

# COVID-19 Sale of food

## Restriction on buffets and self-service foods

This circular provides guidance for the operators of retail food businesses to assist them in reducing the risk of spreading COVID-19.

### Who needs to take action?

A person who owns, operates or controls a retail food business that includes buffets and/or self-service foods needs to take action. Businesses included are those who sell food products including fresh food and groceries such as supermarkets and other retailers. It also includes those providing food and/or drink whether pre-prepared or prepared on site. This includes, but is not limited to cafes, restaurants, fast-food outlets, retail shops and vending machines. It also includes those businesses who may not require a food business licence, for example those selling pre-packaged snack food, drinks such as coffee, soft drinks, flavoured ice and water and also non-profit organisations.

### What is the risk?

While COVID-19 is commonly spread from one person to another through respiratory droplets, transmission can also occur through touching an object or surface that has been infected by another person and then transferring the virus to your mouth, nose, or possibly eyes. The shared use of tongs, scoops, spoons or other utensils equipment used for self-service and buffets which may have been touched by multiple people increases the risk of spreading COVID-19.

### Action to be taken

#### Buffets and self-serve restriction

To assist in containing the spread of COVID-19 within the community, the Chief Health Officer's public health direction, [Restrictions on Businesses, Activities and Undertakings Direction](#) prohibits buffets and self-service at retail food businesses. It is important that all retail food businesses take action to remove or restrict access to self-serve foods or provide specific arrangements to serve or package the food. Self-serve foods to be removed, or access restricted, may include but are not limited to:

- Self-serve buffet foods
- Self service foods such as salads, meats, cheese, olives, cereal, nuts and delicatessen items.
- shared menu items or grazing plates are to be served on individual plates and separate cutlery provided for each person.

#### Conveyor style sushi food service

Conveyor style sushi bars/trains are permitted only where food is provided as single-serve items and the food is protected with a cover. Items removed from the conveyor are not to be returned. Signage should be provided to advise patrons that items are not to be returned to the conveyor. Should condiments be provided, they are to be packaged as single-serve items.

#### Bulk food dispensing

To help avoid the transmission of COVID-19 through surface contact, it is important that frequent washing and sanitising of all common contact surfaces is conducted.

Cleaning and sanitising common contact surfaces between customers, or at least hourly, is important in reducing the spread of the COVID-19 on surfaces including:

- gravity dispensing bin handles and bulk bin lids and scoops. These bulk containers may contain grains, seeds, nuts, dried fruit and other snack or confectionary items
- tongs used to package bread and other bakery products
- tongs or other utensils used to package fresh produce such as salad leaves and dates

### Vending machines

Common contact surfaces of vending machines are also to be kept clean and sanitised between customers or at least hourly. Examples of vending machines may include:

- food and drink product dispensers
- self-serve beverage machines such as coffee, juice or slushy dispensers

### Further precautions

Precautions food businesses could introduce to ensure staff and customers reduce the risk of contracting COVID-19 include:

- Request that customers sanitise their hands before entering the business
- Encourage physical distancing to the extent possible
- Provide specific staff to serve customers
- Frequent washing and sanitising of all food contact surfaces including counters, containers, equipment and utensils
- Prohibit customers from bringing their own (BYO) containers or cups
- Condiments must be single serve items
- Ensure physical distancing measures are in place
- Staff must practice frequent hand washing including before and after serving or packaging food
- remind customers of the importance of washing hands regularly and practicing good respiratory hygiene (sneeze and cough etiquette).

Businesses are required to comply with the [Chief Health Officer public health directions](#). Non-compliance may result the issuing of an Infringement Notice.

### Further information

Cleaning and sanitising: <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-information-about-routine-environmental-cleaning-and-disinfection-in-the-community>

Coronavirus updates and information: <https://www.qld.gov.au/health/conditions/health-alerts/coronavirus-covid-19>

Queensland Health Public Health Units: <https://www.health.qld.gov.au/system-governance/contact-us/contact/public-health-units>

Local Government Directory: <http://www.dlgrma.qld.gov.au/local-government/local-government-directory/search-the-local-government-directory.html>