

## Media Release

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### Do we need a supermarket code of conduct?

Debate over whether there needs to be a code of conduct to regulate dealings between grocery retailers and suppliers will receive fresh impetus in a major public symposium in Melbourne this Thursday.

*Supermarket Power in Australia* will bring together academics, consumer experts, politicians and representatives from the supermarket chains and suppliers to discuss the power supermarkets have in Australian society.

The symposium will be led by Professor Caron Beaton-Wells of the Competition Law & Economics Network at the Melbourne Law School and Professor Christine Parker of the Centre for Regulatory Studies at Monash University.

Professor Caron Beaton-Wells said it was time to again take a closer look at the impact supermarkets are having. “To state the obvious, supermarkets play an important role in people’s daily lives, and have proven over recent years to play an increasingly controversial one. They affect not just consumers and what products they put in their grocery baskets, but also the businesses that interact with them such as competitors and suppliers.”

“While many consumers may feel satisfied with what they perceive as competition – lower prices for example – some argue that it is at the expense of some suppliers, particularly primary producers,” she said.

“So while there may be short term gain for customers, the supermarkets have a degree of power that in the long run, may damage other suppliers as well as independent grocers, leading to higher prices and less choices.”

Among those presenting at the symposium are former ACCC Chairman Professor Graeme Samuel AC and, by video, Christine Tacon, the Groceries Code Adjudicator in the UK.

While there have been numerous enquiries over recent years, Professor Beaton-Wells said none have resulted in a conclusive view about whether or what reforms may be needed.

“We aren’t interested in a preconceived view that the big supermarket chains are ‘bad’. But what we want to do is inform the public better about the power such supermarkets wield, and have a balanced, inclusive debate about their role in Australian society,” she said

“This event is an open forum to have these discussions and tackle some recurring issues.”

Please contact below to arrange interviews. Audio of the event will be available.

#### More information:

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