

Supermarket Soft Plastic Taskforce Meeting 1 Minutes

1 December 2022, 11:00-14:00.

Attendees

Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water: Chloe Bird, Rob Quinn, Jane Cronin, Jessica Lear, Chantal Moore, Annette Williams, Natasha Zivkovic

Coles: Brooke Donnelly (BD), Sally Fielke, Matt Swindells, Catherine McNeil, Wade Mosse, Simone Brookes

Woolworths: Laurie Kozlovic (LK), Peter Bruce, Christopher Lane, Alice Yang, Nerilee Telford

ALDI: Daniel Baker (apologies from Adrian Christie)

Minutes

Agenda item 1: Welcome

- The Participants noted the importance and priority of finding a sustainable solution to soft plastic recovery and recycling.
- The ACCC's interim authorisation decision was noted and an anti-trust statement was read.

Outcomes:

- **Attendees agreed that** Coles would coordinate finalisation of the minutes and their provision to the ACCC. A copy will be provided to the Department before being submitted to the ACCC.
- **Attendees agreed that**, as a condition of participation in this meeting, no Participant would share any competitively sensitive information, whether in person, or through virtual means.

Agenda item 2: Responsibilities and roles

- The Chair noted the ACCC's expectations, authorised conduct, and conditions as outlined in the interim authorisation. The Chair confirmed that a representative from the Department would continue to attend each meeting.

[REDACTED]

- Attendees discussed the role of all Program Partners in contributing to a solution, including those not represented in the Taskforce.

Outcomes:

- **Attendees agreed that Coles** would coordinate joint reporting to the ACCC to comply with the 3-month progress reporting conditions.

[REDACTED]

- **All Participants agreed** the need for other REDcycle Program Partners (approx. 280 in total) to meet their responsibilities to assist in the development of a solution.

Agenda item 3: The Minister for the Environment and Water

- The Minister expressed her concern with the discontinuation of consumer soft plastic collection and recycling.
- The Minister noted an expectation that the supermarkets take the lead on the resolution to the short-term collection and recycling issues for soft plastics. A sustainable long-term solution will also require manufacturers to play a role and take responsibility for soft plastic waste
- The Minister further affirmed the role and responsibility of all generators of consumer soft plastic waste to take a leadership role in reducing waste and noted the roles of both governments and the private sector to contribute to solutions.
- The Minister's preference is for the solution to be developed at the industry level. If not, the Minister is prepared to impose any necessary regulation. The Minister thanked Participants for taking a leadership role.
- The challenge of other consumer-facing soft plastic generators, such as retailers, ecommerce-retailers and manufacturers not contributing to soft plastic product stewardship was discussed.
- The possibility of considering the soft plastic recycling issue within the context of ongoing work to reform the Australian packaging system by 2025 was also discussed.

Outcomes:

- **All Participants agreed** that the involvement of all consumer-facing soft plastic generators should be addressed as part of the short-term solution.
- **All Participants agreed** that all REDcycle Program Partners (approx. 280) should be included in any response and solutions to the current issue.

Agenda item 4: What the Taskforce needs to achieve

- The Chair asked the Taskforce to agree a future workplan to progress development of a short-term solution.

Outcomes:

- **All Participants** agreed to set a future workplan based on key issues identified at the initial Taskforce meeting.
- **All Participants agreed** to weekly Taskforce meetings through to 16 December 2022.

Agenda item 5: Timeframes

- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- The importance of developing a sustainable solution for both collection and recycling to restore consumer faith in soft plastic recycling was discussed.
 - Attendees discussed the materials currently stockpiled by REDcycle. It was noted that they did not have detailed information regarding the location, nature and condition of these materials, despite requests for such information [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]

Outcomes:

- **All Participants agreed** that work towards the short-term solution should not be delayed with regard to a decision from REDcycle on its ongoing business model.

