

Supermarket Soft Plastics Taskforce Meeting 25 Minutes

28 November 2024 10:03am - 10:44am

Attendees

Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water ('Department'): Caitlin Ellis
Annette Williams.

Coles: Brooke Donnelly, Sean O'Malley, Simone Brookes, Nina Stephens, Gemma Grant.

Woolworths: Peter Bruce, Laurie Kozlovic, April Reid, Jonathan Russell.

Aldi: Daniel Baker.

Minutes

Agenda item 1: Welcome – 10:00am (5 mins)

- The Department delivered an Acknowledgement of Country.
- The Department noted that work on the soft plastics pathway is ongoing. Collaboration with jurisdictions is in progress on the soft plastics pathway and the department will consult with taskforce members as soon as possible.

Outcomes

- **Attendees agreed** that Coles would take minutes for this meeting.
- **The Department agreed** to update the Taskforce on the soft plastics pathway and send a document for consultation as soon as possible.

Agenda item 2: Update on the stockpile and reprocessing capability – 10:05am (15 mins)

- Woolworths provided an update:
 - In Victoria, the Close the Loop situation is being managed. Close the Loop is [REDACTED].
 - Woolworths noted that it is continuing to look for alternative processors to manage the shortfall in Victoria.
 - In NSW, Woolworths noted that good progress is being made with the materials from iQRenew.
 - iQRenew is processing high-grade materials, with the first export loads going over to international markets for use.
 - In South Australia, a sustainable infrastructure company is in the process of getting licencing approval.
- Woolworths provided a further update on each region's progress:
 - It has been NSW's best month of recycling, with 500 tonnes of product recycled this month.
 - In Victoria, recycling of the stockpile will re-commence on 2 December 2024, with a truck going to CRDC's facility every day.

- The participants discussed how the offtake markets can be stimulated:
 - The Department asked if the offtake markets were at capacity.
 - Woolworths noted there are challenges balancing the regulatory constraints with the processing capacity.
 - The processing capacity and offtake markets for the premium material are progressing well.
- The Department asked about the state of the end markets for non-advanced recycling.
 - Woolworths explained that there is still a bottle neck for those end markets.

Agenda item 3: Soft plastics instore trial – 10:20am (15 mins)

- Woolworths provided an update:
 - The Melbourne instore trial continues to perform strongly, with 12 stores in Melbourne running smoothly and volumes steadily increasing without issues.
 - The mid-north coast in New South Wales is seeing increasing volumes as the community becomes more aware of the service available. The instore trial is gaining traction in this area. It will take at least 3 months to get it up to decent volumes, but collections are on the right path and there are no contamination issues at this stage.
 - The feedback from iQRenew on the product is that better recycling outcomes are achieved from the new product than the stockpile product, with a 10% increase in quality when shifting from stockpile to new product. Approximately 15% of stockpile product is A-Grade, while 25% of new product (collected from the instore trial) is A-Grade. A-Grade product is being exported to a chemical recycler in the USA, where it is processed into the base components of plastics to be remade into food grade soft plastics. The B and C-Grade materials are being pelletised within Australia and then sold for non-food grade purposes, such as the plastic pellets being made into flower pots.
- The expansion of the instore trial to 80 Woolworths stores in Western Sydney happened on 25 November 2024.
- The Department asked about plans in the new year for further expansion.
 - Woolworths stated that the intention is that the [REDACTED] will become the entity that runs the instore program.
 - Woolworths noted that there is work being undertaken to map out the transition from the current instore trials across Victoria and New South Wales to the [REDACTED] in the future. At this stage, there is no plan to expand the current instore trial offering until the [REDACTED] is set up.
 - Woolworths reiterated that the intention to have one scheme for all participants, rather than Coles, Woolworths and Aldi all embarking on separate programs.

Agenda item 4: [REDACTED] update – 10:35am (20 mins)

- The Department asked for a progress update [REDACTED].
- Coles provided an update [REDACTED]:
 - [REDACTED].
 - [REDACTED].
 - The intent is to hit the ground running in the new year.

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- Coles stated that [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED].
- Coles noted that there [REDACTED]
[REDACTED].
- Aldi further added that it is good to see engagement with other players in the market, such as major brand players.

Agenda item 5: Other business and wrap-up – 10:55am (5 mins)

- The Department asked the participants whether anyone had anything else to raise.
- Woolworths asked whether anyone had any feedback on the recent event held by the Australian Council of Recycling on recycled plastic usage in Canberra.
- The Department noted that they did not attend the event and offered to look into feedback.

Outcomes:

- **The Department agreed** to look more into feedback from the Australian Council of Recycling event.

Agenda item 6: Meeting close – 11:00am

- The Department raised some administrative items:
 - The Department acknowledged that this was the last meeting scheduled in the diary for the year.
 - The participants confirmed that the Taskforce meetings would continue with monthly meetings on Thursdays in the new year.

Outcomes:

- **Attendees agreed** to continue with monthly meetings on Thursdays in the new year.
- **The Department agreed** to check whether the procurement side of the Department can attend any future Taskforce meetings.