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Why do I need this guide?

This guide will help operators of commercial vessels understand and comply with Queensland’s laws covering food safety, food handling, food premises and equipment and labelling provisions as well as food licensing. These are:

- *Food Act 2006* (the ‘Act’)
- Food Standards Code (the ‘Code’)
- Food Safety Standards (Chapter 3 of the Code)

Food legislation aims to reduce food poisoning and increase consumer confidence in the food industry, while reducing costs of compliance to businesses.

How do food laws apply to me?

If you operate a charter vessel, passenger service or other commercial vessel business, which sells and/or handles food intended for sale, your business is considered to be a ‘food business’ and must comply with the Act.

Under the Act, a ‘food business’ is defined as a business, enterprise or activity (other than primary food production) involving the handling of food intended for sale or the sale of food.

This definition applies regardless of:

- whether it is a one-off occasion
- whether it is in connection with a charity or other fund raising event
- regardless of the type of foods involved

The definition of ‘sell’ determines whether or not your food-related activities constitute the conduct of a food business. Sell is a very broad term under the Act and includes:

- food given to passengers inclusive of their cruise fare, including any seafood caught during the tour
- food given to employees as part of their contract
- food provided on a bare boat charter

However, bareboat hirers who provide or catch their own food for their own consumption are not selling food by sharing it with other members of the hiring party.
Do I need a food licence?

If the activities you undertake class you as a food business as defined in the previous section you may need a food licence from the local government of the area you operate in.

If you conduct a food business in more than one local government area, even if you are operating only in coastal and inland waters, you need a food licence from only one local government. You must have your licence displayed in a prominent position so the details are easily visible to persons on the vessel.

If you operate without a current food business licence, you can be prosecuted. The maximum fine is $75,000.

What do I need to do to comply?

This guide gives you an overview of the basics to get you started. For more detailed information on how to comply with the food laws, contact the local government that issues your licence.

Food Safety Supervisors

All licensed food businesses must have a food safety supervisor, who:

a) Knows how to recognise, prevent and alleviate food safety hazards of the food business; and
b) Has skills and knowledge in matters relating to food safety relevant to the food business; and
c) Has the authority to supervise and give directions about matters relating to food safety to persons who handle food in the food business.

There are specified competencies that should be obtained in order to be a food safety supervisor. For further information about food safety supervisors, including details of the required competencies and the responsibilities of a Food Safety Supervisor, see the food industry fact sheet 18 Food Safety Supervisor and fact sheet 19 Food Safety Update, which can be accessed from www.health.qld.gov.au/food safety, or contact your Local Government.

Food Safety Programs

If your food business conducts off-site and/or on-site catering, the licensee will be required to develop and implement a food safety program. The food safety program must be accredited by the Local Government that issues the food business licence and regular food safety audits must
be undertaken to determine compliance with the program, the Standards and the Act. For more information on food safety programs, contact your Local Government.

**Food Safety Standards**

Under the Act, all food businesses must comply with the Code. The Code incorporates the Food Safety Standards, which deals with food hygiene issues.

The Food Safety Standards set out basic information on how to handle and store food safely, personal hygiene of food handlers and design of food premises. This document describes the requirements of the Food Safety Standards as they relate to vessels.

**Galley design, construction and fit out requirements**

Size and weight are major factors in the design of all parts of a vessel. The Food Safety Standards allow flexibility in how you set up your galley, but it must meet some minimum requirements to ensure that you can store, handle and serve food safely.

The elements that you must include on your galley are:

- a dedicated hand wash basin with soap and paper towels
- an adequate supply of drinking water for hand washing, cleaning and food preparation
- protection from dust, dirt, fumes, smoke, pests and other contaminants
- enough space for preparing food
- enough cold storage for food
- separate storage for garbage and waste water
- enough space and equipment to prepare food safely

If you can’t meet a structural requirement essential for making sure your food is safe, you may need to change the type of foods you serve e.g. use only packaged sandwiches bought on-shore rather than prepare them aboard.

Advice specific to the design and fit out of your vessel as a food business should always be sought from your local government’s environmental health officer. General information on required structural standards for food businesses can be found in *Safe Food Australia–A guide to the Good Safety Standards*, which can be accessed from [www.foodstandards.gov.au](http://www.foodstandards.gov.au).
Skills and knowledge

Anyone who handles food must have skills and knowledge of food safety and hygiene that reflects the type of food handling they do. For example, if someone only washes the dishes, they only need to know how to do that safely. However, if they make, store and serve prawn rolls, they need different skills and knowledge.

