

EHA POLICY



Food Business Grading Schemes Policy

Policy Number:	EHANP-2014-03	Responsible Association:	EHA (QLD) INC)
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1. Purpose

Environmental Health Australia (EHA) recognises that food business rating schemes are an effective tool to educate consumers and promote and encourage food businesses to adopt a more holistic approach to food safety. The purpose of this policy is to articulate EHA's support for food business rating schemes and provide a mandate and framework for advocacy of this position.

EHA acknowledges current research in the field of food business rating schemes and supports food business rating schemes that:

- are based on risk management;
- are aligned and recognise both national and international accepted best practice;
- are incentive driven and reward a systematic approach;
- encourage a holistic food safety approach.

2. Scope

The scope of this EHA policy is to provide an agreed framework and policy position which may be utilised to provide support to environmental health professionals involved in developing and implementing food business rating schemes (FBRs). The policy applies to the practice area of food safety and is envisaged to support FBRs key decision makers.

3. Policy Principles

Environmental Health Australia affirms the following principles:

- the role of EHA is to protect consumers by supporting food businesses to provide safe food;
- the food industry's significant role in achieving effective food safety outcomes;
- the need for consumers to make informed choices about food safety;
- the increasing consumer demand and awareness of food safety issues;
- the growth of the Australia's food industry and the subsequent impact on food safety regulators;
- the support for incentive driven and more innovative ways to achieve food safety outcomes;
- the increasing costs of food-borne illness (FBI) with an estimated 5.4 million

cases of food borne disease occurring annually costing an estimated \$1.2 billion per year (source: Annual Report of the OzFoodNet Network 2009).

4. Actions

Environmental Health Australia considers that the following steps should be undertaken to achieve the purpose of this policy:

- publicly announce EHA's support for an Australia wide voluntary FBRS;
- advocate with all levels of government and the food industry for a single consistent, simple, achievable and mandatory FBRS for Australia;
- support the proactive advocacy of government agencies to invest in education and promotion of FBRS to ensure:
 - consumers are able to correctly interpret any scheme;
 - industry clearly understands the criteria for the scheme;
 - regulators are sufficiently resourced to provide a consistent and fair process for grading and review; and
 - that the focus of any mandatory FBRS is on the positive promotion of best practice food safety.
- support the application of FBRS to all regulated food premises;
- advocate for plain English FBRS legislation;
- recognise existing established reputable FBRSs in Australia; and
- acknowledge that FBRSs are just one part of a holistic approach to food safety.

5. Definitions

- **food business rating scheme** means “a scheme in which a local government or regulating food authority;
(a) assesses, for each food business participating in the scheme, the level of
(i) compliance with this Act and the food standards code; or
(ii) food hygiene in premises from which the food business is carried on;
and
(b) assigns a rating to the food business according to the assessed level.”
- **food business** as defined in the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code - Standard 3.1.1 - Interpretation and Application
- **food premises** as defined in the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code - Standard 3.1.1 - Interpretation and Application

6. References

Australia New Zealand Food Authority (ANZFA) 2001, *Safe Food Australia*, 2nd edn., http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/publications/documents/complete_safefood.pdf [accessed 12 April 2014].

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Department of Health and Ageing 2006, *The annual cost of foodborne illness in Australia*,

[http://www.ozfoodnet.gov.au/internet/ozfoodnet/publishing.nsf/Content/137D93E765468F17CA2572130080B157/\\$File/cost-foodborne.pdf](http://www.ozfoodnet.gov.au/internet/ozfoodnet/publishing.nsf/Content/137D93E765468F17CA2572130080B157/$File/cost-foodborne.pdf) [accessed 12 April 2014].

NSW Food Authority 2011, 'Scores on Doors' pilot evaluation report, http://www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/Documents/industry_pdf/Evaluation_Report_SoD.pdf [accessed 12 April 2014].

OzFoodNet Working Group 2009, *Monitoring the incidence and causes of diseases potentially transmitted by food in Australia: Annual report of the OzFoodNet Network, 2009*, [http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/cda-cdi3404-pdf-cnt.htm/\\$FILE/cdi3404b.pdf](http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/cda-cdi3404-pdf-cnt.htm/$FILE/cdi3404b.pdf) [accessed 12 April 2014].