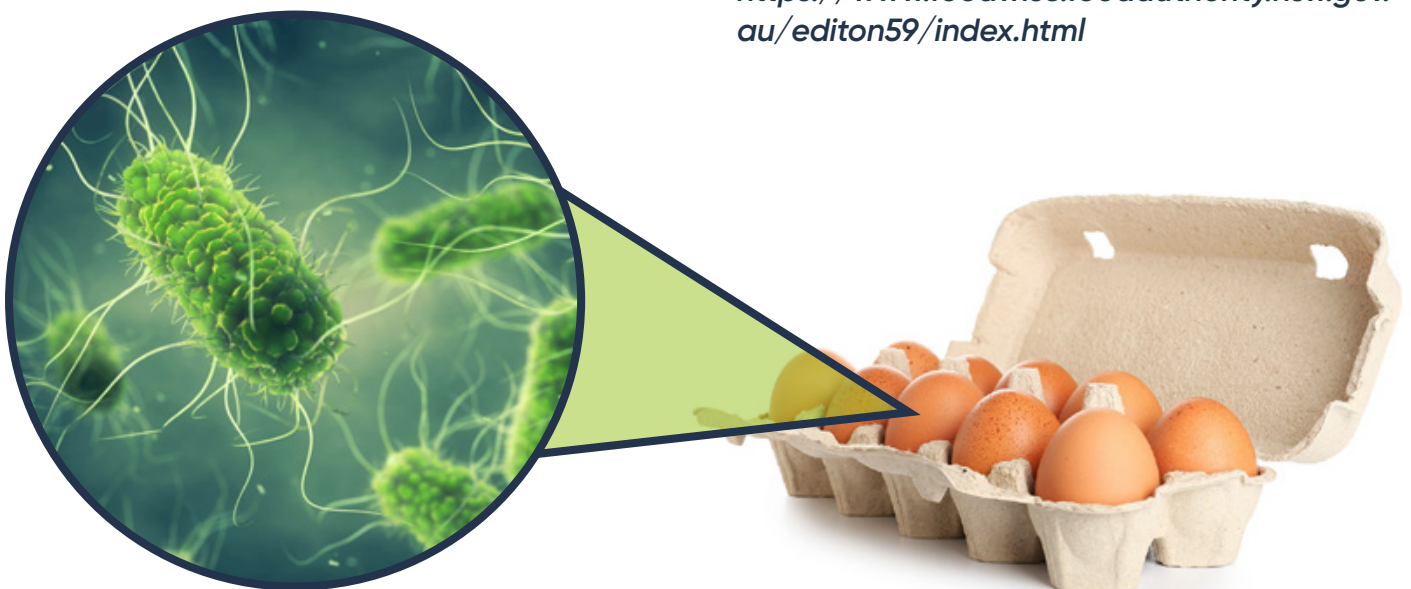
Local Councils focused on the storage and handling of fresh eggs in kitchens, along with production of certain foods using uncooked or lightly cooked eggs such as aioli, mayonnaise, hollandaise sauce and desserts with uncooked egg such as tiramisu and deep-fried ice-cream.

Factsheets and guidelines were distributed to businesses with the initial aim to increase awareness of the risks associated with the use of raw eggs in the kitchen. The following year a questionnaire was developed to gauge how well the businesses had implemented the specified control measures. Only a small number of businesses required the service of an Improvement Notice and/or fines to achieve compliance.

Five (5) years on from the introduction of the education campaign, the NSW Food Authority has released the results of Food Safety Strategy 2015–2021 and estimates **40,000** fewer people contracting salmonellosis with an associated estimated saving in health care costs of approximately **\$196 million between 2017 to 30 June 2021**. This is a great result across NSW and Newcastle, and we want to thank all food businesses in Newcastle for their contribution towards this great result.

Key elements from the campaign have now been incorporated into the routine food inspection to ensure a continued focus on the risks associated with the use of raw eggs in the retail setting.

<https://www.foodwise.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/editon59/index.html>



Lightweight plastic bags banned from the 1 June 2022

Currently single-use plastic items and packaging make up 60 per cent of all litter in NSW, much of it ending up in our lakes and oceans and on our beaches.

From 1 June 2022, businesses in NSW will no longer be able to give customers lightweight single-use plastic bags (bags with handles that are 35 microns thick or less at any part of the bag and are partly or fully plastic).

From 1 November 2022, businesses in NSW will no longer be able to give customers single-use plastic cutlery, stirrers, straws*, plates and bowls.