It is the responsibility of the licensee of the food business to ensure that food handlers have the appropriate skills and knowledge to safely undertake all food handling tasks assigned to them.

Formal training is not necessarily required for food handlers. There are many different things you can do to ensure that food handlers have the skills and knowledge they need for their work. You can choose an approach that best suits you.

Some examples are:

- ‘in house’ training by other staff, the owner of the business or using a suitable training kit
- giving staff food safety and food hygiene information from reliable sources to read
- developing standard operating rules and induction documents based on food safety requirements that set out responsibilities of food handlers
- signs located throughout work area (eg. poster on how to wash hands located over hand basin)
- sending staff to food safety courses run by industry associations or hiring a consultant to run a course for the staff
- recruiting staff with formal industry-based training qualifications.

Purchasing food

When purchasing the food that you will be preparing aboard, when you accept it you must ensure that it is in good condition, at the correct temperature and if packaged, fully enclosed and labelled.

Food must be transported safely, under temperature control and protected from contamination. If you have food delivered, you should ensure that the person transporting the food also follows these rules.
Transporting food

There are three main food safety rules you should follow when transporting food:

- keep the food protected from contamination (in sealed containers, keep the vehicle clean, no animals etc)
- keep the food colder than 5°C; or
- keep the food hotter than 60°C

Protecting food from contamination

When transporting food it is important to protect it from contamination by keeping it covered at all times.

Materials used to cover food should be suitable for food contact to ensure they do not contain any chemicals that could get into the food. Aluminium foil, plastic film and clean paper may be used but food should be completely covered. Previously used materials and newspaper may contaminate food so these materials should not be used in direct contact with any food.

Temperature control

When potentially hazardous foods are transported they should be maintained colder than 5°C, or hotter than 60°C during the journey. Alternatively you could use time, rather than temperature, to keep the food safe while it is transported. For more advice see temperature control (page 8).

If the journey is short, eskies with ice bricks may keep the food cold. If the journey is long or on hot days, a portable refrigerator may be required. Hot food may be maintained hot in insulated containers or with heat packs for short periods, but portable ovens may be required to keep food hot over longer trips.

Food must be pre-heated or pre-cooled before being placed in an insulated container. The container must have a close-fitting lid to help maintain safe temperatures. The container must be in good condition and kept clean at all times and used only for food.

Other transport considerations

- Keep the journey as short as possible.
- Make packing potentially hazardous foods into insulated containers your last job
Containers for cold food should be placed in the coolest part of the vessel
Vehicles must be clean. If pets or dirty equipment have been previously carried, the intended food storage area must be thoroughly cleaned or lined to minimise the likelihood of contamination
Make it your first job to unload any hot or cold food and place it into on-site temperature control

**Food handling**

**Tips for safely preparing food**

Food that is freshly cooked aboard and served straight away has less chance of becoming unsafe or unsuitable than food that is pre-cooked and then taken aboard to the event.

Never use the same utensils for raw meats and seafood and foods that are ready to eat unless they have been thoroughly cleaned, sanitised and dried. Cooked food and other food that is ready to eat such as salads should always be placed on separate, clean, dry serving dishes.

Use tongs and other implements when preparing food that will not be cooked before it is eaten such as salads and sandwiches. Gloves can be used but remember that they should be used for one task only. When you start the next task, make sure you have new gloves on. Remember: never wash gloves—always throw them out!

**Cooking**

Always cook food thoroughly. Do not partially cook food and then warm it up later. Cook chicken, sausages and hamburgers until juices run clear – steaks can be cooked to preference.

Thorough cooking will reduce dangerous bacteria to safe levels. But remember that some food poisoning bacteria can protect themselves from cooking and while they will not be present in enough numbers to make someone sick just after the food is cooked, they can start growing again if the cooked food is left at temperatures between 5-60°C for too long. This is why minimising time at unsafe temperatures is so important.

Wherever possible, try to cook food as close to the time that you will be serving or selling it.
This reduces the chance of the food becoming contaminated after it has been cooked and does not give pathogens enough time to grow to dangerous levels on the cooked food before it is eaten.

**Temperature control**

To prevent food poisoning safe storage temperatures are 5°C or colder, or 60°C or hotter.

