

Food Surveillance Program

Council's Environmental Health Officers carry out inspections of retail food premises for compliance with the food safety, food hygiene, maintenance and construction requirements of the Food Act, Regulations and Food Standards Code.



30 years of food surveillance

Council has had a food surveillance program operating for well over 30 years.

Having a routine inspection program in place with a 100% inspection rate (of fixed food premises) is a notable achievement for any council.

In 2008, local councils in NSW entered into a partnership with the NSW Food Authority. The partnership required a mandated food surveillance role be taken up by local councils. For Ballina, the process was the formality of a role already well established.

champion award

In recognition of its ongoing commitment to maintaining food surveillance and for the development and provision of educational resources to food premises, Council's Environmental Health Group won the 2011 Food Regulation Partnership Food Surveillance Champion Award.

retail food outlets

There are approximately 270 retail food outlets inspected annually by Council's Environmental Health Officers. Factors such as cleanliness, pest control, temperature control, safe food handling, Food Safety Supervisor, maintenance and construction are routinely checked.

Premises subject to annual inspections include:

- cafes, restaurants and bakeries
- takeaway food outlets
- clubs, hotels and motels
- supermarkets and general stores
- health food stores
- childcare facilities
- water carters
- school canteens
- home based businesses

Throughout the year Council's Environmental Health Officers also inspect approximately 60 food stalls that sell higher risk foods at the weekend markets and community events.

enforcement protocol

If breaches are detected during inspections a number of enforcement tools are available in order to obtain compliance. These include:

- verbal warning
- written warning
- improvement notices
- prohibition orders (closure of all or part of food premises)
- seizure of food or equipment
- penalty infringement notices (on-the-spot fines)
- legal action.

Council's objective is to achieve voluntary compliance, and stronger enforcement action is undertaken as a last resort.

consumer concerns

Environmental Health Officers respond to food complaints lodged by members of the public. Matters investigated include poor cleanliness, the presence of pests, foreign matter in food, inadequate protection of food from contamination, alleged foodborne illness and maintenance issues.

new food premises

Development Applications that include food premises are referred to the Environmental Health Section for assessment to ensure that they are constructed and fitted out in accordance with the construction provisions of the Food Act, Regulations and Food Standards Code.

the environmental health team

Council currently has a team of four Environmental Health Officers including one food specialist, who conduct routine inspections of food premises (and other regulated commercial premises such as hairdressers, beauticians and tattoo parlours).

The team is committed to maintaining a high standard of food hygiene and health in Ballina Shire.

scores on doors food hygiene rating program

The Scores on Doors voluntary food hygiene rating program that awards food premises that maintain a high standard of food hygiene and food safety. The program is based on routine unannounced inspections by Council's Environmental health Officers.

Food premises eligible for the program may be awarded with a 3, 4 or 5 star food hygiene rating. A certificate showing the rating is to be posted at the entrance of the food premises.

It is a great initiative and provides recognition for retail food businesses that are committed to good food hygiene and food safety practices.

Further Information

Planning and Environmental Health Division

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ballina.nsw.gov.au

NSW Food Authority

foodauthority.nsw.gov.au

