

# Managing consumer food safety in Queensland

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(Report 17: 2018–19).  
Tabled 14 May 2019.

## Slide 1: Welcome

Welcome to our presentation on the performance audit report on managing consumer food safety in Queensland.

Please note that this is a summary. The full report can be read on our website.

## Slide 2: Audit objective

In this audit, we examined whether food safety is effectively managed for consumers of food in Queensland.

We audited the Department of Health, hospital and health services and local councils in three densely populated or high-demand tourist locations along the state's coast—Brisbane, Gold Coast and Cairns. More than 45 per cent of the state's licensed food businesses are located in these regions.

## Slide 3: Food safety and public health risks

Food safety is an important aspect of public health and wellbeing. Worldwide, an estimated 600 million people fall ill each year from consuming contaminated food. Of these, an estimated 420 000 die. In Australia, approximately 5.4 million cases of foodborne illness cost the community \$1.2 billion per annum.

## Slide 4: Growing food industry and emerging innovations

Since 2010, licensed food businesses in Queensland have increased by 27 per cent. Emerging innovations, such as market stalls, shared commercial kitchens, food trucks, and online delivery services, have also placed huge demands on food regulators. Major events like the Commonwealth Games and local community events contribute to the complexity.

## Slide 5: Queensland's legislative framework

In Queensland, the *Food Act 2006* regulates food businesses based on the food safety risks they present to the community. Queensland Health and local councils are jointly responsible for enforcing the *Food Act*.

## Slide 6: Our conclusions—gaps in the *Food Act 2006*

We concluded that there are gaps in the legislative coverage of food risks. Queensland is the only state or territory that doesn't require its government entities to comply with its food safety legislation.

While the legislation excludes certain businesses or food types in order to reduce the regulatory burden, these exclusions are perceived as arbitrary and confusing at an operational level.

## Slide 7: Our conclusions—no statewide framework across councils

We also concluded that consumers in Queensland cannot be confident of a consistent experience with respect to food safety across the state.

There is no statewide risk-based framework to guide councils in consistently classifying and inspecting food businesses, and taking enforcement actions. Inconsistent practices can lead to elevated risks.

## Slide 8: What we recommend

We made nine recommendations to the Department of Health to:

- conduct a legislative review of the *Food Act 2006*
- implement a consistent statewide risk-based framework and standards
- improve existing governance committees, performance measures, data collection and reporting, training requirements, and long-term technology solutions.

We made seven recommendations to the three audited councils to improve aspects of their regulatory practices, including food safety licensing, food safety programs, and compliance monitoring, systems and reporting.

## Slide 9: For more information

For more information on the issues, opportunities and recommendations highlighted in this summary presentation, please see the full report on our website.

Thank you.