

Supermarket Soft Plastics Taskforce Meeting 17 Minutes

15 December 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, Nina Stephens.

Woolworths: Alice Yang, Jonathan Russell, Laurie Kozlovic, Peter Bruce, Nerilee Telford.

Aldi: Daniel Baker.

Minutes

Agenda item 1: Welcome

- Cameron Hutchison delivered an acknowledgement of country.

Outcomes:

- Attendees agreed Woolworths would take minutes for this meeting.

Agenda item 2: Packaging regulatory reform update

- Jane Cronin provided an update on the review of the current co-regulatory arrangement for packaging (Australian Packaging Covenant and National Environment Protection (Used Packaging Materials) Measure), noting that:
 - in November 2023, all Australian Environment Ministers agreed that the new regulations will be implemented under Commonwealth law and that the Commonwealth Government will regulate the scheme; and
 - over the next 12 months, the Department will lead work to develop a National Packaging Design Standard, with the aim to finalise the Standard by the end of 2024, and implementation of regulation by the end of 2025.

Outcomes:

- The Department confirmed that consultation will take place in mid 2024.

Agenda item 3: Update on the stockpile and reprocessing capability

- Woolworths provided an update on upcoming processing capacity noting that:
 - in Victoria, there are [REDACTED] key processors who are rapidly developing their infrastructure, namely [REDACTED], and progressing with obtaining relevant approvals. These processors are likely to underpin our efforts to process the REDcycle stockpiled materials and accelerate the pilot restart of the instore soft plastics collections. At this stage, it appears that [REDACTED] Woolworths is liaising closely with EPA Victoria and councils regarding progress; and
 - in NSW, there are [REDACTED] processors who are at the start of commissioning their facilities and working through various regulatory approvals.

Outcomes:

- Woolworths confirmed that a further update on progress would be provided at the next Taskforce meeting.

Agenda item 4: Update on the upcoming soft plastics store pilot

- Woolworths noted that the Participants' intention was to commence a pilot restart of the instore soft plastics collection program of a small number of stores [REDACTED] once processing capability is available [REDACTED]. At present, the Participants were working towards a target restart date [REDACTED] to align with processing capacity becoming available. The Participants will have further clarity regarding expected timings in the new year.
- Woolworths noted that the Participants' current projections of the volumes from the pilot instore collection restart indicate that processors will have sufficient capacity to concurrently commence the processing of the REDcycle stockpiled material.
- The Attendees discussed the critical third party consents and regulatory approvals which the processors require to ensure processing capability was available to enable the pilot restart. Woolworths noted that assistance from the Participants may be needed and progress would need to be closely monitored.

Outcomes:

- The Participants confirmed that they are targeting the pilot restart of the instore soft plastics collection program [REDACTED]
- Attendees agreed to convene a further Taskforce meeting in January 2024 to further discuss progress towards the restart of the pilot instore soft plastics collection program.
- The Department agreed to undertake appropriate discussions with relevant Commonwealth and State contacts regarding progress and the critical pathway to enable the pilot instore soft plastics collection program.

Agenda item 5: Update on progress towards establishing an independent product stewardship body for soft plastics with retailers and brands

- An agreed pathway for keeping the ACCC across the progress and this space and the activity required to authorise a new program
- Coles noted that the Participants are anticipating receiving [REDACTED] draft proposal regarding potential scope in the coming weeks, for each Participant to consider. The Participants also have a meeting with the AFGC and key brand owners scheduled for late December 2023 to gauge appetites for potential engagement from those parties to participate.
- Following these steps, the Participants will consider the pathway forward for this body of work, including Department, ACCC and other stakeholder engagement.

Outcomes:

- The Participants agreed to provide a further update at the January 2024 Taskforce meeting.

Agenda item 6: Taskforce communication and stakeholder engagement

- Coles noted that the next Taskforce progress report to the ACCC was due in late January 2024 and that the Participants were intending to include the most recent updates regarding processing infrastructure, stockpiles and intentions around the instore pilots.
- Coles also noted that the Participants were considering the appropriate communications to customers regarding the pilot instore soft plastics collection restart, including the appropriate instore messaging.

Outcomes:

- **The Participants agreed** that the Taskforce progress report would be provided to the ACCC in January 2024, in accordance with the requirements under the Authorisation.

Agenda item 7: Meeting with the Victorian Minister for Environment

- Woolworths noted that the Participants have requested a meeting with the Victorian Minister for Environment to brief stakeholders on the background to the proposed restart of the pilot instore soft plastics collection program.

Outcomes:

- **The Department agreed** to undertake appropriate discussions with EPA Victoria contacts regarding the pilot instore soft plastics collection program.

Agenda item 8: Meeting close