

**7 JULY 2020**

## **COLES CELEBRATES SUSTAINABILITY WEEK AS MORE THAN 1 BILLION PIECES OF PLASTIC SAVED FROM LANDFILL**

Coles has taken a major step towards its goal of becoming Australia's most sustainable supermarket after diverting more than 1 billion pieces of soft plastics from landfill.

Since 2011, Coles has worked with sustainability partner REDcycle to recycle plastic bags and soft plastic packaging such as biscuit packets, lolly bags, frozen food bags and bread, rice and pasta bags which cannot be recycled through most kerbside recycling services.

With the program now collecting an average of 121 tonnes - or 30 million pieces of plastic every month - customers returned the one billionth piece of plastic to the REDcycle bins at Coles in June.

The milestone coincides with Coles' first Sustainability Week as a publicly-owned company and aligns with its strategic objective to become Australia's most sustainable supermarket.

Liz Kasell, founder of Red Group and the REDcycle program, congratulated Coles and its customers for reaching the incredible milestone.

"For nearly ten years Coles has supported the REDcycle program, and thanks to the participation of their enthusiastic customers, they have now diverted more than a billion pieces of soft plastics from landfill," Liz said.

In 2018, Coles became the first national supermarket retailer to have REDcycle bins in every store for customers to donate soft plastics, which are transformed by manufacturers such as Replas into a range of recycled products including outdoor furniture for community groups.

To support its recycling initiatives, REDcycle received a \$430,000 grant from the Coles Nurture Fund to increase the amount of soft plastic it collects for recycling. The funds, which it received this year, allowed the company to purchase new processing technology and three new collection vehicles.

Coles' soft plastics collected by REDcycle are also recycled into an asphalt additive for roads by Melbourne manufacturer Close the Loop and into garden edging by Albury business Plastic Forests.

This month, Coles supported another recycling solution for soft plastics by providing a \$300,000 grant from the Coles Nurture Fund to Plastic Forests to manufacture steel-reinforced plastic posts which can be used for fencing by farmers including those affected by bushfires.

Coles Chief Property & Export Officer Thinus Keeve, who leads Coles' sustainability strategy, congratulated customers on their role in helping to reach the milestone.

"Our customers have told us recycling is important to them and Coles is proud to support initiatives which help close the loop on recycling and divert waste from landfill," he said.

“One billion pieces of soft plastics recycled via Coles and REDcycle is a fantastic achievement by our customers and team members. It’s also an important step in helping to drive generational sustainability in Australia.”

As a major food retailer, many of Coles' sustainability initiatives are focused on waste reduction, including through partnerships with food rescue organisations SecondBite and Foodbank to collect and distribute edible, unsold food to Australians in need.

Last month, SecondBite reported nine out of 10 of their food relief charity partners surveyed across Australia had been impacted by COVID-19 and more than 80% have witnessed an increase in demand for food relief<sup>1</sup>.

To date, Coles has donated the equivalent of 146 million meals to SecondBite and Foodbank, which partner with local community groups to deliver nutritious meals to vulnerable Australians facing hardship.

Coles further reduces the volume of food waste sent to landfill by donating fruit, vegetables and bakery products that are no longer suitable to eat to livestock farmers and animal shelters, with more than thirteen million kilograms donated to farmers in FY19.

As part of Sustainability Week, Coles supermarkets are now reaching out to local farmers and customers to expand this program. Customers who may have a use for the produce as livestock feed are encouraged to visit their local Coles supermarket and speak to the store manager.

Coles is also working with bakery supplier Goodman Fielder on an initiative to recycle surplus Coles Brand bread that cannot be used by our food charity partners by processing into breadcrumbs and bread meal, an ingredient in pet foods such as dog biscuits.

Following a successful pilot earlier this year, the program is now being rolled out to over 200 stores, to further support repurposing unsold Coles Brand bread away from waste.

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**For further information, please contact**

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<sup>1</sup> The SecondBite survey was undertaken in May and June 2020 and involved 218 community agencies which provide food relief to vulnerable people such as those who are unemployed, single parent families, people experiencing homelessness and elderly Australians.