



Case Study

**South East
Industries (SCOPE)**

Certification:
Hazard Analysis Critical
Control Point (HACCP)
Food Safety Standard



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Repackaging a social business for the future

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Background

For people with a disability, South East Industries (SEI) provides a lifeline – an opportunity to work and form friendships in a supportive and positive environment. But now it also offers much more.

SEI is one of four business enterprises that operate within Scope Industrial in Victoria. Scope aims to give people with disabilities the opportunity to achieve their potential, through everyday support, training and therapy, and employment.

By providing packaging and assembling services to local businesses, SEI employs over eighty people with a wide range of disabilities to carry out co-manufacturing work. They repackage or label a variety of products, including dry food goods such as chocolate bars and unwrapped lollies.

A few years ago Julie McKay, General Manager of SEI, saw that in order to provide meaningful and challenging work for their employees and operate as a serious business, she needed a program that would allow them to improve workforce skills and get the certifications they needed to expand their customer base.

“We looked at where the opportunities are, and saw we had a great value proposition in food,” explains Julie. “So as part of an overall growth project, which also includes traineeships in food safety and food handling, we need HACCP certification.”

This would provide SEI’s employees with the support they needed to truly develop their skills and perform to the best of their ability. SEI’s customers were also looking for a way to demonstrate their social responsibility.

Meeting the challenge

HACCP was a significant goal for SEI. First of all, no one in the business had any previous food safety experience. As a non-profit organisation, SEI needed to source funds externally for the process of consulting and auditing. And very few other businesses like them had achieved the HACCP standard.

Nam Luc was brought in as Business Manager in January 2009. Having worked at Ernest Hillier and Coles, he had experience in the HACCP certification process. By then the Department of Human Services had approved funding for the project.

“We already had a food safety documentation system but it needed adjusting,” explains Nam. “By July I felt we might be ready. So I called Jim Durard at NCSI. I’d worked with him before and I’d always found him helpful.”

Jim made a sales call to the site and explained how the process could work for SEI. Nam then gave himself the tight timeframe of two months to get it all done. “Typically, this process could take a year. But in our operation there is less risk, as we’re not manufacturing food - just re-packaging it. So I felt we could do it.”

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At the end of August, Jim came back to audit the business.

“It was really positive,” says Nam. “He picked out areas we could improve on, but he also noted a lot of things we’d already done since the first visit. It was very encouraging. It’s always a pleasure, working with Jim!”

SEI was awarded the HACCP certification – the first SCOPE business to achieve this. It was an incredible achievement for the team, and it all happened quickly.

“The next step is to roll this out the other SCOPE business sites,” says Julie. “When everyone has the same accreditation, we’ll be more attractive for larger contracts and organisations. We already have a long pipeline of customers just waiting for us to get this.”

Focus on quality and growth

“We can now use HACCP as a platform to approach new customers,” says Nam. “It really gives us an advantage within the disability service industry, and it allows us to be more commercially oriented and get more customers on board.”

It has certainly been a positive experience for the team at SEI. “Our production co-ordinators feel that with this system they now know how they can continually improve, it gives them some structure. Up until now it has been pretty informal. It’s been a massive learning curve, because they didn’t have a food background.”

There is no doubt that their business will now grow. “The market has responded very well to this,” says Julie. “It’s a great value proposition for them – they get the service they need, to the standards they expect, and they meet their social and ethical responsibilities too.”

Nam also believes that the HACCP certification is simply the best way to provide quality products.

“We now know we’re part of the process of manufacturing food and we are doing everything we can to provide good, safe, quality food for our customers.”





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“We’re working towards a standard that’s transparent, and there’s a level of assurance that we’re doing everything we can.”

For Julie, the advantage is clear. “We talk about our business differently now. Firstly, we provide great service in food packaging. Oh, and by the way our highly trained staff are people with disabilities. This means our customers can show their community support, and get a high quality result. It really sets us apart.”

For more information on how your small business can achieve HACCP certification with NCS International, please visit our website **www.ncsi.com.au**, email us at **marketing@ncsi.com.au**, or call **1300 856 554**.

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