Lightweight plastic shopping bags



Single-use plastic straws, stirrers and cutlery



Single-use plastic plates and bowls



Expanded polystyrene foodware

*Exemptions will apply for providing a plastic straw for people with a disability or medical need.

The ban **DOES NOT APPLY** to:

- Thicker plastic bags (over 35 microns) like those from major supermarkets and boutique stores.
- Barrier bags such as produce and deli bags, bin liners and compost caddy liners, nappy bags and pet waste bags.

To help retailers adjust to the change, the NSW Government has partnered with the National Retail Association to run an education campaign to show how you can phase out and replace single-use plastics. You can contact the National Retail Association on **1800 844 946** or email sustainability@nra.net.au for more information on this campaign.

If you still hold stock of lightweight plastic bags and are seeking advice on how to comply with the law and what to do about them, visit the **NSW EPA website**.

How do you know if your cleaning and sanitising is working?

Effective cleaning and sanitising in your food business helps protect you and your customers against the spread of bacteria and other organisms that cause foodborne illness. It is important to understand the difference between the two activities and that this is a two-step process.



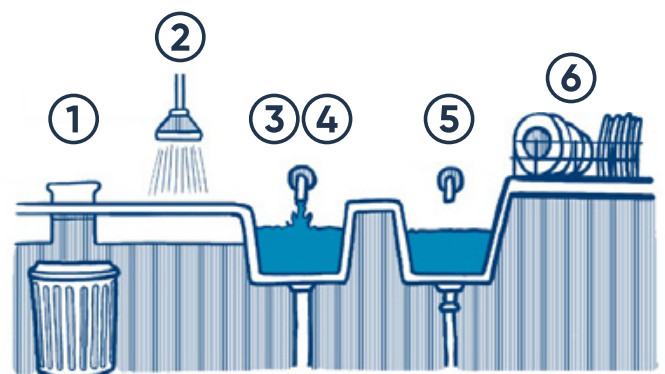
Cleaning requires the use of warm to hot water, detergent and physical action to remove food debris and dissolve grease to ensure the surfaces are clean to touch and free of visible matter and odours.

Sanitising is the process of applying heat (usually very hot water above 70 degrees Celsius) or chemicals or a combination of both heat and chemicals, to an already clean surface to reduce the number of bacteria and other organisms to a safe level.

Cleaning and sanitising can be done mechanically using a dishwasher or manually using wash up sinks and spray bottles. There are many different types of sanitiser and they can vary greatly in how they should be diluted and applied. Always, dilute and apply chemical sanitisers by strictly following the manufacturer's instructions. If clear instructions are not provided with the product, such as dilution rates and contact time, seek advice from the supplier or manufacturer. Note: when sanitiser instructions refer to "contact time" they are referring to the amount of time a sanitiser must be in contact with an item being sanitised, for maximum effectiveness.

The six recommended steps for effective cleaning and sanitising using sinks are:

1. Scrape or wipe away food scraps
2. Rinse with water
3. Wash using warm to hot water and detergent to remove grease and dirt. Soak if needed.
4. Rinse off any loose dirt or detergent residue (sanitisers will not work well in the presence of food or detergent residues)
5. Sanitise with a chemical sanitiser
6. Air dry or use single use towels



Do you know the difference between a "food allergy" and a "food intolerance"?

According to Allergy and Anaphylaxis Australia, 1-2% of adults and 4-8% of children under the age of 5 years suffer from a food allergy, but can you identify allergens in your food business?



PEANUTS



FISH



MILK



EGGS



TREENUTS



CRUSTACEA



LUPIN



WHEAT (GLUTEN)



SULPHITES



MOLLUSC



SOY



SESAME SEEDS

Food allergy is an immune system reaction to a food which can be potentially life threatening.

Allergen is a substance that a person's immune system thinks is harmful to the body. Allergens include foods, insects, pets, dust mites, pollens and some medicines.

Food intolerance does not involve the immune system, but is the bodies inability to digest a food which can cause comfort and distress, but is not life threatening.

Businesses are required by law to take customer requests about allergies seriously. Everyone, from the manager through to the food preparation and service staff need to be aware of the risks food allergies pose, and the need to be clear on how to identify and manage them.

Allergy and Anaphylaxis Australia have developed a number of resources to assist food businesses navigate their responsibilities and comply with the legislation. Please visit their **website** for further information.

