



The Place To Be

Media release

From the Treasurer of Victoria

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BRUMBY GOVERNMENT SAVES THE SAUSAGE SIZZLE AND OUTS DODGY FOOD OUTLETS

Dodgy food outlets that are successfully prosecuted will be named and shamed in a Department of Human Services annual report as part of new changes to food regulations, announced by Treasurer John Lenders today.

Mr Lenders said the changes to food regulations also meant that the organisers of sausage sizzles, cake stalls, community fundraisers and farmers markets would also be big winners from a big cut to the red tape around food regulations.

“The Brumby Government is determined to keep the great Aussie tradition of a sausage sizzle alive,” Mr Lenders said.

“We want people who are organising sausage sizzles and cake stalls to raise money to do this without having to fill out piles of costly and time consuming paper work.

“Businesses along the food supply chain from farmers to café owners will also see savings of more than \$20 million each year as a result of the cuts to red tape.”

The changes are part of the government’s response to the Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission’s (VCEC) inquiry into food regulation and will be included in the 2008 Legislative Agenda.

Mr Lenders said while most food outlets in Victoria did the right thing, it was still important that the names of those businesses that are convicted of breaches have their name published.

“In the past the successful prosecution of dodgy food outlets has sometimes gone unnoticed by the public that may use that food outlet because the court cases are not always reported and the food outlet themselves are unlikely to publicise the matter,” he said.

“By naming and shaming them in an annual report that goes up on the internet, we hope to increase the public’s access to this information.”

Mr Lenders said the government had accepted the majority of the VCEC recommendations and as a result would be implementing a number of measures including:

- Local councils will be given greater enforcement options including powers to issue on the spot fines to food outlets not complying with health standards and to charge for compliance checks.
- The registration process for temporary and mobile food businesses will be made easier. Mobile food operators will no longer have to register their business in each municipality within which they operate. A central database will be developed so mobile food operators will only have to register their business at one central point.
- Food regulation will be focussed on businesses where food safety risks are the greatest, through the development of a new risk classification system rather than burdening local sausage sizzles, cake stalls and other small fundraising initiatives with unnecessary regulation.

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- Victoria will be advocating for a comprehensive review of food labelling and a greater focus of good regulatory practice at the national level.

“This report was commissioned by the Government to look at ways of lifting the burden on business and communities to deliver competitive products while providing a guarantee of high quality and safety to the Victorian community,” Mr Lenders said.

“By looking at ways to refine the current system, we have been able to make changes that clarify our food regulation system, improve responsibility and accountability of regulators and strengthen education around food safety.

“The food industry employs about 370,000 people in Victoria and generates \$6.8 billion in exports – so it is important that we continue to look at ways to support and grow this significant industry.”

The Government Response to the VCEC outlines its full support for 22 of the 37 recommendations, support in-principle for nine and support in part for four.

“Over coming months we will be consulting with industry and local communities to put in place these changes and work in partnership with councils to better streamline our system,” Mr Lenders said.

“With these changes we are implementing a new risk framework to ensure that the regulatory requirements are linked to any inherent risk to public health.

“There’s no point having your local cake stall subject to the same food safety requirements as an aged care facility that prepares food for potentially vulnerable people - these regulations can work more effectively if they are targeted.”

Mr Lenders said implementation of the Government Response would ensure that Victoria remains ahead of the pack in best practice food regulation.

“Protecting public health is the key objective of food regulation,” Mr Lenders said.

The VCEC was commissioned by the State Government to undertake the inquiry into Food Regulation in September 2006. It released its draft report in April 2007, following consultation with stakeholders, community groups and local councils.

For a copy of the final VCEC report into food regulation, *Simplifying the Menu: Food Regulation in Victoria* go to www.vcec.vic.gov.au and to see the Government response log on to www.dtf.vic.gov.au