

Supermarket Soft Plastics Taskforce Meeting 13 Minutes

27 March 2023, 11am - 12:30pm

Attendees

Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water: Cameron Hutchison, Annette Williams

Coles: Brooke Donnelly, Llew Fleming, Simone Brookes, Kristen Boverly-Spencer, Cath Macneil, Wade Mosse

Woolworths: Laurie Kozlovic, Peter Bruce, Nerilee Telford, Simran Kaur, Alice Yang, Christopher Lane, Eloise Fanuli, Deanne Braz

ALDI: Daniel Baker

Minutes

Agenda item 1: Welcome and attendance

- Cameron Hutchison confirmed his role as Chair for this meeting on behalf of the Department and commenced with an acknowledgement of country

Outcomes:

- Attendees agreed that Woolworths would take the minutes for this meeting.

Agenda item 2: Roadmap

Feedback on the release of the soft plastics roadmap and implementation update

- Coles and Woolworths noted that the public soft plastics roadmap was well-received overall, as it reported on the Taskforce's progress to date, and provided context regarding necessary timeframes and the external dependencies which would need to be managed to enable the recommencement of an in-store soft plastics recycling scheme.
- The Department broadly agreed and noted that progress against proposed implementation timelines should continue to be monitored going forward.

Outcomes:

- Participants agreed that a draft implementation plan would be developed for discussion at the next Taskforce meeting to enable monitoring of progress.

Agenda item 3: Stockpile update

- Woolworths reported on the progress made to date in assessing the current storage conditions of the stockpiled material, and liaising closely with relevant EPAs to enable safe interim storage going forward. In particular, based on Woolworths' assessments to date:

- In NSW,

[REDACTED]

- In Victoria,

[REDACTED]

- o In Western Australia, [REDACTED]
 - o In South Australia, [REDACTED]
 - o In Queensland, [REDACTED]
- The Attendees discussed that State / Territory EPAs could be invited to future Taskforce meetings if required, noting that the Participants are already liaising closely with the EPAs on a regular basis for day-to-day engagement.

Outcomes:

- Participants agreed that consideration would be to inviting EPAs to future Taskforce meetings.

Agenda item 4: Recycling capacity

- Woolworths noted that further analysis of the quality of the stockpiled materials is required to better understand its suitability for various potential recycling processing options, noting that processors often have varying quality requirements. Such analysis will likely take place in detail once safe storage conditions have been secured.
- Attendees discussed the anticipated future recycling capacity coming online, as set out in the roadmap, and arising from existing government funding.
- Participants noted that further investments may need to be considered to support the development of soft plastic recycling capacity. Woolworths sought clarification regarding the timing and availability of \$60m of additional government funding allocated to the Recycling Modernisation Fund, which was previously announced by the Government, to support the acceleration of domestic soft plastics recycling capacity in the near term. Woolworths emphasised that near term funding for projects that increase local recycling processing capacity would support the timely recommencement of instore collections. The Department noted that while the guidelines for the program are still to be finalised, it will be a program delivered in partnership with the states and territories. The Department estimated that, subject to government approvals, funding under the program could flow later this calendar year. The Department noted that options for more rapid delivery of funds to meritorious projects would be a matter for the government to consider.
- Coles noted that there is likely to be ongoing pressure on domestic soft plastics recycling capacity, particularly as other proposed longer-term programs set up and expand trials without consideration for addressing the current stockpile volumes.
- Woolworths noted that it was continuing to also explore international recycling options, with samples of the stockpiled material being sent to offshore processors for consideration and testing. The Department noted that it would provide support to assist in obtaining the necessary permissions for offshore processing in an expeditious manner, should the Taskforce proceed with that option.

Outcomes:

- Participants agreed to further assess the quality of existing stockpiled materials, and to continue to explore and monitor recycling capacity domestically and internationally.
- The Department confirmed that it would continue to work with the government on the delivery of funding under the Recycling Modernisation Fund's Plastic Technology stream.

Agenda item 5: Other business and wrap-up

- Attendees discussed moving Taskforce meetings to a monthly rhythm, as the Participants focused on progressing the workstreams arising from and in preparation for Taskforce meetings. Attendees noted the upcoming Easter and ANZAC day public holidays in setting the date for the next Taskforce meeting.

Outcomes:

- **Attendees agreed** that Taskforce meetings would move to a monthly cadence, with the next meeting to take place on 1 May 2023.