

28 February 2019

Unit Pricing Code Consultation Paper  
Consumer and Corporations Policy Division  
The Treasury  
Langton Crescent  
PARKES ACT 2600

Dear Sir/Madam

## **Review of the Retail Grocery Industry (Unit Pricing) Code of Conduct**

National Seniors is the independent voice of older Australians and welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Review of the Retail Grocery Industry (Unit Pricing) Code of Conduct.

Older Australians expect that the sale and purchase of consumer items promotes competition and enhances consumer choice. Older consumers, as a specific group, have needs in terms of the presentation of pricing information which should be accounted for within the relevant legislation and codes of conduct.

The mandatory *Retail Grocery Industry (Unit Pricing) Code of Conduct* (the Code) prescribed under the *Competition and Consumer Act 2010* (CCA) should ensure that product sellers and retailers display information about product pricing in ways that are legible and promote easy comparison. In this regard, National Seniors supports the need for ongoing regulations to require the display of unit pricing in grocery retail outlets through the Code.

Unit pricing has been an effective tool to empower consumers to make informed purchasing choices. The requirement to display unit pricing at point of purchase and in advertising enables consumers to easily understand if a pre-packaged product provides value for money when compared to other similar products and is therefore an effective tool to foster competition within the retail grocery environment.

In reviewing the Code of Conduct (the Code), we would argue there are several systemic problems that adversely affect older consumers and require attention. These include:

- inadequate prominence and legibility,
- non/obscured provision,
- inconsistent units of measure,
- insufficient consumer education, and
- insufficient monitoring and enforcement of compliance.

National Seniors believes that the effectiveness of unit pricing should be enhanced by strengthening the Code and expanding its scope.

In this regard, we support the following actions as have been recommended by the Queensland Consumers Association.

- The Code should be continued and should continue to require certain grocery retailers to provide unit pricing. Any who do voluntarily should continue to be required to comply with the Code.
- The Code's scope should be extended to include more retailers that sell groceries.
- Non-grocery retailers, such as chemist and hardware stores should also be required to provide unit prices for products sold in fixed measure packages.
- The Code should be amended to increase the extent to which all consumers, including those with sight, mobility and other disabilities, can easily notice, read, understand and use unit prices covered by the Code.
- There should be more effective and proactive monitoring and enforcement of retailer compliance with the Code.
- Greater liaison, cooperation and consultation is needed between the organisations responsible for the Code and those responsible for trade measurement legislation.
- There should be more consumer education and more research about unit pricing.
- Unit pricing legislation should:
  - include a requirement for review after no more than 3 years.
  - require the regulator convene a meeting of industry and consumer representatives at least once a year.
  - require the regulator undertake compliance monitoring and enforcement activities and report findings publicly.

National Seniors believes that unit code pricing is an important tool to enhance consumer choice and promote competition in the retail environment. Maintaining and expanding the Code is an important step in further protecting consumers and enhancing competition.

Yours sincerely



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**Chief Advocate**