

Media Release

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COLES EXPANDS QUIET HOUR IN SUPERMARKETS NATIONWIDE TO INCREASE ACCESSIBILITY FOR CUSTOMERS

Reduced sound has been extended for customers from 6:00pm to 7:00pm, Monday through Friday at Coles stores nationally.

Coles has expanded its low-sensory shopping experience – Quiet Hour - to five days a week, at a time that better suits many customers and working parents. Coles supermarkets nationwide are now offering customers a Quiet Hour experience from 6:00pm to 7:00pm, Monday to Friday ensuring customers who find high sensory environments challenging are offered more convenient and accessible time in the evening to enjoy their grocery shop.

The changes customers will notice during these times include Coles Radio turned down to the lowest volume, reduced register and scanner volume and team members refraining from using the PA system, except for in emergencies.

Coles was the first major supermarket to introduce Quiet Hour in 2017, with select stores nationally continuing to reduce their sound and lighting between 10:30am to 11:30am on Tuesdays at participating stores.

Not only is Coles expanding its popular Quiet Hour to support the one in 70 Australians who are on the autism spectrum¹, but has also meaningfully invested in a number of Own Brand products that have seen accessibility improvements, made digital upgrades to the Coles app and has proudly increased representation in the workforce, with 7.6%² of team members identifying as having a disability.

Coles Head of Diversity and Inclusion, Katie Wyatt said Coles is committed to meeting the diverse needs of customers, ensuring everyone feels welcomed, valued and comfortable throughout their shopping experience.

"At Coles, we are always looking for new ways to serve our customers with disabilities and their carers, and we are privileged to have many active voices of people with disability in our feedback channels," Katie said.

"Up to 70% of autistic people experience sensitivity to sounds, with autistic adults reporting that these symptoms worsen with stress and anxiety³ therefore, Quiet Hour promotes increased opportunity and enhances the shopping experience for thousands of customers."

Coles also joined forces with Amaze, a not-for-profit autism organisation in 2021. Since then, Amaze

¹ Autism in Australia: Understanding, Challenges and Support - <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10484064/>

² Coles Group Internal mysay survey, May 2023.

³ Characterising Auditory Sensory Stability in Autism - <https://autism.org/ari-funded-research-studies-2022/>

and Coles have worked together on a number of initiatives to build the capacity and capability of our business, employees and store environments to meet the needs of Autistic people and their families - some of which have included collaborating on the store environment to improve accessibility for the diverse range of customers.

Amaze CEO Jim Mullan said, "we have been delighted to see our partnership with Coles grow in strength and success since 2021, and much of that is a testament to their commitment to building an environment and a workforce that is representative of the community they serve, including autistic people. The expansion of their low-sensory shopping experience is just another example of the many steps that they have taken over the years to understand and purposefully meet the needs of not only their Autistic customers but also their autistic employees. Amaze's vision is an autism inclusive Australia and we're proud to have partners like Coles who share that same aspiration."

Coles App nominated for App of the Year at Centre for Accessibility Awards

Coles is an integral part of Australians' everyday lives and is always looking at ways to meet the diverse needs of customers and has proudly been nominated for Corporate App of the Year at the Centre for Accessibility Awards 2023.

The Coles mobile app has seen significant upgrades, with best-in-class accessibility features integrated, informed by insights from individuals with disabilities. The app boasts a variety of new features making it more accessible, easier to see, operate and use for all Australians.

The accessibility features Coles customers can benefit from in the app include tailored text sizes, the ability to make content larger and easier to read and allows customers to use their preferred screen orientation with both portrait and landscape options. To assist customers using assistive technologies, the app also features custom actions which provide a simpler experience by reducing the number of swipes and taps required to navigate the app.

"Our award-winning app keeps getting better for customers and particularly those using accessibility software and aids to use it. The team consider accessibility in every step of our design process which is why it has been so well received," Katie said.

Improvements to the accessibility of Coles Own Brand products

Coles Own Brand strengthened its commitment to accessibility through a partnership with Get Skilled Access between July 2022 and June 2023. Coles took recommendations from focus groups conducted with a diverse cohort of people with disabilities who evaluated the accessibility of selected products. Lessons and recommendations led to improved accessibility of 45 Coles Own Brand products in 2023, including the improved ease of opening for six seed oil products by significantly reducing the force required to open the bottles.

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For further information, please contact: Coles Media Line (03) 9829 5250 Or
media.relations@coles.com.au