



Updating of Food Act recommended in I Cook Foods report

A parliamentary inquiry report into the closure of I Cook Foods Pty Ltd has recommended updating Victoria's food safety law.

The Legislative Council Legal and Social Issues Committee has made 13 recommendations following an eight-week investigation into whether family business I Cook Foods was closed on the basis of sound and proper process and whether it was treated fairly during that process.

I Cook Foods, which provided pre-packaged meals to hospitals and the aged care sector, was temporarily closed last year during investigations into the source of a Listeria infection. That investigation led to the imposition of a closure order under the *Food Act 1984* which ultimately resulted in loss of contracts and clients, retrenchment of employees and cessation of operations of a business.

"We found that the Closure Order was validly executed but that the framework in which the decision to impose the Order was made and the processes that led to this decision were inadequate and that I Cook Foods was not dealt with in a fair or consistent way," Committee Chair Fiona Patten said.

"The City of Greater Dandenong Council failed in many aspects of their role as regulator. In fact the Committee received evidence of inconsistent reporting practices, fluctuation in inspection procedures, inadequate processes, inadequate adherence to the processes in place and poor communication by the City of Greater Dandenong," Ms Patten said.

The Committee noted that the expertise of food regulation rests to a great degree with the Department of Health and Human Services.

The Committee came to the view that the Department needs more powers in food safety regulation in Victoria.

"The *Food Act 1984* is complex and outdated and should be amended to ensure that certain processes are consistently regulated and decrease the likelihood of situations such as this one arising in the future," Ms Patten said.

The report is available from the Committee's [website](#).

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