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Kitchen sale

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Greater Dandenong Council declined to comment on Community Chef, referring Star Journal to the DHHS.

A Victorian Government spokesperson said the DHHS was examining ways to "boost capacity in our hospitals - including ensuring appropriate meal services are available".

Health Minister Jenny Mikakos told a press conference on 16 April that the Government would "consider what's the best value for taxpayers". She added she wouldn't discuss the "commercial in confidence" matter.

Community Chef chief executive Joe Ciccarone declined to comment on the proposed sale.

Meanwhile, Ms Crozier has called for the inquiry to include the controversial shutdown of Dandenong South commercial caterer I Cook Foods by health authorities and Greater Dandenong Council in 2019.

I Cook Foods is regarded as a chief rival of Community Chef.

Ms Crozier says she's still awaiting "answers" from her FOI request for emails between Health Minister Jenny Mikakos, Chief Health Officer Brett Sutton and the DHHS departmental secretary relating to I Cook Foods.

"You have an organisation that's running up millions of dollars of liabilities that the Government is willing to write it off - while a legitimate business has gone down in the process.

"The Victorian public deserve to know what's going on."

On 14 April, Health Minister Jenny Mikakos was quizzed about calls for a police investigation into claims that Greater Dandenong food inspectors planted a slug in the I Cook Foods factory prior to its shutdown.

Ms Mikakos said the matter had been "concluded" by anti-corruption body IBAC.

She said it had also been investigated by Victoria Police - though I Cook Foods says the investigation is still afoot.

"If some individual has new evidence, that's up to them to refer to Victoria Police," Ms Mikakos said.

"There's litigation pending with the Department (of Health and Human Services) so I'll limit my comments to what I can say."

Greater Dandenong Council has fended off allegations of a conflict of interest in closing down I Cook Foods.

It self-referred the allegations to IBAC, which passed on the claims to the State Ombudsman.

The State Ombudsman found no further investigation was warranted, the council has stated.

The council later dropped all 96 food-safety charges levelled at I Cook Foods after alleged links to a listeria-related death of an elderly hospital patient.



Celebrity chef Gabriel Gate and Victoria University students at the opening of Community Chef. Picture: VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT