

## **Update on the priority responses of Australia's hygiene products industry to the COVID-19 pandemic through the industry body Accord**

### **Industry Action Report #2**

#### **Priority action area #1 – ensuring ongoing supplies/access to essential sanitising and disinfecting products**

##### Background

- Public health protection is a primary goal for the industry that Accord represents. Products such as hand sanitisers, hard surface disinfectants and food operation sanitisers will always play vital roles, but never more so than now. (For more detailed background on why Accord's actions on product supply are essential, refer to our previous Industry Action Report #1, dated 25 March 2020.)

##### Potential roadblock #1 – availability of essential product ingredients, especially germicidal active ingredients

- Formulated hygiene products generally comprise an active ingredient kept in a usable form by a range of other ingredients (e.g. the gelling agents in hand sanitisers, which help the active alcohol ingredient do its job). Like most other industries, the contemporary hygiene products industry is highly globalised.
- And this means many ingredients/products come from offshore sources that may be disrupted by global impacts from COVID-19. Additionally, ingredient supply disruptions can also result from local factors and policy decisions.

##### *What actions are being taken?*

- Initial priority action has been on alcohol-based hand sanitisers, which are urgently needed in a variety of scenarios and especially for the protection of healthcare workers. Ethanol supply is just one of many essential inputs for sanitiser products. Accord notes and applauds early attention given to ethanol and other supplies for hand sanitisers by federal Industry Minister Karen Andrews – see [www.minister.industry.gov.au/ministers/karenandrews/media-releases/government-working-industry-hand-sanitiser-production](http://www.minister.industry.gov.au/ministers/karenandrews/media-releases/government-working-industry-hand-sanitiser-production).
- Weekly roundtables are now being convened by the federal Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources (DISER) at the initiation of the Industry Minister. Accord is actively participating in these via relevant experts from within our industry.
- To gain a deeper understanding relating to supply issues for alcohol-based hand sanitisers, Accord has conducted an in-depth survey with more than 45 respondents (mostly member and non-member companies making or supplying hand sanitisers). Initial survey details have been shared with DISER officials as part of the Industry Minister's Roundtable on Hand Sanitisers on 9 April. For transparency, Accord will also publish an Industry Statement summarising the final survey findings, sometime after the Easter break.
- Following the Easter holiday break, Accord will initiate a further industry survey on essential hard surface disinfectants, food/beverage production sanitisers and general cleaning products. Examples of potential supply concerns will be shared with government once authenticated via this survey.

##### Potential roadblock #2 – making currently inflexible regulatory rules more flexible in this time of crisis

- Many formulated hygiene products, particularly those with suitable characteristics for use in medical settings during a pandemic, are regulated by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA). Others designed for general consumer use are regulated in Australia as cosmetics under Australian Consumer Law (ACL) while their ingredients are regulated as 'industrial chemicals' by the National Industrial Chemicals Notification and Assessment Scheme (NICNAS). (For more background on how existing rules may impede essential product supply refer to our previous report published 25 March.)

##### *What actions are being taken?*

- Accord has been in active dialogue with the TGA to discuss suitable measures such as expedited administrative arrangements that could streamline regulatory approvals for sanitiser products and disinfectants. This process is ongoing and is hoped to deliver improvements that will assist to maintain and increase supply of essential hand sanitisers and hard surface disinfecting products. The TGA is also an active participant in the DISER roundtables on hand sanitiser supply.

- An early positive action, which has helped increase hand sanitiser supplies, has been the publication by the TGA of a 'no frills' hand sanitiser pathway built on WHO and US FDA recommended formulations. Details about this can be found at [www.tga.gov.au/hand-sanitisers-and-covid-19](http://www.tga.gov.au/hand-sanitisers-and-covid-19).
- Further dialogue on streamlining regulatory pathways is ongoing and will be reported as completed.

Potential roadblock #3 – product testing for effectiveness against the COVID-19 virus

- **This issue has been successfully resolved.** A range of suitable virus surrogates has been listed by the TGA. Interested businesses should visit the TGA website at [www.tga.gov.au/surrogate-viruses-use-disinfectant-efficacy-tests-justify-claims-against-covid-19](http://www.tga.gov.au/surrogate-viruses-use-disinfectant-efficacy-tests-justify-claims-against-covid-19) or contact the TGA.

**Priority action area #2 – ensuring best possible advice to the public on effective and safe product use**

Background

- Product safety is a primary goal for the industry Accord represents. The many benefits that our industry's products offer in terms of public health protection rely heavily on products being used safely and effectively. It is therefore vitally important that safe use messages are correct. Product advice must be responsible and consistent with best safety practices.

*What actions are being taken?*

- Since 2010 Accord has promoted good hygiene product use for infection control via our Hygiene for Health website ([www.hygieneforhealth.org.au](http://www.hygieneforhealth.org.au)). We have been updating this site since the start of the COVID-19 crisis to incorporate hygiene messages based on the latest information.
- Via engagement with the federal Health Department a revised environmental cleaning fact sheet has been released and can be found at: [www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-information-about-routine-environmental-cleaning-and-disinfection-in-the-community](http://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-information-about-routine-environmental-cleaning-and-disinfection-in-the-community).

**Priority action area #3 – sharing expertise to ensure ongoing product safety and quality in the market**

Background

- Existing hygiene product companies generally have sound technical knowledge and have implemented procedures to help ensure their products are safe, effective and comply with critical regulatory rules. This may not always be the case with new entrants to the market keen to assist with the provision of essential hygiene products.

*What actions are being taken?*

- As part of our contribution to the Industry Minister's Roundtable on Hand Sanitisers Accord undertook to coordinate the drafting of an Information Sheet on the safe production and transport of alcohol-based hand sanitisers. This publicly available resource has now been published and is accessible via the home page of Accord's website ([www.accord.asn.au](http://www.accord.asn.au)).
- Accord stands ready to share other technical knowledge about product standards and regulations as needed as part of our industry response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Update #2, 9 April 2020**

+ends+