

Supermarket Soft Plastics Taskforce Meeting 16 Minutes

27 October 2023 10:30am - 11:30am

Attendees

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

Coles: Brooke Donnelly, Simone Brookes, Kristen Boverly-Spencer.

Woolworths: Alice Yang, Jonathan Russell, Laurie Kozlovic, Rebecca Boustead, Shomo Sen, Peter Bruce, Nerilee Telford.

Aldi: Daniel Baker.

Minutes

Agenda item 1: Welcome

Outcomes:

- **Attendees agreed** Coles would take minutes for this meeting.

Agenda item 2: Packaging regulatory reform update

- Jane Cronin provided an update on the Review of the National Environment Protection (Used Packaging Materials) Measure 2011, noting:
 - the meeting of the Minister of Environment is to be held on 10 November 2023;
 - public consultation on the reforms may be moved to 2024; and
 - work on the national design standard will continue over the next 12 months, with the aim being to formalise this standard by the end of 2024.
- Woolworths queried the status of the draft National Framework for Recycled Content Traceability (**Framework**) and how this would affect any dates of recycled content requirements.

Outcomes:

- **The Department confirmed** that it would liaise with the relevant division on the draft Framework after the meeting of the Minister of Environment and provide an update to the Taskforce.

Agenda item 3: ACCC Progress Report- submitted 23 October 2023

- Attendees discussed the content of the Progress Report submitted to the ACCC on 23 October 2023 (**Progress Report**).

Outcomes:

- **Coles confirmed** the Progress Report was lodged on 23 October 2023 and included the minutes of Taskforce meetings held since the final Authorisation was issued on 30 June 2023.

Agenda item 4: Independent PSO opportunity for Soft Plastics to support a broader stakeholder group and next steps

- Coles and Woolworths provided an update on discussions with [REDACTED] in relation to a product stewardship hub proposed to be set up within [REDACTED] and

noted that the expertise of this hub could be used to create a broader, industry-based soft plastics stewardship program.

- Participants discussed the [REDACTED] hub in detail, including:
 - the [REDACTED] models available;
 - the preferred model [REDACTED];
 - some of the issues surrounding establishment of a new model [REDACTED];
 - that [REDACTED] is a viable option given [REDACTED];
 - continuing to engage with the Australian Food and Grocery Council (AFGC) as part of this process, in light of the various trials run by the AFGC to date; and
 - funding possibilities for the proposed model.
- Woolworths noted the concurrent focus on re-starting in-store collection and noted that sufficient time would be necessary to consult on and set up a comprehensive and sustainable scheme that has longevity.
- Participants discussed the possibility of a phased approach to setting up a new entity to ensure alignment with government timelines, and the potential need for an industry roundtable to enable further consultation, possibly facilitated by the Department.
- Coles noted the increase in customer queries around in-store collection and stated the importance of not losing momentum with regards to current consumer behaviour.

Outcomes:

- **Attendees agreed** that having a not-for-profit independent entity leading a return to store soft plastics program could address some of the issues associated with other proposed programs and have the benefit of involving a broader stakeholder group.
- **Attendees agreed** leveraging the product stewardship hub model was a viable option worth progressing.
- **Participants agreed** that the [REDACTED] model would also likely be a beneficial solution from a regulatory perspective with the brands and supermarkets engaging in the program independently.
- **Participants confirmed** that [REDACTED] would likely be the vehicle for, and administer the [REDACTED]
- **Attendees agreed** this would need to be a broader conversation at a later date.
- **Participants confirmed** the intention to align with APCO and any regulatory framework and noted the need for support from the Department to do so.
- **The Department agreed** to work with the Taskforce to ensure any new entity would fit within the wider regulatory reforms.
- **The Department confirmed** that there was no particular deadline to set up a larger scheme and that the longer-term plan shouldn't preclude actions to reinstate in-store collection.
- **Coles and Woolworths agreed** to work with [REDACTED] and ALDI on the process of setting up an independent entity, and **Attendees agreed** to engage with the AFGC and big brands such as [REDACTED] to discuss options, opportunities and challenges associated with setting up this proposed model.

Agenda item 5: Pilot Program

Logistics and funding

- The Participants discussed the status and progress of the pilot program for re-starting an in-store collection program for soft plastics.
- Woolworths discussed the Participants' engagement with processors and noted that:
 - Victoria is the most likely location to restart in-store collections, given the projected earlier availability of processing capacity in that State;

the Participants

each core processor is currently working through issues including

Outcomes:

- **Participants confirmed** that the pilot program would begin in early 2024, and that based on current information, it appeared that the three core processors would likely begin processing towards the end of 2023 and into the following year once the relevant issues were resolved.

Agenda item 6: Taskforce

Update from Woolworths meeting with AFGC 23 October

AFGC proposal to seek variation of ACCC authorisation to include discussions regarding broader scheme

- This agenda item was largely discussed at agenda item 4.

Outcomes:

- **Attendees agreed** that the PSO opportunities discussed in agenda item 4 needed to be explored further, prior to engaging the ACCC on any further authorisation or variation to the existing authorisation which may need to be sought.

Agenda item 7: Other business and wrap-up

Other agenda items

Next meeting date

Outcomes:

- **Attendees agreed** to set another Taskforce meeting before the end of the year.
- **Coles and Woolworths confirmed** they would regroup with the Department on an exact date for the Taskforce meeting at the end of next week after meeting with the AFGC.

Agenda item 8: Meeting close