

Supermarket Soft Plastics Task Force Meeting 15 Minutes

25 September 2023, 10:30am - 11:30am

Attendees

Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water: Kate Lynch, Cameron Hutchison, Annette Williams, Caitlin Ellis

Coles: Brooke Donnelly, Nina Stephens

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

Aldi: Daniel Baker, Matilda Gable, Hayley Taylor

Minutes

Agenda item 1: Welcome

- The Department opened the meeting with an acknowledgment of country.

Outcomes:

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

Agenda item 2: Stockpile update

Consolidation of sites, relocation activities and remaining sites including risks

- Woolworths reported that the REDcycle stockpiled materials have been moved to safe storage sites and consolidated to approximately ■ sites nationally. Some sites may continue to be moved in the coming months based on council and/or landlord feedback.
- Woolworths noted that the current area of focus is ensuring processing pathways for the stockpiled material. A number of trials are currently underway with processors domestically (who are largely in the start-up phase, and primarily based in Victoria at this stage) and internationally (including the US and Europe). While further capacity is expected to come online domestically towards the end of this year and early next year, there needs to be sufficient confidence and robustness in the soft plastics processing industry.
- Coles noted that the domestic soft plastics processing industry is still relatively embryonic and expectations of timeframes for the processing of the stockpiles and the scale of the restart of a full instore collections program will need to be managed against processing capacity.
- The Attendees discussed the current government funding grant process as per the guidelines to which soft plastics processors could apply.

Outcomes:

- **The Participants agreed** that the timing of the processing of the stockpile and the recommencement of a full-scale soft plastics recycling program would be heavily dependent on industry capability and that domestic industry is currently in the very early stages of being able to stand up the volumes and service levels needed to process soft plastics at scale.
- **The Participants agreed** that they were willing to engage with and provide helpful information to Government on the current funding grant process as Government considers

and assesses any soft plastics processing applications.

Agenda item 3: Roadmap, Section 9 of the Soft Plastics Taskforce's Roadmap

Program partners & participants under the ACCC Authorisation

- The Participants noted the discussions which had taken place with the AFGC and key brand owners to date in preparation for the Taskforce meeting, regarding the management of the stockpiles and the need for a broader, longer-term industry solution for soft plastics collections and recycling going forward.
- The Attendees discussed the limitations under the current ACCC Authorisation, which is focused on the management of the stockpiles and restart of the instore collection scheme only, rather than broader collection options (including kerbside). The Attendees discussed the need to engage with the ACCC once further clarity regarding proposed next steps is developed.
- The Department noted that, based on preliminary discussions with the ACCC, there may be some conduct which could be captured by the current ACCC authorisation and/or undertaken without specific authorisation. There was also the potential to amend the current Authorisation, or seek a new/separate Authorisation for additional conduct.
- The Attendees noted the need for the new broader scheme to be co-designed with retailers and brands, including in the non-grocery retail sectors, and for government input. The Attendees discussed the need for broad consultation, and noted the AFGC's proposed scheme.
- The Department noted that it could facilitate a consultative process.

Outcomes:

- **The Participants agreed** to consider further specifics of the type of conduct for which any amended or further authorisation would be required in order to facilitate discussions on a broader industry solution for soft plastics collections and recycling.

Links to industry efforts including NPRS, other brand schemes and next steps

- Tanya Barden, Barry Cosier and Georgina Foster joined the call on behalf of the AFGC.
- The AFGC acknowledged the spirit of collaboration between the Participants, the AFGC and its members to date.
- The AFGC discussed its vision for a single scheme, managed by a not-for-profit entity, for all post-consumer soft plastics collections and recycling (including instore, kerbside and other collection methods). The AFGC acknowledged that a staggered approach will be necessary in order to bring community, councils, governments and industry along the journey, but that a larger-scale solution beyond in-store collections needs to be a longer term solution.
- [REDACTED]
- The Attendees discussed the need for broader consultation and a broader baseline of members which would include AFGC members, retailers, other brand owners and other players in the supply chain. The AFGC noted that it was open to broader discussions, that the setting up of the entity would be the starting point which would allow membership to grow over time.
- The Department noted that the packaging regulatory reform work that is underway may influence the design and nature of the proposed scheme.

PUBLIC VERSION

- The AFGC requested that the Participants consider whether the existing ACCC authorisation could and should be amended to enable discussions for this single broader scheme.
- The AFGC noted the Soft Plastics Summit being hosted that afternoon by the AFGC, and requested the Participants consider what could be said at the Soft Plastics Summit regarding potential retailer participation.
- The AFGC left the meeting.

Outcomes:

- **The Participants agreed** to consider the AFGC's proposal.
- **The Participants agreed** to consider what could be announced at the AFGC's Soft Plastics Summit regarding potential retailer participation in the AFGC's proposal.
- **The Department agreed** to provide an update on packaging regulatory reform timelines.

Soft plastics instore trials including pathway forward

- The Participants discussed the need to ensure that the instore soft plastics collection trials were timed with relevant processors' capacities becoming available [REDACTED], and the need to avoid the busy Christmas trading period given pressures on store operations during that time.
- The Participants discussed the need to ensure confidence that there is a robust recycling process to support the trials, including from a customer-trust process.

Outcomes:

- **The Participants agreed** to consider further the precise timeframes for the start of the instore soft plastics collection trials, based on updated timeframes of relevant processors' capacities becoming available.
- **The Department agreed** to report back on any Government views on proposed timings.

Agenda item 4: Other business and wrap up

ACCC Reporting

Other agenda items

- Coles noted the next report to the ACCC is due on 23 October and that Coles would be liaising and coordinating the drafting of the report over the coming weeks.
- The Attendees discussed including, if possible, a high level description of proposed next steps for the Taskforce as part of the next report

Outcomes:

- **The Participants agreed** to draft and submit the next report to the ACCC.

Agenda item 5: Meeting Close