



New Food Safety Standards for Australia

NOTE: The Food Safety Standards do not apply in New Zealand. The food standards treaty between Australia and New Zealand does not include food hygiene standards.

Why were the Food Safety Standards developed?

The Food Safety Standards were developed for the following reasons:

- to provide more effective food safety regulations and reduce the level of food-borne illness in Australia;
- to provide nationally uniform food safety standards for Australia so businesses operating in more than one State or Territory have only one set of requirements;
- to replace existing food hygiene regulations that were sometimes significantly out-of-date; and
- to introduce less prescriptive regulations, that are simpler to comply with and give businesses more flexibility to determine the best way for them to comply with the requirements — providing food safety is not compromised.

Three mandatory standards and a model standard

Standard 3.1.1 *Interpretation and Application*

This is the introductory standard. It explains the main terms that are used within the Food Safety Standards, such as the meaning of safe and suitable food. It also applies the standards to all food businesses in Australia with the exception of primary food production businesses, unless those businesses are also involved in the processing or retail sale of food.

Note: *If you are unsure about what this exemption means for your food business, the fact sheet Food Safety Standards — Definitions may help, or contact your State or Territory health department.*

Standard 3.2.2 *Food Safety Practices and General Requirements*

This standard sets out specific food handling controls related to the receipt, storage, processing, display, packaging, transportation, disposal and recall of food. Other requirements relate to the skills and knowledge of food handlers and their supervisors, the health and hygiene of food handlers, and the cleaning, sanitising, and maintenance of the food premises and equipment within the premises. If complied with, these requirements should ensure that food does not become unsafe or unsuitable.

Standard 3.2.3 *Food Premises and Equipment*

This standard sets out the requirements for food premises, fixtures, fittings, equipment and food transport vehicles. If food businesses comply with these requirements, they will find it easier to meet the food safety requirements of Standard 3.2.2.

A fourth standard, Standard 3.2.1 *Food Safety Programs* has also been developed as a model standard. Food businesses do not have to comply with this standard unless a State or Territory requires this. At this stage, Victoria is the only State with a requirement for food safety programs. The situation in other States and Territories is set out in the fact sheet *State & Territory enforcement of the Food Safety Standards*.

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When do food businesses need to comply with the standards?

The standards apply from 24 February 2001 and come fully into force as each State and Territory to enact the standards under their own laws and regulations. The following table indicates the proposed implementation dates in each State and Territory. Additional information on the situation in each State and Territory is set out in the fact sheet *State & Territory enforcement of the Food Safety Standards*.

State/Territory	Implementation dates
NSW	following the gazettal of the enforcement regulation
Victoria	following the autumn session of Parliament, 2001
Tasmania	by June 2001
Queensland	1 July 2001
Northern Territory	expected to be from July 2001
ACT	from November 2001
South Australia	expected to be from January 2002
WA	fully operational in early 2002

NOTE: The skills & knowledge and notification requirements cannot be enforced before February 2002.

Who do the standards apply to?

The Food Safety Standards apply to every business involved in the handling of food for sale, or the sale of food in Australia, with the exception of businesses involved solely in primary production, provided they do not process their products or sell them directly to the public. Also, there are exemptions from some of the provisions in the standards for charities and community groups and also for temporary premises and home-based food businesses.

How will the standards affect businesses?

The new standards are based on the old food laws. Although there are some new requirements, businesses operating safely now and in accordance with the old food regulations should find that compliance with the new requirements is a simple exercise. However, there are some requirements that are **completely new** for all food businesses. Some examples of these requirements are:

- (from February 2002) ensuring food handlers and supervisors have the skills and knowledge necessary for them to carry out their jobs safely;
- (from February 2002) supplying details about the business to the local enforcement agency unless this information is provided already under an existing food business registration system;
- taking steps to ensure that food received into the premises is safe and suitable; and
- if handling potentially hazardous food, having a thermometer accurate to +/- 1°C to measure the temperature of this food.

Some of the other provisions in the standards may also be new for food businesses in some States and Territories. This will depend on what was included in the old State and Territory hygiene regulations. State and Territory health departments will be able to provide advice on these local changes.

Need more information?

Copies of the standards, the guides to these and other fact sheets and supporting material can be found on the ANZFA website (www.anzfa.gov.au). As the standards come into force in each State and Territory, food businesses will also be able to seek advice directly from the Environmental Health Officers at their local council, or from their State or Territory health or health services department and Public Health Units.

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