

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH FACT SHEET

No. 218

CHARITIES, COMMUNITY GROUPS AND VOLUNTEERS

To make sure these organisations continue their valuable work in the community, their special role is recognised by the Northern Territory food regulations and certain exemptions may apply to their activities.

What if the charity provides food for free?

The regulation applying to commercial food businesses including those which require registration, do not apply to anyone providing food free of charge.

Examples include:

- A free sausage sizzle for junior soccer players.
- A free end of season barbeque for surf life savers.

Providing free food in these types of circumstances is not regulated by the Department of Health and Families.

What if the charity sells food for a fund-raising event?

Anyone who sells food at a fundraising event for community or charitable causes is not required to register with the Department of Health and Families, provided the food does not pose a potential health risk, or is eaten immediately after thorough cooking.

Examples include:

- A sausage sizzle to raise funds for a sports club.
- A lamington drive to raise money for the victims of a natural disaster.
- Selling chocolates to raise money for the Red Cross.
- School fundraisers whereby the money stays with the school to purchase equipment, library books etc.
- School fetes where the proceeds are donated to a charitable organisation.

What about training for people preparing food?

People who are preparing food that is sold for charitable purposes do not require any formal skills or knowledge providing the food does not potential pose a health risk, or is eaten immediately after cooking.

The Department of Health and Families has a resource pack: "Food Safety Guidelines for Community Events" that may be borrowed from your local Environmental Health Officer to help you run a safe food event. The packs are available in languages other than English.

So when does a charity need to register with the Department?

Any organisation selling food for community or charity purposes needs to register with the Department only if it selling potentially hazardous food or food that is not cooked thoroughly before consumption.

Examples of potentially hazardous foods are:

- Pre-cooking a large amount of meat-based food that will be stored and transported prior to reheating and serving.
- Ready to eat foods that would normally be refrigerated to keep them safe such as raw shellfish, cooked meats or cooked rice;
- Dairy or egg based desserts.

These sorts of meals have a greater potential for public health problems, such as cross-contamination, temperature controls and storage that need to be considered by food handlers.

Registration allows the Department to trace the source of a possible food-borne illness outbreak to protect public health and to minimise the likelihood of it happening again.

For more information contact your local Environmental Health Office.

Contact details can be found at

http://www.health.nt.gov.au/Environmental_Health/Contact_us/index.aspx