

Wesfarmers (Coles Supermarkets) Australia - 'geniuses' at Work

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After corporate retailing giant, Wesfarmers, acquired the Coles food supermarket chain things began to change for the traditional retailer but not always for the better!

Whether recent changes to marketing strategies serve the Australian public or share prices is currently a matter of debate.

Wesfarmers are not new to corporate retail in Oz, so current 'strategies' at the Coles supermarket chain would strike most people as odd, extremely eccentric or down right incompetent; in any instance it is clear that these new strategies DO NOT adequately SERVE the Australian consumer!

Coles is currently undergoing dramatic changes, which include refurbishments and upgrades to antiquated store infrastructures. For the most part all the new displays, fridges and designs are a welcome change; however, the absurd 'fly in the retailing ointment' is that new changes also include removing fresh produce stock from displays one hour before closing. So if you're after lettuce, Asian vegetables or a range of other fruits and vegetables an HOUR before closing time, then forget it, stock has been removed to storage for the night.

This new policy impacts directly on late night shoppers, it seems that staff costs are more important to management than shopper's NEEDS -- we are talking essential food items here!

While this very American 'numbers' marketing strategy may serve the bottom line, it clearly does not serve the Australian public, especially shoppers that have no choice but to shop late at night due to work or other commitments -- most urban and city stores close at midnight.

After struggling with the inconvenience of store upgrades, many shoppers were shocked to discover that previously available fresh produce items were now unavailable an HOUR before closing!

Local store management's explanation for this extremely unhelpful and odd occurrence, is that 'new' staff rosters do not allow for returning stock to cold storage AFTER hours, which was the usual procedure -- the reason is obvious, reductions in staff penalty pay overheads, which may temporarily serve the bottom line but certainly does not serve the Australian public's needs!

This problem is not only attributable to managerial incompetence and inconsideration to the consumer public but to the removal of refrigerated displays which did not require stock to be relocated to cool rooms every night -- draw-down blinds served to enclose perishable stock in refrigerator cabinets and maintain crispness and freshness overnight.

The new labour inefficient strategy requires the unnecessary 'ice' in open displays to be replenished on a daily basis, hence the need to remove stock to cool rooms nightly -- notwithstanding that ice is deleterious to many vegetable and other perishable products!

It would seem that the current situation has not been fully appreciated by the 'numbers' men in upper management. While it may look good on paper it certainly does not 'work' in reality on the

'floor' -- both on a labour cost basis and major inconvenience to the public, who are now forced to request stock returned to cool rooms to be brought out again for purchasing, which increases shopping time considerably.

But to be fair, until such time as upper management become aware of this problem -- I was thanked for bringing the matter to the attention of supervisors in charge of refurbishments -- we would attribute this current counter-productive and extremely inconvenient situation to the 'teething problems' of local managers, who seem more interested in AVOIDING issues rather than addressing and rectifying critical problems -- we shall see!

We certainly hope that this easily remedied situation will soon be addressed and rectified and that the required fresh produce stock would be made readily available for late night shoppers once again -- after all, what's the point in spending millions on renovations and refurbishments if shoppers are disadvantaged?

In the meantime it is comforting to know that the *Woolworths* supermarket chain and other major competitors continue to make ALL stock available to shoppers during trading hours.

<http://www.wesfarmers.com.au/our-businesses/coles.html>

Jungle Drum Prose/Poetry. <http://jungledrum.lingama.net/news/story-276.html>