

Food Business

Guidelines for construction, fit out and operation | 2025

FOOD ACT 1984

In Victoria, all businesses that prepare, store and handle food for sale must contact Council to arrange for registration for your business. All businesses must comply with the Victorian Food Act 1984 ('Food Act') and the Australia and New Zealand Food Standards Code.



Introduction

Food businesses wanting to operate from a new premises must submit the Business Approvals application form for assessment. To complete this process, you need an understanding of what permits and registrations your business will need – refer to the Latrobe City Council starting a new business link for more details

https://www.latrobe.vic.gov.au/Home/Business/Business_Registrations/Starting_a_New_Business

When purchasing an existing food business, registration issued under the *Food Act 1984* must be transferred from the name of the existing proprietor to the name of the purchaser.

We can assist you when buying an existing food business. Before you buy a food business you should:

- Check if the business has current registration
- Request a pre-purchase inspection of the business (allow 7 working days)
- If you plan to change the types of services provided at the business phone the Health Services team on 1300 367 700 or email latrobe@latrobe.vic.gov.au to discuss requirements associated with these services.

These *Guidelines* have been designed to provide information in relation to the fit-out and maintenance of a food premises under the provisions of the Food Standards Code Australia New Zealand and the Victoria *Food Act 1984*.

What if we change the type of food we sell?

If you want to change the type of food you sell at your food business you should first discuss the changes with a Council Environmental Health Officer who will review the equipment and processes that need to be considered with the proposed changes. If the classification of your food business changes you must ensure you meet the food safety regulatory requirements of that Class. Council will review your food premises activities and determine whether reclassification of your food premises is required. Changing the classification of your food business may also change the fees payable for your business operation.

Refer to <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/food-safety/food-premises-class-list> for details on food classifications relating to the types of foods being provided.

Food Safety Training

Everyone who works with food for sale is responsible for ensuring that the food they sell, or prepare for sale, is safe for people to eat.

All volunteers and staff handling food need to have the skills and knowledge relevant to their tasks. That means that different people will need to know different things. For example, the cook will need different food safety skills and knowledge to volunteers transporting or serving food.

- All class 1 and commercial class 2 premises must appoint a **food safety supervisor**.
- The food safety supervisor must have the minimum competencies for the food sector they work in and have a Statement of Attainment to be a food safety supervisor in their sector.

<https://www.health.vic.gov.au/food-safety/food-safety-supervisors>

General food handler skills and knowledge

In addition to the food safety supervisor requirements all food handlers must be able to demonstrate that they understand, safe handling of food, food contamination, cleaning and sanitising equipment, and personal hygiene.

This means that all food handlers must complete a food safety training course in, or be able to show the following food safety topics:

- Safe food handling including temperature control measures for potentially hazardous food and the temperature danger zone.
- Food contamination including ways to keep food from becoming contaminated, and food allergen management.
- Cleaning and sanitising food contact surfaces and equipment including correct procedures, using food-grade chemicals, and sanitising using heat.
- Personal hygiene including obligations for sick employees, handwashing, uniforms and grooming of hair, nails, and skin

We recommend all food handlers complete dofoodsafely, which is a free, online food handlers training program developed by Department of Health Victoria www.dofoodsafely.vic.gov.au

To comply with this requirement, it is recommended you conduct initial training with all staff, and schedule regular food safety training refreshers for staff and update staff when processes, foods, equipment, or chemicals change. Whether you choose to deliver in-house, external or online training to your staff, you are required to keep records of training completed by staff, and when requested provide this to Council.

Food Act Registration

Once the final inspection has been completed and the premises has been approved by an Environmental Health Officer, an invoice for registration will be provided to you for payment. A Certificate of Registration will then be issued once payment has been received by Council to you for the calendar year.

This certificate must be made available on request at all times.

Registration of your business is renewed annually and the registration period is from the 1 January to 31 December. Council will send out the renewals of registration in October of each year.

Note that Class 4 food operations receive on-going registration unless food provided by the operation changes that include higher risk foods being provided and then such operations then must re-register each year.