Bacteria that cause foodborne illness can grow at temperatures between 5°C and 60°C, which is known as the temperature danger zone. The fastest rate of growth is at around 37°C, which is human body temperature.

The Food Safety Standards also require you to have a thermometer if you prepare, handle or sell potentially hazardous food. This will enable you to check that safe temperatures are being maintained. Clean and sanitise the thermometer with an alcohol swab before use and between checking each food.

**Keeping food cold**

When you are preparing food make sure that you have enough refrigerator space to store the food. It is important to remember that refrigerators do not work properly when food is packed tightly into them because the cold air cannot circulate.

If you are running out of room in your refrigerator, remove foods that are not potentially hazardous such as soft drinks. The temperature of soft drinks is not critical and they can be kept cool in insulated containers with ice.

**Cooling foods**

When cooling cooked foods, the temperature should fall from 60°C (or over) to 21°C in less than two hours and be reduced below 5°C within the next four hours. Putting food into shallow containers and not overfilling them will help to cool it more rapidly.
**Time limit between 5-60°C**

The four-hour/two-hour guide applies to ready-to-eat potentially hazardous food. It provides the absolute maximum periods this food can be held safely at temperatures between 5°C and 60°C and what should happen to it after certain times. The times refer to the life of the food eg. including preparation and cooling, not just to display times.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Frame</th>
<th>Action</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 2 hours</td>
<td>Must be refrigerated or used immediately</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 2 and 4 hours</td>
<td>Must be used immediately</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 hours or longer</td>
<td>Must be thrown out</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Thermometer tips**

- Thermometers should not contain glass as this could shatter and contaminate food
- Clean the probe of the thermometer with a sterile wipe before inserting into food
- Insert probe and wait for temperature to settle on thermometer
- Note temperature
- Clean probe in hot running water (and detergent if necessary to remove grease)
- Allow probe to air dry (wipe probe with sterile wipe before re-use)

**Reheating food**

Cold food which is to be served hot will need to be quickly and thoroughly heated until it is steaming hot and then kept hot until it is served. You must re-heat the food to 60°C in no more than two hours. Use your probe thermometer to check that the internal temperature reaches 60°C.
Hygiene requirements

Preventing food poisoning

Food poisoning is a hazard that must be effectively managed to avoid its occurrence and possible litigation.

All food handlers must be informed that:

A person must not handle food if they are ill or have an infection, which can easily transfer harmful bacteria or viruses to food, particularly if:

- they are vomiting or ill with diarrhoea, fever or sore throat with fever; or
- their doctor has diagnosed them as having or carrying a food borne illness.

Food handlers must let you know that they cannot work as a food handler if they have one of the above conditions or symptoms.

What to do

If a food handler tells you they are ill:

- direct the food handler to immediately cease work which involves handling food; and
- reallocate duties, so that the person is assigned non-food handling jobs while the condition persists.

If a food handler has infected sores on their hands, arm or face or any discharges from their ears, nose or eyes (such as a cold or conjunctivitis) they must take extra precautions to prevent food being contaminated. For example, cover the skin sore or take medication to dry up the discharge. They can then continue to work with food for sale.

General hygiene

Each food handler must take all reasonable precautions to ensure that food or food contact surfaces are not contaminated from his or her body or anything he or she is wearing. This would include hair, saliva, mucus, sweat, blood, fingernails, clothes, jewellery or bandages.

A food handler must

- Avoid hand contact with ready-to-eat food, such as salads and cooked food. Always use clean tongs or other implements to handle the food
• Not taste test food with the same utensil, unless you thoroughly clean and sanitise it between each contact with your mouth and the food. Do not use your hands or fingers for this purpose
• Wear clean clothing and change it when it becomes dirty or soiled
• Make sure bandages and dressings on exposed parts of your body such as the hands, arms or face are enclosed with a waterproof covering
• Not eat over uncovered food or equipment (includes utensils)
• Not sneeze, blow or cough over uncovered food or equipment and utensils
• Not spit, smoke or chew tobacco where food is handled
• Importantly, wash their hands whenever it is necessary or required

Hand washing

The most important measure to protect food from contamination is proper hand washing, because clean and dry hands prevent the transfer of pathogens. All food handlers must wash their hands:
• before handling food
• in between handling raw food and food that is cooked or ready-to-eat eg. raw meat and salads
• after using the toilet
• after smoking, coughing, sneezing, blowing their nose, eating, drinking
• after touching their hair, scalp, mouth, nose or ear canal or other body opening
• after touching another person, including shaking hands
• after handling garbage, other waste or non-food substances not known to be clean and sanitary
There are five steps that should be followed when washing hands:

1. **Step 1: WET** hands
2. **Step 2: SOAP** hands
3. **Step 3: RUB** thoroughly - wrists, forearms, between fingers
4. **Step 4: RINSE** in clean water
5. **Step 5: DRY** on paper towel

Be aware that cloth towels require frequent replacement (and sanitising during laundering), to ensure that they do not act as a vehicle for the transfer of pathogens.

