


Former Labor minister Craig Emerson tasked with review amid claims of supermarket profiteering

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Supermarkets have been warned “all options on the table”, including government intervention, if it does not pass lower prices onto consumers.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese confirmed former Labor minister Craig Emerson has been appointed to lead a review of the food and grocery code amid criticism of the government dragging its feet on the issue.

“No other government before us has done anything about this ... We are prepared to take action,” Mr Albanese said on Wednesday.

“What we want to make sure is that when the big supermarket chains get goods cheaper off our farmers, then those costs are relayed onto consumers.

“But we’re indicating as the government that we’re prepared to examine mandating (the code) and what further action may be required,” Mr Albanese said.

Currently, the code is voluntary and it governs how Coles, Woolworths, Aldi and Metcash (which owns IGA) interact with supplies and customers.

A review of the code was announced last year but 100 days later a reviewer had not been appointed, sparking condemnation from Nationals leader David Littleproud.

“They have been caught asleep at the wheel,” he said.

But Mr Albanese claimed Dr Emerson had been working on the review for some time and the announcement of his appointment was delayed simply due to the holiday period.

“The decision to appoint Dr Emerson was made a while ago ... (he) has been already undertaking the work,” the Prime Minister said.

Food inflation has eased in recent quarters, decelerating to 4.8 per cent in the year to September, down from its 9.2 per cent peak in December 2022.

The government said it is prepared to use “all available levers” to ensure lower costs for consumers.

Dr Emerson, who previously served as competition, trade and small business minister in the Rudd-Gillard government.

He was previously appointed in 2022 to head a federal review into the payment times reporting scheme, which required large businesses to disclose the time they took to pay smaller firms.

A separate Senate inquiry, established by the Greens, is also set to probe allegations of price gouging by the major supermarkets.

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