

**Tuesday, 5 March 2019**

## **QUIET HOUR TRIPLES NATIONWIDE TO HELP MORE SHOPPERS**

### **More than 250 Coles stores offering low-sensory shopping across Australia**

From today, Coles' low-sensory shopping experience – Quiet Hour – will now be offered at 256 Coles supermarkets across Australia, tripling the number of stores it's offered to customers since the national debut in 2017.

Quiet Hour offers a low-sensory shopping experience that's easy on the eyes and ears by reducing noise, lighting and other distractions instore to help make a difference to customers who find it challenging to shop in a heightened sensory environment.

Quiet Hour came to fruition thanks to one Victorian customer, David Brinkley, who reached out to Coles via Facebook in early 2017 with the idea to reduce noise at his local Coles store in Healesville to make it easier for parents shopping with children on the autism spectrum.

Within a few months of David's request, Coles partnered with Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) to research what changes could be implemented in store to support customers with sensory challenges. The concept was then trialled in two Coles supermarkets in Victoria in August 2017.

Following the success of the trial, Coles rolled out Quiet Hour to 70 stores nationally just three months later, followed by an additional 107 supermarkets in 2018, and from today, an additional 79 stores will offer the low-sensory shopping experience every Tuesday between 10.30-11.30am.

During Quiet Hour, customers will notice the following changes in participating Coles supermarkets:

- Lighting will be reduced throughout the store
- Coles Radio will be switched off
- Register and scanner volumes will be reduced to the lowest level
- No trolley collections and roll cages will be removed from the shop floor
- No PA announcements \*excluding in case of emergencies
- Free fruit will be offered at customer service
- Additional trained team members will be available to support customers during the hour

Coles Accessibility Sponsor Peter Sheehan said Coles had received an overwhelmingly positive response to Quiet Hour from customers, who said it made a real difference to their shopping experience at Coles.

"At Coles, we are passionate about improving accessibility in our stores. We are always looking at ways we can make life easier for our customers and how we can respond to the differing needs of communities by creating a shopping environment in which our customers and team members feel comfortable," he said.

"We know that it is estimated that one in 70 people in Australia are on the spectrum<sup>1</sup> so that's a lot of our customers who find it challenging to come into our supermarket.

"Our goal is to offer Quiet Hour at every eligible Coles supermarket by 2023. Unfortunately not all supermarkets currently have the ability or technology to offer Quiet Hour at their store due to control of lighting or audio and store locations. However, we are working hard with our store teams to retrofit technology into those stores particularly where we've had feedback that customers want to access Quiet Hour as part of their shopping.

"We're incredibly thankful to David for taking the time to reach out to Coles to bring to life a wonderful initiative. It's amazing to see a simple idea from David turn into a movement with so many Coles team members working to

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<sup>1</sup> ["Autism prevalence rate up by an estimated 40 per cent to 1 in 70 people" - Autismspectrum.org.au](https://www.autismspectrum.org.au)

implement and successfully execute Quiet Hour in their stores, as well as continuing to look at ways we can make Coles an even more accessible and welcoming shopping environment for our customers.”

Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) National Manager Aspect Practice and Clinical Psychologist Dr Tom Tutton said he was pleased to see Coles continuing its commitment to an autism friendly Australia.

“We know that the types of practices that Coles is implementing as part of their Quiet Hour program can make enormous differences to people on the autism spectrum and their families,” Dr Tutton said.

“People on the autism spectrum can have heightened sensory awareness which makes shopping in a store with bright lights, loud music, unexpected voiceovers and the constant noise of cash registers, incredibly overwhelming.

“These small changes make a significant difference and highlight the importance of businesses becoming more aware of their customers’ needs.”

Coles is a partner of the Australian Network on Disability and the National Relay Service, and is working on a range of initiatives to create an inclusive environment for all members of the community, across each pillar of its “Better Together” Inclusion program – Gender Balance, Accessibility, Pride (supporting the LGBTI community), Indigenous and Flexibility.

**NEW COLES STORES OFFERING QUIET HOUR FROM TODAY:**

<b>VICTORIA</b> Sebastopol Warrnambool North Hamilton Craigieburn Kangaroo Flat Roxburgh Park Keilor Vermont South	Melton South Taylors Hill Moonee Ponds Braybrook Airport West Wodonga Plaza Myrtleford Diamond Creek	Mill Park Lakes Lalor Plaza Drouin Sale Cardinia Lakes Croydon North Mooroolbark Healesville	Springvale Knox Patterson Lakes Somerville Carrum Downs Lynbrook Spring Hill Berwick Central
Reservoir Northcote Kingsbury Collingwood Coburg Malvern Richmond Icon Bulleen	Doncaster Mentone Sandringham Hampton Corio Village Lara Tarneit Central Footscray	<b>NSW</b> Broken Hill Wagga Wagga Tumut Batemans Bay Eden Deniliquin Lake Macquarie Fair	<b>ACT</b> Chisholm Manuka Tuggeranong
<b>SA</b> Firle St Agnes Murray Bridge Green Reynella Noarlunga Port Lincoln Edwardstown	Mt Gambier St Clair Churchill Centre Whyalla Gawler Green Kurralta Park Aldinga Beach	<b>NT</b> Palmerston	<b>TASMANIA</b> Sorell Kingston Mowbray Burnie Ulverstone Wellington Street

For details on existing Quiet Hour stores in all states and territories, [click here](#).

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