Setting Up A New Food Premises – Inspection of the Proposed Site

You are encouraged to request a site assessment of the proposed food premises to ensure that the property is suitable for the operation of the proposed food business. It is recommended that a site assessment is conducted prior to the purchase of the premises or signing of any rental agreement.

You should also contact Council to determine whether the proposed activity requires a planning permit.

Business Approvals

Upon submitting a “*Business Approvals form*” you will be contacted by our Business Development Officer to discuss the proposal with officers from across the Health, Building, Planning and Local Laws teams to review the submission and advise the applicant of any requirements.

Floor Plan – We recommend that you submit a floor plan which may include details of the internal and external areas of the food premises and clearly indicate:

- the type and location of all proposed fittings and fixtures; and
- schedule of finishes including a description or specification for finishes and claddings of walls, flooring type, coving details, flooring type; and
- description of all light fittings; and
- description of equipment to be installed in the food premises; and
- description of how equipment is intended to be installed (on castors, fitted to the floor); and
- mechanical exhaust drawings and specifications (if applicable).

Businesses that intend to manufacture foods or produce food for wholesale (including home manufacturers) must ensure the products meet the food labelling requirements refer to Page 11 for further detail.

Assessment of New Business Application

Once you have submitted your “Business Approvals” form, an Environmental Health Officer will assess the application against the *Food Act 1984*, the Food Safety Standards and the Australian Standards and make a time with you to conduct a site inspection. You may request that Council’s Environmental Health Officer undertakes inspections after key stages of construction.

Final Inspection

Once construction is complete, a final inspection must be arranged with an Environmental Health Officer to verify all works have been completed in accordance with the *Food Act 1984* and associated Food Safety Standards.

Food businesses are not permitted to store food products or open for trade until a final inspection has been conducted by the Environmental Health Officer and *Food Act 1984* registration is granted.

Construction Guidelines for Food Premises

This information has been taken from the Food Standards Code and Safe Food Australia 3.2.3 and the Australian Standard 4674 – 2004 Construction and fit-out of food premises. This information is a summary only. Further detail is available on www.foodstandards.gov.au

Design layout and materials

The food premises must provide adequate space to allow for safe food production and accommodate equipment and ingredients without overcrowding. Overcrowded food premises are difficult to keep clean and can provide harbourage of pests. The correct design and layout can help streamline work practices, reduce cleaning and maintenance, and prevent cross contamination. To prevent food contamination your premises should be designed so the flow of food is in one direction from receipt to storage, preparation, packaging, serving and disposal.

You will need to provide adequate storage space for dry goods, fresh fruit and vegetables, cutlery, crockery, cooking utensils, personal belongings and chemicals. All food preparation areas, cool rooms, freezer rooms and dry storage areas must be large enough to prevent overcrowding of food, equipment or staff working in these areas.

Design and Materials

Food premises must be designed to prevent cross-contamination between different processes and work-flows. The food premises should be designed around food receipt, storage, preparation, cleaning and sanitising, serving of ready to eat food, etc. Food premises must be constructed so that they can be effectively cleaned and sanitised. All materials used in the premises must be durable and able to withstand the regular application of cleaning chemicals and equipment.

Water Supply

An adequate supply of constant hot and cold potable water must be provided to the food premises for washing food ingredients, cooking, adding to food and drinks, making ice, cleaning, sanitising and personal hygiene.

Hot water must be of a sufficient temperature to facilitate effective cleaning and sanitising.

Potable water must comply with the requirements set out in the *Australian Drinking Water Guidelines 2018*. <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/australian-drinking-water-guidelines>

Sewage and Wastewater Disposal

All wastewater generated by the premises must be drained to sewer (including waste and condensation overflow from cool rooms & coffee machines) in a sewer district, or to an approved septic tank wastewater system. Waste water from a food premises must never be disposed of into a stormwater drain.

In many cases, installation and maintenance of a grease trap may be required. Grease traps must be situated outside of the food premises and away from any food storage areas. Gippsland Water can provide further advice on the appropriate type and size of the grease trap for your premises.

