What to do if you suspect a food business is operating without a licence

The primary reason for licensing requirements under the Food Act 2006 is to ensure that a food business is equipped to produce safe and suitable food. Unlicensed food businesses can cause problems for industry, regulators and consumers, for a variety of reasons. These problems include:
- reducing operating costs, creating an uneven playing field for businesses doing the right thing
- increased risk of food-borne illness caused by improper food safety practices or unsuitable equipment
- reduced consumer confidence in industry.

Licensing allows local governments to ensure that food handlers have adequate skills and knowledge in food safety and food hygiene and that the business has the necessary equipment to handle, store and transport food safely.

Licensed food businesses are required by law to display their licence or a copy of their licence in a prominent position at the premises so it is easily visible to persons at the premises. The term of the licence is stated on the licence so you can see if the licence is current.

However, it is important to know that some low-risk food businesses are not required to be licensed, although they are still required to comply with the food laws. Therefore, they will not have a licence on display at the food business. You can contact your local government to ascertain whether a particular type of food business is required to be licensed.

As a business competitor, it is important to understand that it is not your responsibility to approach a business that you believe does not have a licence. Your local government environmental health officers are the only persons authorised to take any action.

If you believe that a food business should be operating with a licence or the licence is not clearly visible, you should notify your local government and provide them with as many details about the business as possible, including:
- business/trading name
- address/location
- types of food sold
- day and time they were operating
- vehicle registration, if it is a mobile food business.

For further information
Queensland Health has a variety of fact sheets with detailed information on food safety. Fact sheets can be accessed from the Queensland Health website at www.health.qld.gov.au/foodsafety.

Contact your local government if you have any further questions. Contact details can be found at www.dlgp.qld.gov.au/local-government-directory.html or your local White Pages.

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