Tips to protect food from contamination

It is the business owner's responsibility to set up food safety processes and procedures in the workplace to comply with the Food Standards Code. Here are some simple steps you can incorporate into your processes and procedures to protect food from contamination during the receipt, storage, processing and display of food:

- Store food in food-grade containers and covered, if necessary, to protect it from contamination
- Elevate food and packaging off the floor and onto shelves
- Store raw food, especially meat, fish and poultry below and away from ready-to-eat food in a coolroom or fridge
- Store chemicals and cleaning equipment separately from food, food packaging and food handling areas
- Maintain the premises, including all fixtures, fittings and equipment, in a clean condition, fit for its intended use
- Regularly clean and sanitise food contact surfaces and utensils, e.g. chopping boards, knives
- Use separate equipment and utensils for raw and ready-to-eat foods, or thoroughly wash and sanitise equipment and utensils between handling raw and ready to-eat foods
- Avoid unnecessary contact with ready to eat food, e.g. use utensils rather than bare hands
- Thoroughly wash and dry hands before starting work, changing tasks or returning from a break, e.g. between serving customers and preparing food, and after handling raw foods and garbage, or using the toilet
- Minimise the wearing of exposed jewellery and tie back long hair
- Cover cuts and wounds with an appropriate dressing
- Do not handle food if feeling unwell or suffering from a contagious illness



Can I bring my dog to the café?

In NSW, **working guide dogs** are allowed entry into any public area used by customers, such as indoor or outdoor dining areas of a café or restaurant, public bars, supermarkets, kiosks, fast food outlets etc. Guide dogs are not allowed to enter areas that are off limits to the general public, e.g. kitchens, food preparation areas and food storage areas. Food business owners may allow other dogs (i.e. not assistance animals) into outdoor dining areas of a café or restaurant under certain circumstances.



Food labelling resources

Many food businesses have questions regarding food labelling and sometimes the answer isn't as straight forward as we'd like. To assist with these enquires the NSW Food Authority has developed an interactive quiz "***do-I-need-food-label?***" to help with the more complex labelling requirements. Sometimes there are other requirements too – for example, total weight and measure statements are regulated by the ***National Measurement Institute***.

Everything said about a food on the label is also subject to Australian Consumer Law, which prohibits false, misleading or deceptive representations. See ***Truth in Labelling*** for more information.



On the lookout for "dark kitchens"

Over the last few years regulators have observed an increase in food for sale on-line largely driven by COVID-19 restrictions on face-to-face trade.

On-line platforms such as Facebook Marketplace have become commonly used for established and new businesses to advertise their food offerings to a significant segment of the population. While CN is supportive of these new and innovative platforms and associated business models it is important that all businesses are appropriately regulated. The Food Act requires all food business to notify their food handling activities to Council so that each business can be risk rated and appropriately regulated. This also ensures complying businesses are not disadvantaged by investing in safe food handling practices.

What did CN do?

To combat this trend the City of Newcastle (CN) along with 19 other volunteer Councils contributed towards the Food Notification Project. The aim of this project was to identify un-notified low visibility food businesses also known as a "dark kitchen". A dark kitchen is essentially a food preparation site where food is produced for sale without Council's knowledge. These sites are often not the traditional bricks and mortar type food premises and seek to attract customers by engaging with them directly either online or through other channels such as social media. They may operate from residential premises or use an existing food premises after hours.

During the Food Notification Project, Councils identified 131 un-notified food businesses.

Of the 131 food businesses identified, the majority were:

- Operating from home **(38%)**
- Preparing Potentially Hazardous Food **(59%)**
- Selling via social media **(67%)**

Councils engaged with these businesses and requested they notify their food handling practices in accordance with the requirements of the Food Act. As a result of this project, 2 Improvement Notices, 1 Prohibition Order, 1 Penalty Infringement Notice were issued. **13%** of these businesses failed the inspection, cleaning and sanitising being the biggest non-compliance issue. Advice or guidance was the most common action taken **(58%)**.

NSW Food Authority also hosted a free food safety information webinar. The webinar highlighted good food handling practices: cleaning and sanitising, food safety supervisor, food labelling, allergen management, appropriate raw egg use, and allowed for a Q&A session for attendees.

What can you do to help?

If you know of an un-notified food business operating in our area and you are concerned about their activity, please contact CN's Customer Service Team on **(02) 4974 2000** or report by filling out an electronic request form.

To assist CN investigate your request, please provide full details of the business including the type of food sold, phone number, location of the business and/or email address so we can contact the operator. CN's Food Services Team will then assess the risk posed by the food sold and allocate the appropriate resources for the investigation.