For further information, see page 12.

Storage of Rubbish and Recyclable Matter

The rubbish bins used by the business must be of a suitable size to contain the volume of garbage and recyclable matter generated on a daily basis. Garbage receptacles must be fitted with lids to prevent contamination and pest entry.

For further information please see the fact sheet on Latrobe City Councils food premises section on the website.

Overflowing and uncontained rubbish can generate odour and attract pests.

Personal Belongings and Storage

To prevent the contamination of food, you will need to provide a separate room or locker for storing clothing, footwear and other personal belongings. Personal belongings may carry dirt, hair and other foreign material that can contaminate food. Staff clothing and personal belongings must be stored in a designated room or cupboard located outside of food preparation and storage areas.

Fixtures, Fittings and Equipment

All fixtures, fittings and equipment in the premises must be made of materials that are durable, impervious, smooth and easy to clean. To allow for effective cleaning, all fixtures must be either:

- fixed to the floor (without false bottoms);
- 150mm off the floor; or
- on castors to allow movement.

All pipes, conduits and electrical wiring must be either:

- concealed in floor, walls or ceiling; or
- fixed on brackets to provide at least 25mm clearance between the pipe and the adjacent vertical surface.

This assists in preventing a build-up of dirt and grease along these hard to access areas.

Rubbish Bin Wash Area

A bin washing facility must be provided outside of the food premises for the purposes of washing bins. This area should be graded and drained to a floor waste gully connected directly to the sewerage system and grease trap (where required). The bin wash area must be provided with hot and cold running water provided through a single outlet with a hose connector.

Ventilation

All food preparation areas where fumes, smoke, steam or vapours are produced require a mechanical ventilation system that complies with *Australian Standard 1668 Part 2 - Use of Ventilation and air-conditioning in buildings*.

An exhaust canopy should be fitted above commercial dishwashers, to prevent steam damaging the ceiling and walls. Care should be taken when considering the location for the exhaust outlet, so as not to affect the amenity of the surrounding area with offensive noise or odour.

A mechanical exhaust system must be installed above cooking equipment and dishwashers if their total maximum electrical power input is greater than 8kW or total gas input is greater than 29MJ/hour.

If a mechanical exhaust system is required, you will need to engage the services of a private building surveyor for installation.



Lighting

The lighting system must provide sufficient light for the activities conducted on the food premises. Dimmer lighting may be acceptable in dining areas. Lights in areas where food is handled or stored must be fitted with shatterproof covers, in order to prevent physical contamination of food in the event of breakage.

Floors

Floors in food preparation and storage areas must be constructed of a material that is smooth, durable, impervious and able to be effectively cleaned.

Coving is required at the floor-wall junction of all wet areas and food preparation areas. The flooring material should form a continuous surface from the floor up to the wall. This makes the floor-wall junction area easier to clean and helps to prevent the build-up of dirt and food matter.



Floors that are hosed down for cleaning or are regularly wet must have floor drains that connect directly to the sewer (or septic tank wastewater system for a non-sewered property).

The floor must be appropriately graded so that the water flows to the floor drains and does not pool.

SUITABILITY OF FLOOR FINISHES FOR FOOD PREMISES AREAS									
Finish	Wet washed areas	Food Preparation	Vegetable Preparation	Servery	Store room	Chiller Freezer	Bin Store	Eating Areas	Comments
Stainless steel	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Welded joints
Ceramic tiles	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Epoxy grout
Quarry tiles	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Sealed
Steel trowel case hardened concrete			X		X	X	X	X	Smooth-sealed finish, no joints
Carpet/carpet tiles								X	
Wooden flooring								X	Sealed
Polyvinyl sheet	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Heat-welded joints (not suitable adjacent to hot fat appliances)
Laminated thermosetting plastic sheet	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Heat-welded joints (not suitable adjacent to hot fat appliances)
Vinyl tiles					X			X	
Plastic matting				X				X	Should be used for safety reasons only. It shall be easily cleaned and laid in sections that can be removable for cleaning
Cork tiles								X	Sealed
Epoxy resins	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Complying with AS 3554

The above table outline the floor finishes that can be used in various areas of a food premises.

