

MEDIA RELEASE

8 April 2024

Growers justified, Bunnings on notice – interim report into supermarket powers

Greenlife Industry Australia (GIA) is pleased that today's Interim Report for the Food and Grocery Code of Conduct Review has acknowledged that for the Code of Conduct to regulate the major grocery retailers, it must be mandatory, with new protections against retribution and serious penalties for breaches.

Dr Craig Emerson's interim report also acknowledges that, like farmers supplying supermarkets, greenlife growers are disadvantaged by Bunnings, which controls 70% of the plant retail market in Australia. However, GIA is disappointed that the Report has not taken the crucial step of recommending that the government protects these growers in the Code of Conduct, instead suggesting that Bunnings be invited to develop its own voluntary code of conduct.

'We are encouraged that Dr Emerson's report demonstrates a good understanding of the power imbalance between growers and retailers. However, we are puzzled by his suggestion that Bunnings participates in a new, separate code of conduct that is voluntary,' said GIA CEO, Joanna Cave.

'The report acknowledges that the current supermarket Code is ineffective, largely because it is voluntary. So, we struggle to understand how creating a new voluntary code would improve things for greenlife growers.

'Plants are already covered by the Code of Conduct. Coles and Woolworths sell plants. These retailers have signed up to the current Code of Conduct. The better and fairer solution is to include the biggest plant retailer – Bunnings – in the new, improved Code of Conduct.'

Bunnings has a lot in common with the major supermarkets and sells other groceries such as pet food, cleaning products, household goods, electrical appliances, kitchenware and DIY products – as well as plants.

Perhaps this is why a Woolworths' spokesperson said in today's *Guardian* that the Code should apply to all major retailers operating locally, including global retail giants Amazon and Costco, as well as Australian retailers Bunnings and Chemist Warehouse, who also compete in grocery categories.

On behalf of greenlife growers, GIA urges Dr Emerson to include Bunnings in the strengthened Food and Grocery Code of Conduct. It makes sense to include Bunnings now and it is the right thing to do. Not taking this opportunity to protect suppliers of plants would be a betrayal of greenlife growers – and an easy win for Bunnings.

Those in support of including Bunnings in the Code of Conduct can sign our petition at:

www.change.org/growerprotection

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The greenlife industry employs over 25,000 people and generates a farm gate value of \$2.8 billion a year.

– ENDS –

More information

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Available for interview

- Joanna Cave, CEO
- Greenlife growers – Tasmania and Queensland

About GIA

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