

## **Outback Stores: Food security and safety our top priority**

25/3/2020

As the situation with Coronavirus (COVID-19) unfolds in Australia and across the globe, Outback Stores is taking every measure to respond to the changing impacts, to adapt to measures to reduce the spread of the virus, and to ensure its stores remain open and safe for customers and staff.

We understand a strong supply chain is vital, now more than ever. As an essential service to more than 40 remote communities around Australia, Outback Stores continues to supply customers with groceries, goods and take-away food.

Our store staff are working hard to keep the shelves stocked while ensuring the safety of our staff and customers.

A special working group formed to coordinate the response across all stores continues to focus its attention on:

- Food security
- Health and safety of team and customers
- Movement and retention of store managers and team

We've expanded this working group and added resources to enable separate teams to work across these three, core areas of focus.

Outback Stores continues to ensure food security and has increased stock monitoring, including a daily store snapshot of sales trends, to ensure consistency of availability and price.

An \$800,000 at-cost stock build, to the equivalent of four weeks supply, is being distributed across the stores we manage. We also believe our key suppliers are in a solid position and are prioritising remote communities.

There have been increased sales of some items, such as soap and hand sanitiser, but other key products remain in stock and on the shelves. We expect and are prepared for more demand in the near future.

Outback Stores is working with governments at various levels around Australia as new border restrictions and arrival requirements are implemented in response to the increasing threat of the virus. We want to assure customers that all freight with goods is exempt from these restrictions.

We also recognise that many Aboriginal people with chronic health problems are at particular risk to COVID-19 and Outback Stores supports the stance of Indigenous land councils, health organisations and leaders to prevent the movement of people in and out of communities.

# OUTBACK

Stores  
*Working With Communities*

To reduce travel in and out of communities, all store managers and staff have been asked to stay in their community and “stay on country”. This is an essential part of our commitment to ensuring communities remain free of this infectious virus.

Our stores have always upheld high standards of hygiene, but the threat of coronavirus has led stores to increase their cleaning regimes, including increased wiping down of the register area, counters and the EFTPOS machines, as well as doors and shelves.

Importantly, we have been transitioning more support staff to working from home. In the past week, we’ve mobilised team members to test the technical infrastructure and support network as they work from home.

By the end of this week, we expect 80 per cent of the support team to be able to work from home with the correct infrastructure in place. This will ensure we stay ahead of government direction and minimise the need for any of our team to leave their home.

Outback Stores has a duty of care to its staff and customers and clear guidelines have been developed around what will occur for different scenarios in the days and weeks ahead. On a practical level, personal protective equipment kits, including gloves, aprons and face masks, are being distributed to all stores to assist if they need to trade in more challenging circumstances.

In an effort to stop the spread of coronavirus, we are asking our team to promote the following advice to all customers and communities, friends and family:

- Clean, safe hands - wash or sanitise your hands frequently
- Practice social distancing - stay about 1.5 metres from everyone
- Cover your cough or sneeze
- Do not touch your face

We will continue to post information and regular updates on our social media channels and website: [www.outbackstores.com.au](http://www.outbackstores.com.au)

Outback Stores is dedicated in continuing to provide an essential service and is doing its best to serve remote communities during this unprecedented time.

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