

Friday, February 22, 2019

LISTERIOSIS PROBE AFTER WOMAN'S DEATH

Health authorities have closed a Dandenong South commercial caterer while they investigate the source of a case of listeriosis.

An elderly woman who died in an eastern suburbs private hospital on February 4 was diagnosed with listeriosis – an illness normally associated with food contamination.

I Cook Foods of Dandenong South provides meals to the private hospital.

Subsequent testing on multiple food product samples collected at I Cook Foods have returned six positive samples for listeria.

The Department of Health & Human Services and the Greater Dandenong Council closed the facility overnight. A thorough clean has been completed. The facility will not reopen until further testing and improvements are made.

Health authorities are also assessing any changes required to food handling processes and the premises layout.

Facilities supplied by the company, including private hospitals, aged care centres and Meals on Wheels services have been contacted to make alternative arrangements. No public hospitals are supplied by the company. Most of the health and aged facilities are in the eastern suburbs.

Listeriosis is an illness usually caused by eating food contaminated by the bacterium *Listeria monocytogenes*. The bacteria are widely distributed in the environment and can grow in food at refrigeration temperatures.

Although uncommon, it can be particularly dangerous for pregnant women, the elderly and people with weakened immune systems.

There have been two cases of listeriosis so far this year, compared to nine for the same period in 2018.

Victoria had 27 cases of listeriosis for the 2018 calendar year.

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