

## The VITAL Journey

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Free Allergen Workshop, Sydney



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# VITAL Journey Agenda

- VITAL – The complete package
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  - VITAL Journey – Background
  - Where we started
- Industry & Consumer group collaboration
- VITAL Review 2010 & 2011
- Scientific Expert Panel Meeting

# VITAL – The Complete Package

- V I T A L
- VITAL is a process for determining the requirement for labelling
  - VITAL is a process for determining the requirement for precautionary labelling
  - It is a process, decision tree, grid (action levels) and a
    - Promotes consistent labelling across industry by prescribing when a precautionary label statement is to be applied and when it should be avoided



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# VITAL Journey - Background

- Formation of the Allergen Bureau, established in 2005
- An initiative of the Australian Food and Grocery Council (AFGC) Allergen Forum/working group, established in 2005
- Allergen Bureau is funded by membership from the
  - An initiative of the Australian Food and Grocery Council (AFGC) Allergen Forum/working group
  - Allergen Bureau is funded by membership from the Australian, US, New Zealand food industry
  - Industry group worked with lead consumer groups to



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# VITAL Development team

Fiona Fleming – George Weston Foods

Kim Leighton - AFGC

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Kim Leighton - AFGC

Simon Brooke – Peanut Consultant

Maria Staidyn – Anapylax/Aston Foods

Olivia Martyn – George Weston Foods

Julie Newlands - Unilever

Chris Preston - Consultant

Kirsten Grinter - Nestle

# VITAL Journey - Background

- Allergen labelling needs to mean something to the allergic consumer it must be:
  - Relevant, consistent and easy to understand
  - VITAL supports one labelling approach
- Australian & New Zealand food industry continue to support VITAL implementation

**Collaboration is key for VITAL sustainability**



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# VITAL Review Agenda

- Government Feedback & Support
  - FSANZ
  - FSANZ
  - Review of Labelling Law & Policy -VITAL recommendation
- Consumer Communication Strategy

## **VITAL Review – The Complete Package**

- Review of the VITAL Procedure, Grid (Action Levels) and Decision Tree
- Review VITAL tools:
  - VITAL calculator,
  - Frequently asked Questions, worked examples and other supporting information
- VITAL calculator - a sub project of the VITAL review
  - Working with GS1 to produce a sustainable tool that is web based, easy to use with a global footprint



# VITAL Scientific Review

- Objective was to review and discuss Action Levels in the VITAL Grid
- Scientific Expert Panel Meeting (Sydney, 19 & 20 January)
- Panel Members are:
  - Dr Steve Taylor (FARRP)
  - Dr Joseph Baumert (FARRP) supported by Mr Benjamin Remington (FARRP)
  - Dr Geert Houben (Program Manager Food Safety, TNO. NL)
  - Dr Rene Crevel (Allergy & Immunology, Unilever)
  - Dr Katie Allen (Paediatric Gastroenterologist/Allergist, Royal Childrens Hospital, University of Melbourne), supported by Ms Jennifer Koplin
  - Dr Simon Brooke Taylor (Food Safety & Risk Analysis Consultant, Allergen Bureau)



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# VITAL Scientific Review

- The Panel established principles to be used in selecting Action Levels;
  - scientifically & clinically sound, defensible and transparent
- Current Action Levels VITAL
  - appropriate based on available science at that time
- Portion/Serving Size
  - allergen protein expressed as a concentration in 3 serving sizes
- Exquisitely allergic consumers will not be accounted for in the VITAL grid, continue to assume they do not eat processed foods



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# VITAL Scientific Review

- Level of Acceptable Risk, protection for the vast majority of allergic individuals,
- Action levels should be set with highest degree of safety determined by available data
  - Increasing availability of clinical data enables the model to be applied with increasing confidence
  - Drive research to fill the data gaps
- Potentially opens up choice to a larger number of 'safe' foods
  - Consistent approach across industry
  - Precautionary labels will only be applied when appropriate
- Increasing availability of clinical data enables the model to be applied with increasing confidence

## **Feedback - Government**

- Food industry is addressing allergen labelling and precautionary labelling well
- Satisfied that there is a consistent and collaborative industry approach
- No justification for a regulatory outcome at this stage
- Independent review of food labelling law and policy recommended that VITAL be explored as a supplementary model for precautionary labelling



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# Independent Review of Food Labelling Law and Policy

**Recommendation 8:** That the Voluntary Incidental Trace Allergen Labelling system be explored as a possible supplementary model to manage food label declarations relating to the adventitious presence of allergens in foods.

## Consumer Communication Strategy

- Working with Anaphylaxis Australia to develop a communication plan targeted at the allergic consumer
- Advise consumers of our message:  
  
“Don’t eat products which contain a precautionary statement with an allergen to which you are sensitive”
- Strategy in draft form and will be released and rolled out in the coming months



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## Summary – VITAL Journey

- VITAL has been a successful and positive collaboration between industry and consumer groups
- VITAL review encompasses:
  - Procedure & Decision Tree
  - Action Level Grid – Independent Scientific Review
  - VITAL calculator
- The scientific expert panel continue to deliberate on the work started at the January meeting and we appreciate their support
  - As it underpins the credibility of the system and ensures the program sustainability
- Completion of the VITAL review is expected at the end of 2011



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# Allergen Bureau Activities

Working with Chisholm TAFE to establish a training package for VITAL

Build skills and knowledge of TAFE trainers in the growing area of allergen management and control in the Food Manufacturing Industry

It is expected that it will dovetail with and further develop a pilot program undertaken by the Victorian Department of Human Services in 2009/2010 involving the education of hospitality staff and local councils about the risks associated with food allergens .



## **International Links**

The Allergen Bureau have been actively sought out by a number of international groups to present on VITAL

FAAN (Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Network) – USA  
Consumer based organisation

EAACI (European Academy of Allergens & Clinical Immunology) Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Meeting, - FAAM 2011, Venice, Italy

The 6th Workshop on Food Allergen Methodologies  
May 9-12, 2010 in Toronto Canada supported by Health Canada

EuroPrevall symposium, 20-22 October 2010, Nice



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# Allergen Bureau Membership

Currently 34 Members, classified as the following

Information Technology	2
Manufacturing	23
Testing and analysis	2
Training / Auditing	3
Wholesale / retail	4



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# Thank you

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