



09 February 2024

Committee Secretary  
Select Committee on Supermarket Prices  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600  
supermarketprices.sen@aph.gov.au



### **GetUp Member submissions to the Senate Inquiry on Supermarket Prices**

GetUp welcomes the opportunity to make a submission on behalf of our members to the consultation process for the Supermarket Prices Inquiry.

Due to the cost-of-living crisis, more and more households are struggling to put food on the table and afford essential needs. In a recent survey that GetUp ran, members ranked cost of groceries such as food and beverage as one of their top concerns. This directly points to the problem of the duopoly that Coles and Woolworths have and the stress that is causing Australians.

Commanding two-thirds of Australia's grocery sector, Coles and Woolworths are enabled to hike prices without consequences. In communities and regional areas, their control can cover up to 90% of the market. There is also huge concern about the exorbitant price hikes people in remote Aboriginal communities see compared to the capital cities.

Getup received over 1152 submissions from our members in every state and territory sharing first-hand experience shopping with Coles and Woolworths and how they're affected by rising costs of groceries. Members spoke about the need for more competition in the grocery sector and a crackdown on price gouging.

#### **About GetUp**

We are an independent movement of everyday people who care about climate justice, economic fairness, First Nations justice, and a strong media and democracy.

Our team acknowledges that we meet and work on the land of the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation. We wish to pay respect to their Elders — past, present and future — and acknowledge the important role all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continue to play within Australia and the GetUp community.



We're committed to upholding the tenets of Australia's democracy, including ensuring the transparent operations of government.

GetUp is an independent, not for profit community campaigning organisation, incorporated as a company limited by guarantee. GetUp receives no political party or government funding, and every campaign we run is entirely supported by voluntary donations.

### **Our recommendations**

Due to rising grocery costs, choosing between items to place in the basket and getting anxious about groceries is becoming part of a collective experience among GetUp members.

Below is a summary of key themes raised by our members, as well as selected responses and personal anecdotes:

**It's essential for the government to actively monitor and regulate pricing practices to prevent exploitative behaviour from supermarkets. This means not just setting guidelines, but also enforcing and imposing consequences for breaches.**

*"I struggle to feed my family of 5. This is on my full time salary. We have stopped buying fresh milk, most meat products, breakfast cereals and other basics. it is just wrong that these 2 huge companies reap ridiculous profits and still gouge the farmers who actually grow the food! The producers and consumers are forced to pay to line the pockets of these companies. It needs to change!"*

*"I was down to 2 meals a day, often living mainly on cabbage and bread as I could not afford both rent and food...We didn't suddenly eat more, it's just that the supermarkets used the excuse of supply chain problems to massively increase their margins. Cost of living relief could readily be done with routine monitoring and publishing of price gouging on a typical shopping basket of goods. If they want to price gouge outside essentials that is OK, we will shop elsewhere because they will create conditions for competition."*

*"Whenever I go to the supermarket I take a list. I notice that most people now shop this way looking at their phones then up at the shelves. Even though the items I buy at one of the supermarkets aren't luxuries, my grocery bill has almost doubled. Please restore an equitable balance in our supermarkets where price gouging isn't the norm."*

*"I fear for low-middle income earners who are struggling, particularly in this cost of living crisis. Let's also not forget the primary producers who have been left out in the cold and abused for years, as well as mid-large families who would spend 2-3 times what I did each week. My quick 'back of the envelope calculation' of the compound effect for a large family that spends approx \$600pw*

Our team acknowledges that we meet and work on the land of the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation. We wish to pay respect to their Elders — past, present and future — and acknowledge the important role all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continue to play within Australia and the GetUp community.