Walls

Walls in food preparation and storage areas must be constructed of a material that is smooth, durable, impervious and able to be effectively cleaned. Wall surfaces should be sealed to prevent the entry of dirt, dust and pests. Walls adjacent to food preparation benches, cooking equipment and washing up areas should be finished with a splashback consisting of a durable material (stainless steel sheeting, glass, glazed tiles) adhered directly to the wall. Refer to the table below for detail.

SUITABILITY OF WALL FINISHES FOR FOOD PREMISES AREAS									
Finish	Wet washed areas	Food Preparation	Vegetable Preparation	Servery	Store room	Chiller Freezer	Bin Store	Eating Areas	Comments
Stainless steel	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Welded joints Waterproof screw covers
Ceramic tiles	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Epoxy grout
Vinyl sheet	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Heat-welded joints
Painted plaster					X		X	X	Smooth finish
Feature brick								X	
Aluminium sheet		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Welded or sealed joints
Steel sheet							X		Welded or sealed joints
Trowelled cement		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Polished surface
Wood panelling								X	Wood sealed
Painted brickwork					X		X	X	Flush joints and solid surfaces
Concrete					X		X	X	Sealed smooth finish
Preformed panels	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	H bar joints mastic sealed. In wet areas/food preparation shall be integrated into a dwarf wall or set on plinth

Ceilings

Ceilings in food preparation areas must be of continuous construction so there are no spaces or joints and finished with a material that is washable and impervious. The intersection of ceilings and walls must be tight jointed, sealed and dust-proof.

Approved materials include:

- fibrous plaster;
- plasterboard;
- fibrous cement; or
- cement render.

Removable drop-in or suspended ceiling panels are not suitable for use in food preparation or handling areas.

Food Storage

Storage areas must be large enough to adequately store the volume of food required by the business. Floors, walls and shelving in storage areas are to be constructed of a material that is smooth, impervious and easy to clean. All food must be stored on shelving, at a minimum of 150mm off the floor.

Shelving units installed in the cool room or freezer room must be constructed of food-grade, durable plastic or stainless steel to facilitate effective cleaning and sanitising.

Opened food must be stored in such a way that it is pest proof, generally in food grade containers with tight fitting lids. This also helps to prevent physical contamination and makes cleaning the area easier. These requirements apply to both dry storage and cold storage/freezers.

You will need refrigeration units to store all perishable foods at or below 5C. Freezers must be able to keep food frozen (colder than -15C) to maintain product quality and shelf life.

Wheels or castors should be fitted to chest freezers and upright refrigeration units to allow for easy cleaning underneath.

Cool rooms and freezer rooms must have adequate shelving and must have an external thermometer gauge. You must not store food at ground level.

Self Serve Hot or Cold Display

Self-serve units should have protective sneeze guards to act as a physical barrier between the customers' breath and the food. You will need to provide serving utensils such as tongs, serving spoons or forks.

Cleaning of Equipment, Eating and Drinking Utensils

A double bowl sink must be provided for the cleaning and sanitising of equipment and utensils. The double bowl sink must be of adequate size to fit the largest piece of equipment used within the food premises. Alternatively, a commercial dishwasher may be used for cleaning and sanitising in addition to a single bowl sink.

All sinks must be provided with hot and cold running water supplied through a single outlet and must be large enough to immerse the largest equipment used within the food premises.

Food Preparation Sink

A separate sink must be provided where food preparation involves the washing of food, such as raw fruit and vegetables, fish or other food items. It must not be used for other purposes such as the cleaning of equipment, as this can lead to chemical or bacterial contamination.

Cleaners' Sink

A cleaners' sink is needed for the disposal of mop water and the filling of buckets. It should be equipped with hot and cold water and connected to the sewer. Mop water must not be disposed of into the wash-up sink, food preparation sink, hand wash basin, or the stormwater system.

