

Supermarket Soft Plastics Taskforce Meeting 2 Minutes

9 December 2022, 9:00-10:45

Attendees

Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water: Kate Lynch, Annette Williams, Jane Cronin.

Coles: Brooke Donnelly, Adam Fitzgibbons, Catherine Macneil, Llew Fleming, Simone Brookes, Kristen Boverly-Spencer, Wade Moss.

Woolworths: Christopher Lane, Laurie Kozlovic, Nerilee Telford, Alice Yang.

Aldi: Daniel Baker.

Minutes

Agenda item 1: Welcome and attendance

- Kate Lynch confirmed her role as Chair for Meeting 2 and noted an acknowledgement of country.

Outcomes:

- **Attendees agreed** that Coles would take minutes for this Meeting 2.
- **The Chair confirmed** that each of the Australian Packaging Covenant Organisation (APCO) and the Australian Food and Grocery Council (AFGC) would present at this meeting after agreement by Participants to invite both organisations following Taskforce meeting 1 and leave the meeting after their respective presentations.
- **Attendees confirmed** that there were no further comments on the Meeting 2 agenda.

Agenda item 2: APCO Soft Plastics Stewardship Review

- Chris Foley, APCO CEO, and Bryant Plavsic, APCO consultant, joined the meeting to present on their Soft Plastics Stewardship Review report.

- APCO noted becoming aware in the last 24 hours of 2-3 sites identified by the Victorian EPA with stockpiled REDcycle material.
- Attendees discussed the need for more information to help inform a short-term solution including the flow of material and the volume of material on the market and the resolution of discrepancies in information between different stakeholders.
- Attendees confirmed prioritisation of the re-establishment of soft plastic collections and recycling in the short-term and noted REDcycle's existing stockpile as a separate issue.

Outcomes:

- **All Participants agreed** that APCO would provide a one-page summary on current and anticipated (in the short term) soft plastics recycling capacity by early next week.
- **All Participants agreed** that APCO would seek to confirm the current costs of storage of REDcycle's existing stockpile.

Agenda item 3: National Plastic Recycling Scheme

- Barry Cosier and Tanya Barden from AFGC joined the meeting to present an overview of the National Plastics Recycling Scheme (NPRS).
- AFGC's presentation provided background on the NPRS and on current soft plastic collection trials taking place in Australia.
- Attendees broadly discussed a short-term solution over the next 12 months and noted export as one potential solution.

Outcomes:

- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- **All Participants agreed** that AFGC would provide a one-page summary on current and anticipated (in the short term) soft plastics recycling capacity and potential short-term solutions.
 - **All Participants agreed** that AFGC would provide data available to the AFGC on soft plastics generated by participants outside of the supermarkets, such as food and grocery suppliers.

Agenda item 4: Discussion of presentations

- Attendees generally discussed the solutions presented by APCO and AFGC and noted they appeared to relate to longer term solutions. Attendees further noted that interim solutions being explored included mechanical recycling and export for offshore recycling.
- Attendees recognised that more work is required to source data and address knowledge gaps to help with the consideration of a short-term solution.
- Attendees discussed the need to consider the link between any short-term solution to any longer term solution, including those which could potentially see more efficient post-consumer collection formats for soft plastics, for example, in the context of a kerbside collection scheme.

Outcomes:

- **Attendees agreed** that more data is needed to progress discussions on and planning around a short-term solution, including material volumes, and the involvement of NPRS members and other participants in the scheme.

Agenda item 5: Meeting 1 Action Items (DCCEEW)*EPA data**Public data on recycling infrastructure*

- The Chair discussed the "DCCEEW Actions – Public data on recycling infrastructure", which is high level information (publicly available) shared by the DCCEEW that provides some visibility on who is creating new soft plastics recycling facilities. [REDACTED]
- The Chair provided the Attendees with information on the export scheme in Australia including the need for prior consent from countries receiving exports and countries through which the plastics would be transported, noting that approvals generally take 3 to 6 months.
- The Chair further noted the relevance of levels of contamination of material to this process, with higher levels reducing the prospects of export. The Attendees discussed the benefit of onshore sorting processes to improve the likelihood of material being exported.

Outcomes:

- **All attendees agreed** that more information was needed as to the composition of the plastics to be collected in any short term solution to further inform potential export options. If REDcycle's stockpiled soft plastics were to be considered (noting that this is a separate issue), the composition and current condition and quality of that material would also need to be considered.

Agenda item 6: Review Taskforce Workplan

9 December action items

Other action items

- Attendees discussed the Taskforce Workplan.

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

Outcomes:

- **Attendees agreed** that work is progressing on Item 1 with information to be provided by APCO and the AFGC and input to be provided by the Attendees as soon as practicable.
- **Attendees agreed** that further information was needed to progress Item 2.
- **Attendees agreed** that the further data to be received from APCO and AFGC would inform these action items more clearly in the next few weeks.

Agenda item 7: Communications

Ongoing consumer engagement

- Attendees discussed each of their experiences in relation to removing collection bins from stores for customers to return their soft plastics, noting that Australian consumers generally

seem to have heard and understood the current unavailability of in-store soft plastics collection and recycling programs.

[REDACTED]

- Coles raised a concern that customers could be stockpiling material at home.

Outcomes:

- **Attendees agreed** they would develop a roadmap setting out milestones in relation to moving towards a short-term solution, with the aim of preparing the roadmap by the end of January 2023, with a public-facing version to then be publicly communicated.

Agenda item 8: Other business and wrap-up

- Attendees discussed the next Taskforce meeting on 16 December 2022.

[REDACTED]

Outcome:

- **Attendees agreed** that Taskforce Meeting 3 would be held on 16 December 2022 and Woolworths would be responsible for taking minutes.

[REDACTED]

- **Attendees agreed** that Coles would coordinate finalisation of the minutes from Meeting 2 and their provision to the ACCC.
- **Attendees agreed** that Woolworths would send a list provided by REDcycle of their program partners to Coles and Aldi.

Agenda item 9: Meeting close