*comes in at around \$6-7k a year. Surely that money should be in their pocket to help pay for their kids' education, etc., rather than in the coffers of these two greedy giants and their shareholders."*

**The current code of conduct that we have in place can't protect consumer and retailer rights unless the ACCC is given enforceable powers for price control and penalties.**

*"It's not just about pricing. Farmers and producers have been pushed to lower prices for years. Both chains push their home brands and often won't stock goods/brands that are wanted. I would just as soon go home without buying a brand I do not want. Please give the ACCC the powers to take on price control and issue penalties."*

*"As a father of two, we are increasingly finding it difficult to make ends meet with interest rate rises and inflation. To know that this is in part caused by the major supermarkets price gouging is outrageous to all Australians. As I implore you to take preventative measures by strengthening our competition laws to protect workers and consumers. We need new policies to ensure independent and new grocers to thrive in Australia. Moreover, the ACCC must be given power for price control and penalties to enforce any breaches."*

*"I am the daughter of a fourth generation South Australian Primary Producer. I am horrified that Primary Producers are paid so little for producing our food, eg. 1978 prices. I urge the government to champion fairness and equity for all. I call on the government to make sure there are policies allowing independent and new grocers to thrive in Australia, to give the ACCC power for price control and penalties, so that consumer and retailer rights are protected, to crack down on price gouging by actively monitoring and regulating pricing practices to prevent exploitative behaviour from businesses."*

*"The fact that prices started to drop as soon as an inquiry was talked about shows how much they know they are overcharging. Even more reason to have the ACCC have the power to manage the average shopping basket goods so people struggling can eat satisfactorily. I want an ACCC with teeth to control the average shopping basket of goods."*

**We can't expect lower prices at the checkout unless the two supermarkets aren't pressured to deliver the right prices for quality products. And this can only happen if we chip away at their dominance.**

*"I live in a semi-rural area on the mid-north coast of NSW. If the current Labour Federal Government is serious about supporting farmers and in protecting consumers from price-gouging, and serious about assisting those of us struggling to make ends meet through skyrocketing costs of the basics, then we need policies that prevent the continuation of this duopoly, thus protecting consumers, farmers and smaller sellers such as independent greengrocers, grocers, supermarkets and markets."*

Our team acknowledges that we meet and work on the land of the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation. We wish to pay respect to their Elders — past, present and future — and acknowledge the important role all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continue to play within Australia and the GetUp community.

*"As an economist, it saddens me that the last 50 years of Australian economic history has seen the almost-total and deliberate destruction of competition in almost just about every sector of the Australian economy. Yet in the 'cost of living' debate, not a word is said about the absence of competition and its impacts on the prices we pay, or indeed on the wages we earn. It is fundamental to the longer-term health and competitiveness of the economy; and fundamental to combating inflation; and fundamental to bringing the cost of living back to an affordable range for everyday Australians - not just the business and share owners who have profited from the destruction of competition - that genuine competition is re-introduced across all the key sectors of the economy. Let's start with the supermarkets. Limit any one chain to 10% of the market in each region, with 3 - 5 years allowed for divestment where required, prior to legal sanctions being applied."*

*"I'm a full time teacher of aged care and disability. I have been in the supermarkets lately and found myself putting items back on the shelves! I can't afford many basic items. I haven't had to do this for decades. Our government needs to step in and shake up this totally greed of the two main offenders, Coles and Woolies. Give me IGA any day. But the competition of prices is no match for the average person."*

*"The ability of the 'big two' to dictate to their suppliers what quality of fresh produce (in their eyes) they will be buying, and at what price and in what quantities, surely should be against fair trade regulations. I have heard in other market sectors that retailers have even cancelled long term orders at the last minute, or demanded their suppliers sell at reduced prices, when they know they are forced to sell even at a loss, to avoid even bigger losses. Government action to control these practices is needed urgently. Action must include allowing fairer and freer establishment of competition to the big two."*

Copies of these member submissions are attached in PDF format.

We'd be pleased to assist the Committee further with its deliberations as the inquiry progresses.

Sincerely,

**Amy Gordon**  
Chief Campaigns Officer



Our team acknowledges that we meet and work on the land of the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation. We wish to pay respect to their Elders — past, present and future — and acknowledge the important role all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continue to play within Australia and the GetUp community.