



Gavin Jones
Director – Competition Exemptions
Australian Competition and Consumer Commission
23 Marcus Clarke Street
Canberra, ACT, 2601

By email - exemptions@accc.gov.au

Coles Group Limited and participating supermarkets – Application for authorisation AA1000546 – Interim authorisation decision and interested party consultation

Dear Mr Jones,

Food security, including ensuring supply to regional and remote communities, has been a high priority throughout the Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Supermarket Taskforce, led by the Department of Home Affairs, was established on 18 March 2020 to respond to challenges facing supermarkets arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, and to coordinate supermarket responses across Australia.

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) has previously provided participating supermarkets authorisation (the Previous Application) for substantively similar conduct as that sought in this application (**Current Application**). The Department of Home Affairs provided a submission in May 2020 in support of the Previous Application, noting that industry cooperation had been critical to stabilising consumer confidence, maintaining equitable access to food and minimising negative impacts, including health risks, for supermarket staff and customers. The existing authorisation has allowed supermarkets to work together in certain circumstances to ensure the continuity of food supply. The Supermarket Taskforce continues to meet as required to respond to food security challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The extension of the existing authorisation until 31 March 2022 remains of value in managing the ongoing response by continuing to facilitate industry cooperation to achieve the outcomes outlined above.

The positive outcomes achieved by the Supermarket Taskforce would not have been possible without the authorisation and the cooperation of the supermarkets covered by the authorisation, along with industry peak bodies. As the situation in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic remains uncertain, it is important that the Supermarket Taskforce continue to facilitate industry cooperation on the terms set out in the Current Application. We note that the ACCC will monitor market conditions and will no doubt endeavour to return to a normal competitive environment at the most appropriate juncture.

Kind Regards,

Sam Grunhard
First Assistant Secretary
Critical Infrastructure Centre

