



Supermarkets authorised to continue cooperating on COVID-19 response

3 September 2020

Supermarket operators will be allowed to continue cooperating to ensure supply of food and groceries in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, under an ACCC authorisation granted today.

Coles, Woolworths, Metcash, Aldi, and other grocery retailers whose participation is approved by the ACCC will be allowed to coordinate with each other when working with manufacturers, suppliers, and transport and logistics providers.

“We recognise the impacts that the pandemic continues to have across the economy, including within the food and grocery sector,” ACCC Commissioner Stephen Ridgeway said.

“Allowing this authorisation to continue will likely result in public benefits by giving supermarket operators the opportunity to maximise consumer access to retail groceries, reduce community concerns and stockpiling behaviour, and reduce strain on retail supply chains.”

The authorised conduct only applies to discussions and agreements made at meetings convened by government agencies. The ACCC has been attending these meetings to observe and monitor the use of the authorisation, and to assess whether it should continue.

“The recent Victorian outbreak and stage 4 restrictions have highlighted the benefits of this authorisation in assisting retailers to maintain supply of grocery products, including to those customers in regional and remote areas,” Mr Ridgeway said.

Authorisation is granted on similar terms to the [interim authorisation](#) and does not extend to coordination about the prices of retail products.

The ACCC is granting authorisation until 31 March 2021. More information about the ACCC’s decision is available on the public register at [Coles Group on behalf of itself and participating supermarkets](#).

Background

ACCC authorisation provides statutory protection from court action for conduct that might otherwise raise concerns under the competition provisions of the Competition and Consumer Act 2010. Broadly, the ACCC may grant an authorisation when it is satisfied that the public benefit from the conduct outweighs any public detriment.

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