Location of Hand Wash sinks

Hand wash facilities must be located in all food preparation area and must be easily accessible to food handlers, to encourage regular use by food handlers.

There should be no doors or other obstacles between a hand wash basin and an area where unpackaged food is handled. If there are toilet facilities in the premises, a hand wash basin must be located immediately adjacent to the toilet or toilet cubicles.

Setup of Hand Wash Basins Hand wash basins must have a permanent supply of warm running water delivered through a single outlet. It is recommended that hand wash basins be hands-free, operated either electronically or by a knee/foot mechanism. Hot water must reach this basin within 20 seconds to allow for adequate hand washing.

Hand wash basins must be clearly designated for hand washing only, and be provided with a supply of liquid soap and disposable paper towel in wall mounted dispensers. Air-dryers are not acceptable as the sole means of hand drying.



Chemical Storage

Chemicals used for cleaning and pest control are often toxic if ingested and have the potential to contaminate food and food contact surfaces. Cleaning chemicals, cleaning equipment, pest control chemicals and pest control equipment must be stored in a designated room or cupboard, located away from food preparation and storage areas.

Bars

Bars require a glass washer and a rinsing sink in addition to a separate hand basin. If fresh fruit is frequently used for drinks, such as cocktails, then access to a food preparation sink is also required.

Toilets

In order to prevent the contamination of food preparation areas, toilets must be separated from areas where open food is handled, displayed or stored by an intervening ventilated space fitted with self-closing doors.

The toilets must be kept clean and operating correctly at all times. Hand wash facilities must be provided to all toilet areas and supplied with warm running water. Toilet hand wash basins must also be provided with liquid soap and paper towels in fixed dispensers.

Pest Control

If left unchecked, pests can quickly become a serious problem in a food premises. For this reason, the premises should be designed in a way to prevent the entry of rodents, birds, animals and insects.

Windows should be fitted with tight fitting mesh screens or permanently fixed closed. Exterior doors should be solid, tight fitting, with a pest strip at the base and a self-closer.

Where the doors are open for day trade, doorways must be fitted with heavy duty plastic strip curtains or air curtains that effectively exclude flying insects.

All holes, gaps and spaces in walls, floors and ceilings must be sealed to prevent the entry and harbourage of pests. This includes areas where pipes and conduits pass through walls, ceilings and floors.

Insect control devices must not be located directly over food preparation or storage areas due to the risk of physical contamination by dead insects.

Legal requirements for Food businesses

All food businesses must display the registered proprietors name in a prominent position at the front of the premises.

It is recommended that this is displayed on the front window or door of a food premises.

It is recommended that proprietors obtain or have access to a copy of the Food Act 1984. An electronic copy can be obtained online via the following web address: www.legislation.vic.gov.au/

Food Labelling Requirements

Food must be labelled in accordance with the Food Standards Code which have been developed by Food Standards Australia and New Zealand.

All food for retail sale or sold for catering purposes must be labelled, except for the following:

- food not in a package;
- food in an inner package not designed for sale and where the outer packaging shows the required information;
- food made and packaged on the premises from where it is sold;
- food packaged in the presence of the purchaser;
- whole or cut fresh fruit and vegetables in packaging that does not obscure the nature or quality (does not include sprouted seeds or similar products);
- food delivered packaged at the express order of the purchaser; and
- food sold at fundraising events.

Where a packaged food is exempt from the general labelling requirements information may still need to be displayed in connection with the food or provided to the purchaser on request.

The following information **MUST** appear on the food label and be in English:

1. The name of the food.
2. Premises and lot identification.
3. The name and business address.

4. Mandatory warning and advisory information (including known allergens).
5. Ingredient labelling.
6. Date mark.
7. Health and safety advice for consumers.
8. Nutrition information panel.
9. Characterising ingredient declaration (percentage labelling).
10. The country of origin.

Further information can be obtained from Food Safety Victoria and from Food Standards Australia and New Zealand. www.foodstandards.gov.au . Also refer to Latrobe City Council's Understanding Food Labelling guidance document.

