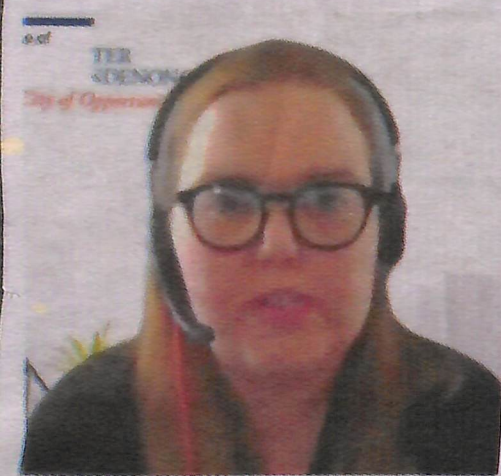




Greater Dandenong environmental health officer Elizabeth Garlick.



Greater Dandenong public health coordinator Leanne Johnson.



A picture of the slug as submitted by City of Greater Dandenong to the Parliamentary inquiry into I Cook Foods' closure.

Garlick denies slug plant

By Cam Lucadou-Wells

Greater Dandenong environment health officer Elizabeth Garlick has again denied at the I Cook Foods inquiry to planting a live slug.

ICF had been forced to close as part of a health department investigation into the death of a hospital patient who contracted listeria in early 2019.

The circumstances are being investigated by a Parliamentary inquiry, Victoria Police and are the subject of a Supreme Court action by ICF.

According to ICF, Ms Garlick was without a body cam and with tissues protruding from her pocket when she planted the slug on the factory floor.

A scrap of tissue was later edited from the council's photo of the mollusc at the scene, ICF alleges.

On 1 September, Ms Garlick told the Parliamentary inquiry she couldn't recall if she carried tissues. It wasn't part of her normal inspection practice.

She was asked how a slug could have got into the kitchen, given a slug expert had said it would not normally be found that time of year and that traps around the premises were clear.

"The slug was very low on my priority list," Ms Garlick said.

She said she suspected the slug may have fallen from dripping-wet food storage containers.

The slug may have travelled upon a container from an outside wash-down area, with a small amount of water in the vicinity of the slug.

"I observed the same sort of containers with debris on them outside the door where the slug was found."

She also denied an allegation from former Greater Dandenong health inspector Kim Rogerson that Ms Garlick had edited out tissue from the slug photo.

Ms Garlick said she was sent to investigate



Greater Dandenong chief executive John Bennie said no slug was planted and no slug photos were doctored.

possible sources of contamination.

She found "causes for concern" and "significant risks".

They formed some of 96 food-safety charges levelled at ICF, all of which were dropped just before a hearing at Dandenong Magistrates' Court in late 2019.

Chief executive John Bennie told the inquiry: "No slug was planted. No images were doctored."

He said of the five photos of the slug, three showed a tissue and two were taken too far away to see the tissue "as is to be expected".

"It is untenable to suggest that Council doctored the photos, but then provided 'un-doctored' photos to I Cook to support the charges against I Cook.

"I Cook has, or should have access to, the original copies of photos provided by Council

to its solicitors that show the tissue.

"These photos are of a vastly different quality to the copy of the photo that has been banded about in the media."

Mr Bennie denied Mr Cook's accusation of "provable lies" to the inquiry, as well as any "conspiracy" by the council and health department to fabricate evidence to benefit its company Community Chef – a rival to ICF.

Mr Bennie would normally sign the closure of a food premises. But because of a conflict of interest as director of Community Chef, he requested Professor Sutton to do so.

"In so far as this relates to Greater Dandenong City Council, Ms Johnson, Ms Garlick and I absolutely reject that we lied to the Committee.

"It has always been Council's position that all of this is a diversion."

Mr Bennie said the council provided more than 2000 documents to Victoria Police's investigation.

"If there is something 'rotten' in Greater Dandenong, I would expect Victoria Police to find it and to take action."

As for the slug allegation, ICF director Ian Cook later told Star Journal that Ms Garlick's "story" was "farcical" and "didn't make sense".

There were no containers in the area, he said. And that Ms Garlick didn't go to the outside washdown area that day but during a late inspection.

"Our administration manager saw the tissues (in Ms Garlick's pocket) and though it was such an odd thing."

In the inquiry's first report in 2020, it came to no conclusion as to how the slug got on the premises.



I Cook Foods director Ian Cook says alteration of inspectors' bodycam footage is a crime. Picture: STEWART CHAMBERS

Bodycam deletion 'crime'

By Cam Lucadou-Wells

City of Greater Dandenong's deletion of body-cam footage has been seized on as proof of a crime by I Cook Foods.

In an inquiry on the forced closure of ICF, Greater Dandenong CEO John Bennie said "private conversations" were removed from body-cam footage shot by council inspectors.

The footage had to be provided "in a short space of time" to I Cook, which served a witness summons in its action "against the State", Mr Bennie said.

Following legal advice, the council sought to delete "any private conversations" taken when the camera was running.

"Ms Johnson asked Ms Garlick to complete that process when the Communications Department was unable to comply with the Court's timeframe.

"The editing did not go beyond this. Everything filmed during the course of inspections was provided.

"It is simply wrong and incredibly unfair to suggest that this process involved 'doctored' the body camera footage."

ICF director Ian Cook told the Star Journal that the body-cam evidence provided to court should not have been altered.

"These people are admitting to a crime, and a conspiracy to pervert the course of justice.

"Whether you call it 'private conversations', you still can't do it."

"They've admitted to the tampering of evidence, the destruction of evidence. They've produced a false and misleading document."

Former police detective Paul Brady, who has helped ICF prepare its case against health authorities, said interviews and field recordings by authorised officers such as police or council health inspectors "can't be touched".

"Everything has to stay in."

"If you did say it's a private conversation, you have to go back to the court to authorise it before you delete it.

"There's obvious reasons for that."