

## ADDRESSING FOOD ALLERGY IN FOOD SERVICE – THE NATIONAL ALLERGY STRATEGY FOOD SERVICE PROJECT

### ABSTRACT

**Background:** There is currently a lack of awareness and understanding of legislation surrounding food allergy, particularly in some areas of the food service sector and amongst many consumers. There is also a lack of evidence-based education and training regarding food allergy and allergen management in the food service sector. This project aimed to engage with the food service sector to identify education needs and provide appropriate resources.

**Method:** Engagement with the food service sector and other key stakeholders through a Food Service Forum for Food Allergy and other avenues of consultation (including face to face meetings with key stakeholders such as Food Standards Australia New Zealand [FSANZ] and Implementation Subcommittee for Food Regulation [ISFR]), has resulted in key issues being identified as well as guidance on what resources and strategies are required to improve the safer provision of food to individuals with food allergy.

**Findings:** The Forum identified key messages which underpin the educational resources for food service staff: know what is in your food; be 100% truthful in responding to consumers; prepare food safely; and understand the consequences. The Forum also identified that a standardised, basic level online training course for food service staff should be developed. It was also recognised that the training content should accommodate low literacy. The Forum also established the need to educate consumers about their responsibility in declaring their food allergy when eating out.

**Conclusion:** The National Allergy Strategy engaged with Adult Multicultural Education Services (AMES) to update and convert the All about Allergens CD-ROM to a freely available online course. A downloadable supporting booklet was also produced. A top-line information consumer education website was also developed in parallel.

## Food service sector

The Food Service Forum provided an opportunity to engage with key stakeholders in the food service sector and identify current issues in food allergen and allergy management. Specific issues discussed included:

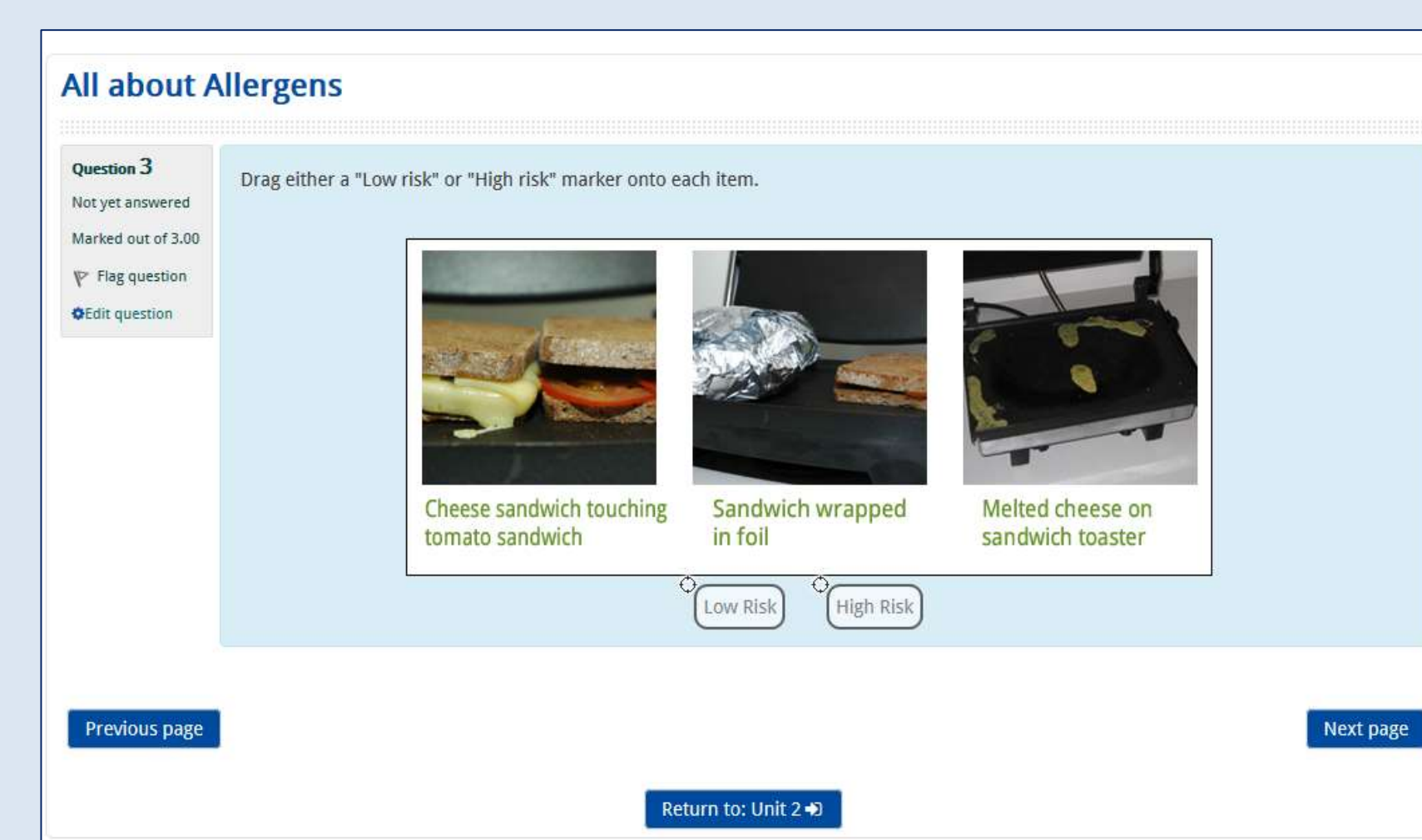
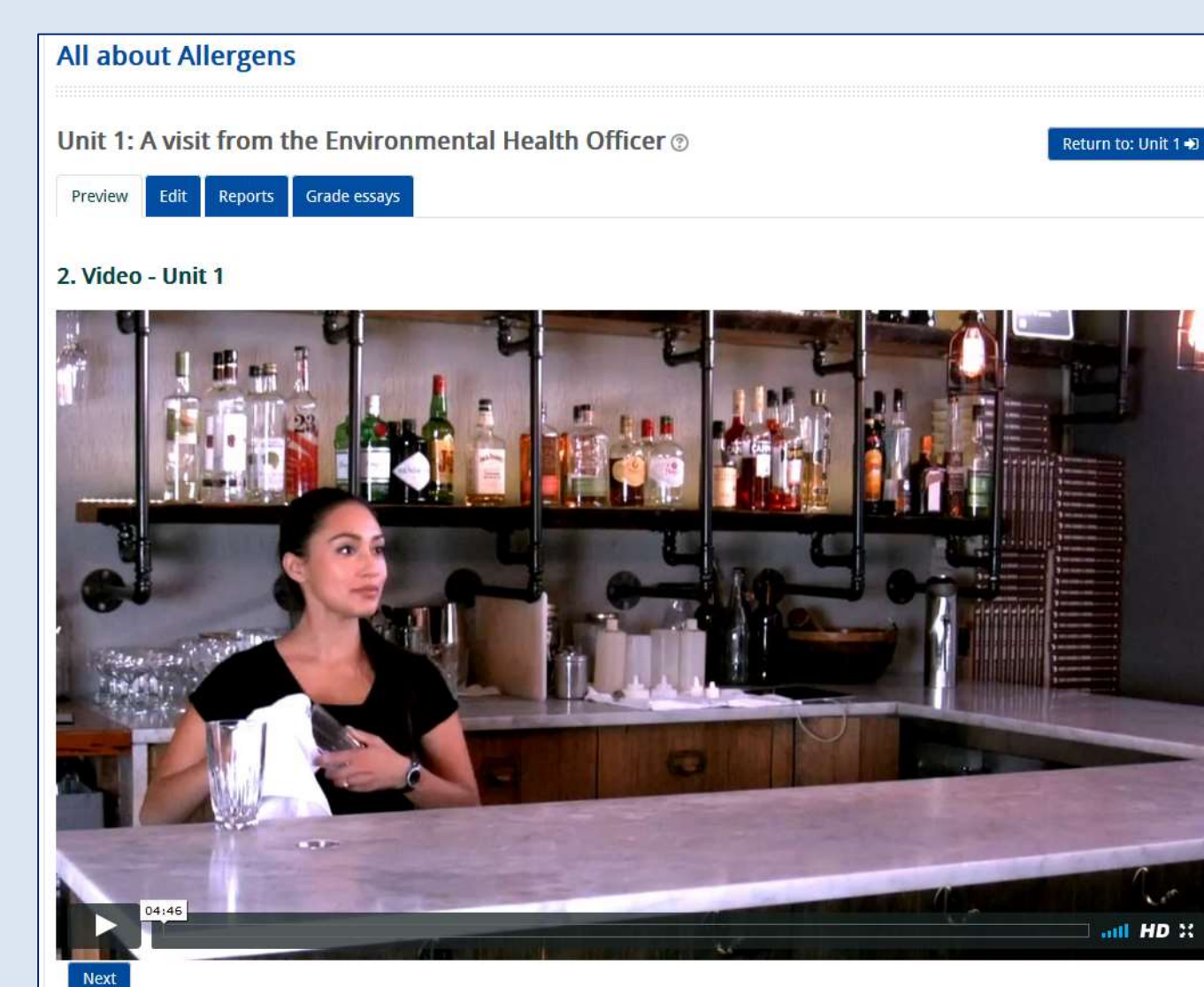
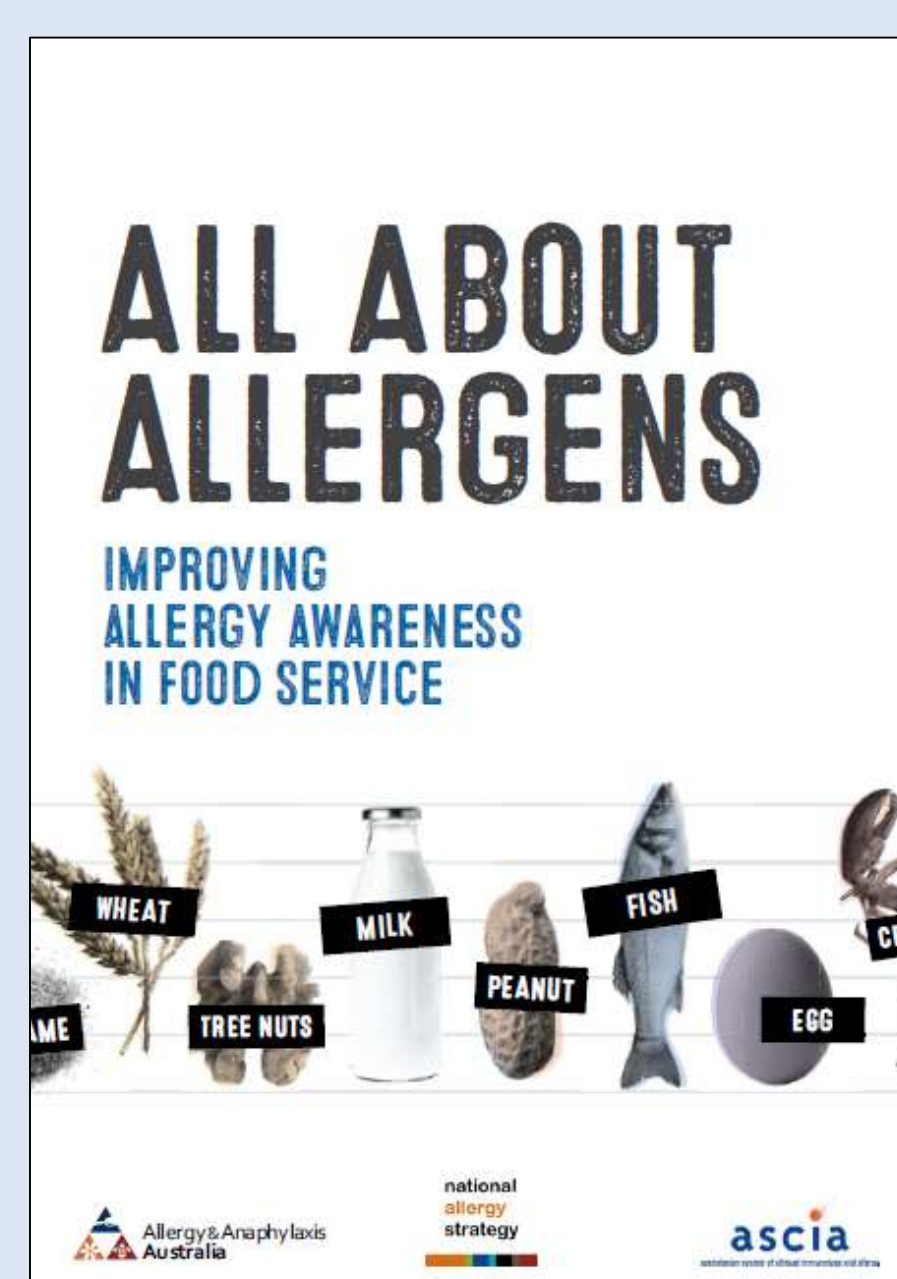
- Training – current training issues and courses available.
- Compliance audits – current practice with regards to food allergen management.
- Communication – methods of informing food service staff about resources as well as how to communicate to consumers which restaurants have undertaken food allergen training.
- Resource sustainability - how to maintain resources beyond government funding.