Trade Waste Agreement

Food premises may be required to install a grease trap and have it pumped out on a regular basis. It is recommended that you contact Gippsland Water to discuss your responsibilities regarding trade waste and to obtain a trade waste agreement/exemption.

If your premises needs a grease trap, it should be installed outside the food premises or (in exceptional circumstances) it may be located inside the food premises away from any food preparation and storage areas, in a purpose built ventilated room. Please contact Gippsland Water on 1800 050 500 to confirm the requirements of your grease trap. You should provide Council with proof that you have entered into a *Trade Waste Agreement* with Gippsland Water, or that your business has been granted an exemption prior to registration of your food business.

Council Departments

In the process of establishing a new food business, it may be necessary to consult with other Council departments to obtain approvals and permits. Listed below are some of the common matters that are addressed with various departments.

Building Services

A building permit is needed when constructing a building and may be required when renovating/altering an existing building. For further information and consultation in relation to building permits contact a private building surveyor to determine what is needed for your situation.

Toilets

Details on the number of toilets, urinals and hand wash basins required to be installed in a premises.

Fire safety

Details on emergency lighting, emergency exits, number, type and location of fire extinguishers/fire fighting equipment.

Local Laws

A permit from Local Laws is needed to place the following items on the footpath:

- A-frame signs;
- tables;
- chairs;
- barriers;

- windbreaks;
- displays; and
- waste skips.

For further information and an application form, contact Council's Local Laws department.

Statutory Planning

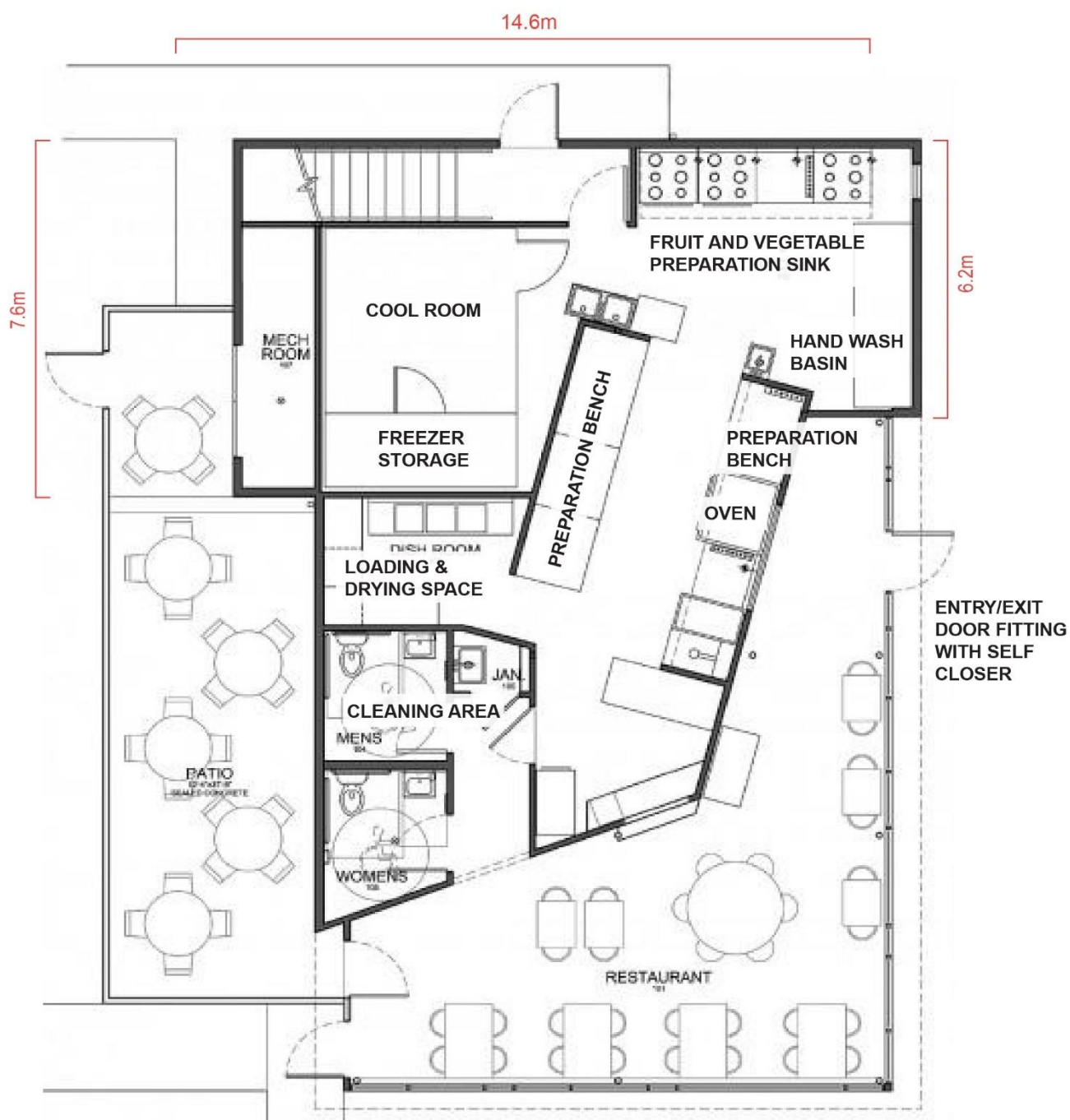
Further information and consultation can be obtained in regard to:

