

23 November, 2021-11-23

Re: Feedback for the Commerce Commission on the supermarket market study.

Background

I write this from the perspective of being a consumer, living on Waiheke, being a mother and having been elected to the Waiheke Local Board for 6 years. My observation in watching the debates for the market study is that the voice of community seems only represented in terms of the cost of product and how this needs to come down as well as the importance of choice.

However, community are affected in a number of ways and I hope to give some examples of lived experience to add to the conversation.

Context

Waiheke is well served by a range of supermarkets, dairies and grocery stores, a major supermarket, Countdown and three smaller 4 Squares as well as about another 6 independent small grocery stores.

The issues that arise:

Interference with public health initiatives

The duopoly determines the conversation around alcohol availability and opening times in our community. Currently Auckland Council are engaged at the Supreme court over alcohol licencing times. While timings of 9am to 9pm are proposed, the duopoly is insisting that the opening hours are 7am to 10pm. This drives the discourse around opening times, so even on Waiheke where there almost no-one on night shift and few people out after dark, there is pressure from alcohol licence applications to be from 7 am to 10 pm precluding the ability to discuss times that are more suitable to a rural location with little night activity.

From my time on the local board, the time of 9.00 am to 9.00 was not seen as desirable from a public health perspective, but what the Council felt they could get over the line.

Further alcohol is almost always loss leader, promoting alcohol unnecessarily when it is associated with harm.

Communities should not be held hostage in public health decisions by what is acceptable to the big supermarket chains, especially when there is a strong link between alcohol availability (proximity and hours of availability), alcohol advertising and harm.

The same could apply to access to sugary drinks which are also loss leaders and are also a public health nuisance and which also prove impossible to regulate in terms of price and availability.

Online shopping

The large supermarkets all offer an online service and also a delivery service. This creates unfair competition as the cost of filling the order is borne by the supermarket with a nominal fee for delivery. It takes on average an hour for one person to fill two online delivery orders. Smaller supermarkets cannot compete with this level of service.

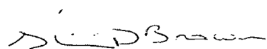
Food wastage

There need to be better accountability of the cost of the wastage and better management of food so that it can be passed on to those who can use it.

I'm sure you have already covered a range of other issues...

- a) The socialising of deprivation where the state and community organisations need to support people to put food on the table because grocery prices are too high.
- b) The undermining of community identity when a supermarket can drive out all the small businesses leaving them as the only viable provider of a range of services within a community.
- c) The undermining of community identity by deliberate exclusion of other shops from precincts they control.
- d) The undermining of community suppliers by not buying from them, or managing suppliers to squeeze the lowest price out of them, or controlling who they can sell to.

Yours faithfully and thank you for the opportunity to comment.



Shirin Brown