- **All Participants agreed** to prioritise re-establishing soft plastics collections and recycling going forward [REDACTED]
- **The Chair agreed** the Department will contact state and territory EPAs on behalf of the Participants to identify whether data can be provided on stockpiled materials.
- **All Participants agreed on** the need to establish thresholds and milestones for actions to re-establish a collection and recovery program, and on the need for visibility and transparency of data on soft plastic collections and soft plastic processing capacity.
- **All Participants agreed** the need to establish contractual agreements with recyclers to accept collected plastics for processing before collections can be re-established, which is reliant on infrastructure coming online.

Agenda item 6: Requirements to re-establish a soft plastic collection in-store

- Attendees discussed their current understanding of the capability and capacity within the existing soft plastic recycling infrastructure in Australia.
- Attendees discussed other potential options and potential levels of desirability, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Any solution should avoid single dependency risk and be focused on current capability and end market availability.

Outcomes:

- **All Participants agreed** that re-establishment of in-store soft plastic collection can only commence if there is a reasonable volume of soft plastic available, and that contracts for processing collected plastics are in place.
- **All Participants agreed** that a clearer understanding is required of available soft plastic recycling options and capacity in Australia, including the expected timeframe required for new capacity to come online.
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
- **All Participants agreed** landfilling is not an acceptable solution.

Agenda item 7: How do we proceed to getting these components in place?

- Attendees discussed next steps, including the Taskforce workplan.
- The importance of informing consumers about the transitional period (ie, pause in collections) was also discussed. Participants understand the Australian Packaging Covenant Organisation (**APCO**) is in discussions with the ACCC on associated challenges with the REDcycle label and the Australasian Recycling Label.

Outcomes:

- **All Participants agreed** to begin seeking data on existing onshore recycling capacity and to share this with the taskforce.
- **All agreed** to the following forward workplan towards achieving a short-term solution:

Taskforce Workplan		
Item number	Work item	Timeframe
1	Mapping to address data gaps, including for processing capacity.	9 December 2022
2	Set milestones for the re-establishment of in-store collections.	9 December 2022
3	Identify key stakeholders to support and participate in future Taskforce meetings.	9 December 2022
4	Set thresholds for re-establishment of in-store collections.	TBC
5	Engagement with additional REDcycle Program Partners and consumer-facing soft plastic generators.	TBC
6	Explore opportunities relating to packaging regulatory reform efforts.	TBC
7	Agree acceptable definitions of a viable solution for a recovery program for government, industry, and consumers.	TBC
8	Understand current capacity and options to accelerate infrastructure in the short, medium, and long-term.	Participants agreed they will commence requests for data with the recycling sector but do not expect this to be completed until mid-January 2023.
9	Explore opportunities to sort and clean plastic in relation to exporting.	TBC

- **All Participants agreed** to complete a data mapping exercise ahead of the second meeting and to set milestones for the re-establishment of collections in the next meeting.
 - The Department will explore the utility of existing public data on recycling infrastructure for the Taskforce’s purposes; and provide information on requirements for waste plastic exports under relevant regulatory schemes.
- **All Participants agreed** to work on milestones and thresholds to bring to the next Taskforce meeting to further populate a forward workplan.
- **All Participants agreed** they would identify key stakeholders to participate in the Taskforce at their second meeting on 9 December.

Agenda item 8: Communications

Outcomes:

- **All Participants agreed** that collection and storage of material alone is not a recycling solution and that the Taskforce is seeking to establish a self-sustaining system for soft plastic recovery and recycling.
- **The Participants agreed** on the need to determine the requirements of a viable scheme and the stakeholders to be involved, [REDACTED]

Agenda item 9: Other business

- The next meeting will be held on 9 December 2022 for 2 hours, to be chaired by Coles (BD) and agenda arranged and distributed by the Department.*
- The following meeting schedule was agreed by the Participants.

Meeting Date	Chair	Note Taker	Location
9 December 2022	Coles (BD)	Coles	Online
16 December 2022	Woolworths (LK)	Woolworths	Online

Taskforce Meeting 1 Minutes addendum

*It was subsequently agreed by Participants that DCCEEW would chair the next two Taskforce meetings on 9 and 16 December.

Meeting Date	Chair	Note Taker	Location
9 December 2022	DCCEEW	Coles	Online
16 December 2022	DCCEEW	Woolworths	Online