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Audit finds shortcomings in Department of Health's regulation of food businesses

The Auditor General's report [Regulation of Consumer Food Safety by the Department of Health](#) has been presented today.

It follows the Auditor General's June 2020 report on regulation of food businesses by local government (LG) entities. It focusses on the Department's inspection of businesses not in a LG area (e.g. Rottnest Island), its support to LG entities, and its monitoring and reporting of regulation activities.

Auditor General Ms Caroline Spencer said the Department needs to improve in all audited areas to give the public more confidence that they are consuming safe food, and to give the business sector confidence that the Government is regulating all businesses fairly and focussing on the risks that matter.

'Our audit found that the Department was conducting inspections at food businesses, but many were overdue and identified issues were not followed-up in a timely matter.

'The Department has also not reviewed the legislation as required, and its guidance for internal and LG entity staff conducting inspections is out of date. This creates a risk that regulation will be inconsistent or inefficient,' Ms Spencer said.

The Department also has a responsibility to report on food safety regulation but lacks timely and appropriate data for LG entities.

Ms Spencer said the Department doesn't know the frequency and types of issues found, whether inspections are completed according to an appropriate schedule and if enforcement action is consistent.

The findings and recommendations in the report are intended to assist the Department improve the efficiency and effectiveness of consumer food safety regulation.

Report resources

- [PDF version](#)
- [summary video](#)