The following key messages for food service were identified by stakeholders at the Forum:

- Know what is in your food
- Be 100% truthful
- Prepare food safely
- Understand the consequences

Online training was developed:

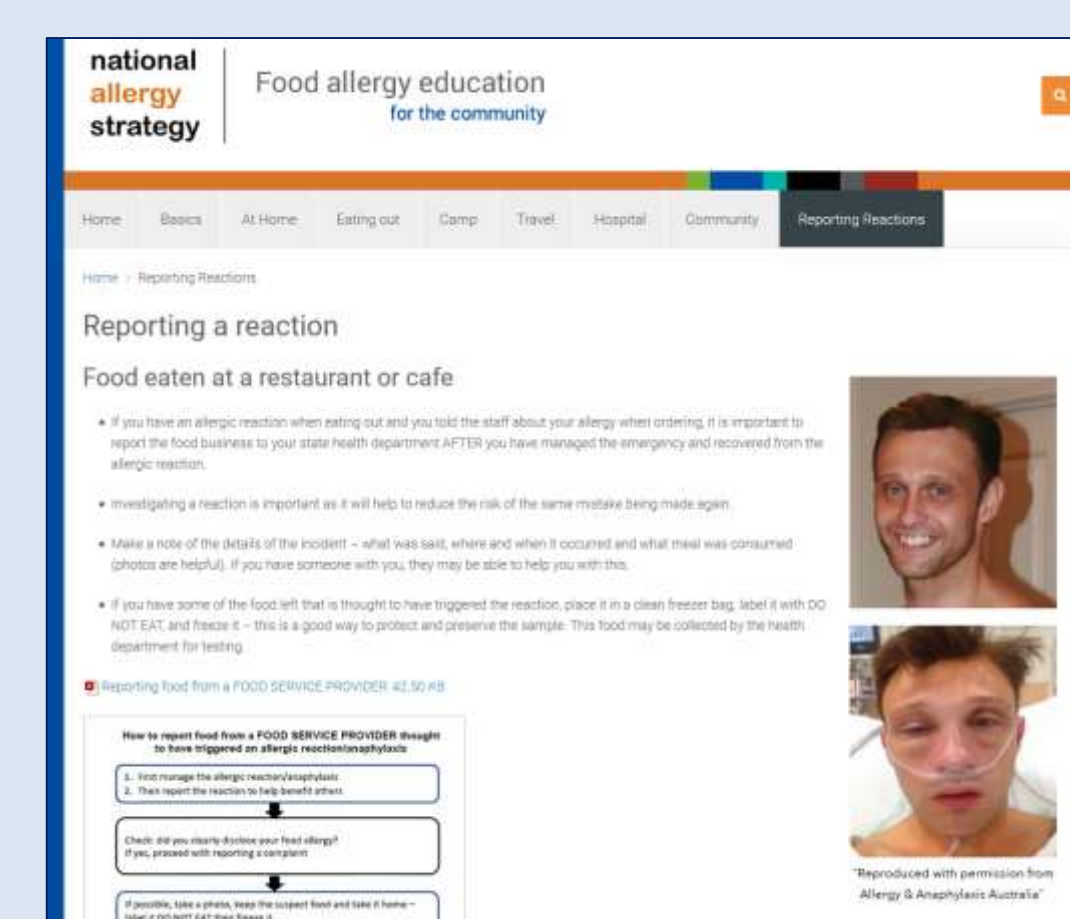
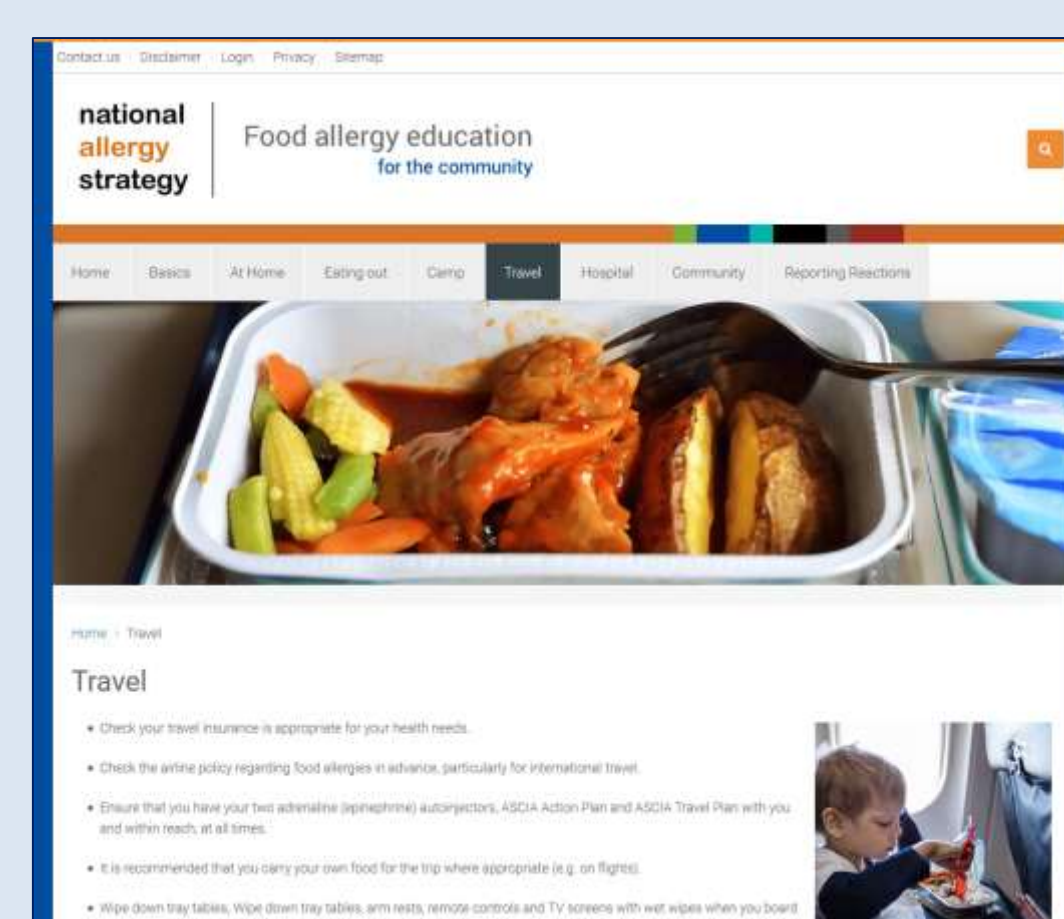
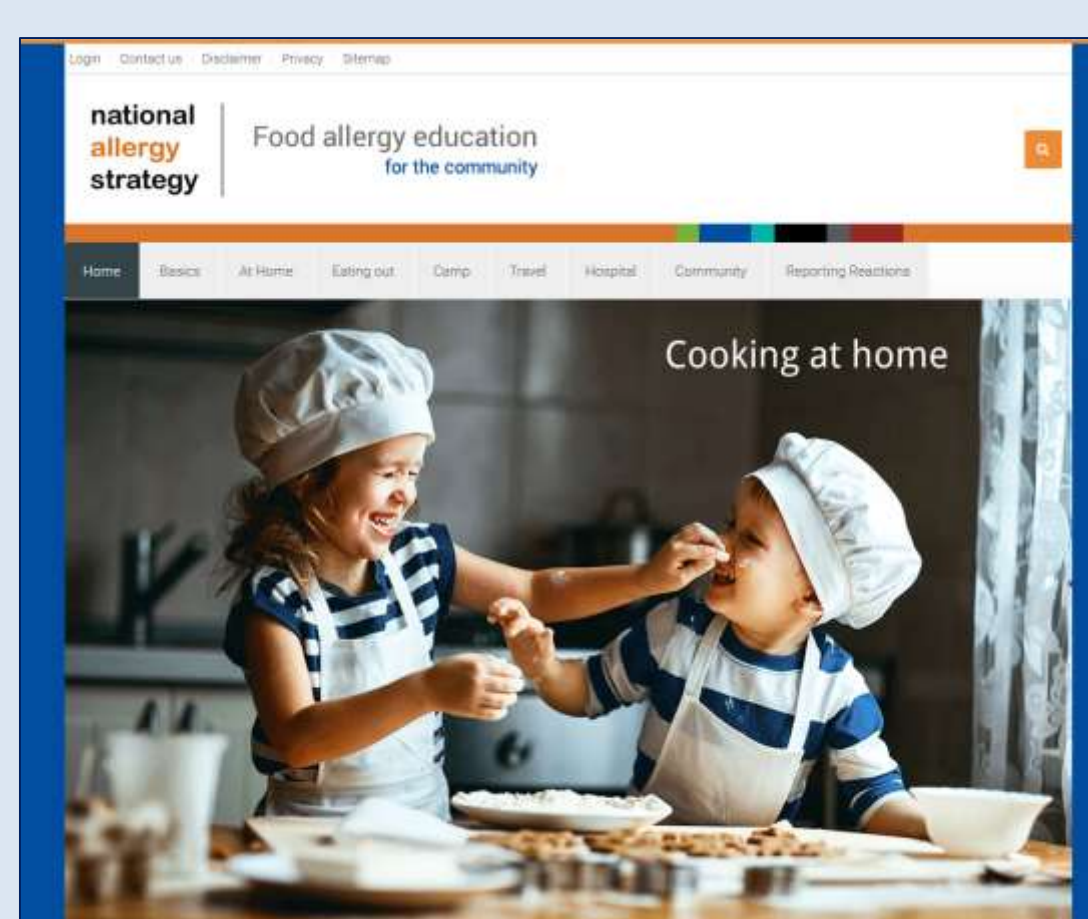
- All about Allergens (developed in partnership with AMES Australia).
- Contains 5 modules:
  - Food allergens and the law
  - Avoiding cross contamination
  - Menus and food labels
  - Talking to customers
  - When something goes wrong and final quiz
- Each module has a video to watch and activities to complete, based on the video content.
- A certificate of completion can be saved and printed once the final quiz is successfully completed (75% required to pass).
- The course is available free of charge, to increase utilisation.
- The training website provides an information hub with free downloadable resources and links to reliable websites.



## Community

### Community website

- The website provides an information hub for people with food allergy, their families and friends.
- Identifies consumer responsibilities in food allergy management.
- Aims to provide practical, easy to access information on the following topics:
  - Preparing food at home
  - Eating out
  - Choosing foods
  - Travel
  - Camps
  - Hospital stays
  - Reporting reactions
- Links to reliable resources and sites



The National Allergy Strategy is an initiative of the Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy (ASCI) and Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia (A&AA). This project was funded by the Australian government.

All about Allergens online training and downloadable resources: [www.foodallergytraining.org.au](http://www.foodallergytraining.org.au)

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