**Hand washing facilities**

Hand washing facilities should have warm running water, which is discharged to an appropriate waste water disposal system.

A supply of soap and paper towels must be provided. A bin should be supplied for used towels. This helps keep the site tidy and prevents contamination from used towels.

**Cleaning and sanitising**

There are three steps needed to effectively clean and sanitise equipment:

- washing
- sanitising
- drying

Equipment such as cutting boards, bowls and knives need to be thoroughly washed in warm soapy water. After washing, the equipment should look clean and there should be no food or anything else visible. Effective cleaning will remove most of the dangerous bacteria present. Sanitising will then kill any bacteria that remain.

All equipment must be thoroughly dried before it is re-used. Air-drying is best but tea towels can be used if they are clean and replaced when they are wet or dirty.

Make sure you have access to plenty of hot water for washing. If hot water is not available, disposable eating and drinking utensils should be used and enough cooking utensils provided to last the duration of the cruise so that washing up is not necessary.
Water

Water is needed for hand washing and for washing up equipment. A water supply, adequate to last the duration of the cruise, needs to be provided. The water must be potable (drinking quality). If using containers to carry water aboard, make sure that they are clean and have not been used to store chemicals.

Help on complying with the Food Safety Standards

A self-assessment checklist *Know Your Food Business* has been developed to help you comply with the Food Safety Standards. Copies are available from your local Queensland Health Population Health Unit, or www.health.qld.gov.au/foodsafety.

You can also talk to your Local Government environmental health officer for assistance.

Food labelling requirements

If you provide all of your food unpackaged, you are exempt from the majority of the labelling requirements. Some exceptions include:

- if you make a claim about the food you serve (eg “low fat”)
- allergens (gluten (such as wheat, rye, barley and oats), crustacean, egg products, fish products, milk products, nuts, sesame seeds, peanuts, soybeans, sulphites (greater than 10mg/kg), royal jelly, propolis and bee pollen)
- characterising ingredients (e.g. chocolate muffins need the percentage of chocolate)

If you are making and packaging your own food for sale, you need to comply with the full range of labelling requirements. For more detailed information, you can obtain a copy of *Label Buster* from your local Queensland Health Population Health Unit, or from www.health.qld.gov.au/foodsafety.
## Appendix 1: Queensland Health Contact Details

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population Health Unit</th>
<th>Postal Address</th>
<th>Phone</th>
<th>Fax</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brisbane Northside</td>
<td>Locked Bag 2 Stafford Q 4006</td>
<td>3624 1111</td>
<td>3624 1159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brisbane Southside</td>
<td>PO Box 333 Archerfield Q 4108</td>
<td>3000 9148</td>
<td>3000 9121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bundaberg</td>
<td>PO Box 185 Bundaberg Q 4670</td>
<td>4150 2780</td>
<td>4150 2729</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cairns</td>
<td>PO Box 1103 Cairns Q 4870</td>
<td>4050 3600</td>
<td>4031 1440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gold Coast</td>
<td>PO Box 267 Southport BC Q 4215</td>
<td>5509 7222</td>
<td>5561 1851</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mackay</td>
<td>PO Box 5925 Mackay Q 4741</td>
<td>4968 6611</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rockhampton</td>
<td>PO Box 946 Rockhampton Q 4700</td>
<td>4920 6898</td>
<td>4921 3230</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sunshine Coast</td>
<td>PO Box 577 Maroochydore Q 4558</td>
<td>5409 6600</td>
<td>5443 5488</td>
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<tr>
<td>Toowoomba</td>
<td>PO Box 1775 Toowoomba Q 4350</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Locked Bag No 16 Aitkenvale Q 4814</td>
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<tr>
<td>West Moreton</td>
<td>PO Box 73 Ipswich Q 4305</td>
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