- signage (apart from A-frame signs on the footpath);
- increasing its seating capacity;
- obtaining a permit for any proposed building works;
- obtaining a permit for manufacturing/wholesale food businesses;
- obtaining a permit for a proposed use of building/area; and
- for the sale of liquor at the premises.

Government Agencies

The following government agencies can be contacted to provide further information in regard to topics summarised in this guide.

1. Food Safety Unit, Department of Health
1300 364 352, foodsafety@health.vic.gov.au
<https://www.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/food-safety>
2. Food Standards Australia and New Zealand (FSANZ)
For information regarding the Food Standards Code, fact sheets and labelling information.
www.foodstandards.gov.au
3. Trade Measurement Institute
Enquiries and Complaints
Phone 1300 686 664 or via email infotm@measurement.gov.au
4. Consumer Affairs Victoria
Phone 1300 55 81 81 or through the website www.consumer.vic.gov.au
5. Liquor Control Victoria, Department of Justice and Community Safety
Phone 1300 182 457, contact@liquor.vic.gov.au
6. Victoria Building Authority
Phone 1300 815 127, www.vba.vic.gov.au



Floor Plan example

Mobile Food Vans

The structural standards required for fit out of a kitchen in a mobile food vehicle are dependent upon the nature of the food business, taking into account the potential risk factors and the frequency of usage.

The proprietor of the food vehicle must prominently affix their name (and contact details) on to the vehicle and ensure this is maintained in a legible condition.

The following requirements apply only to mobile food premises from which food is prepared and offered for sale:

- All fittings, equipment, floors, walls and ceiling must be constructed of smooth and impervious material capable of being easily cleaned
- A minimum of one sink supplied with hot and cold water for the cleaning of utensils and equipment used in the preparation of food
- A dedicated hand wash basin supplied with hot and cold running (potable) water, liquid soap and paper towel
- A wastewater holding tank is to be provided for the water from sink(s) and hand basin
- Adequate mechanical ventilation to be provided above cooking appliances
- Adequate refrigeration facilities to ensure any cold foods are stored at or below 5°C

Mobile food traders

Statewide notification system – Foodtrader

If you sell food from a portable stall, a van, a community hall or other similar site that you only use occasionally, or from a vending machine then you must also be registered on Foodtrader and submit statements of trade (SOT) to notify the local Council of when and where you are trading.

Private water carters that transport/sell water for human consumption must be registered with their local Council and submit SOTs via the web-based system. Once your application for registration has been accepted by your principal council, you may trade anywhere in Victoria. However it is a requirement that you submit a SOT prior to attending a site. Failure to notify the local Council could incur a fine.

Foodtrader can be accessed online via the following link

www.foodtrader.vic.gov.au