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MORE HELP TO KEEP AUSSIE SHELVES STOCKED

Australia's major supermarkets will temporarily be able to offer more hours to international student employees to help keep shelves stocked.

International students currently employed at the major supermarkets will be able to extend their working hours to help meet high demand for essential items because of the coronavirus. Ordinarily international students are subject to a maximum 40 hours a fortnight during term.

Acting Minister for Immigration, Citizenship, Migrant Services and Multicultural Affairs Alan Tudge said the changes would help supermarkets meet the immediate high demand.

"Supermarkets across the country are struggling to keep shelves stocked with essential items, such as toilet paper, tissues, rice and pasta," Mr Tudge said.

"To keep up with this demand, supermarkets have told us they need to give extra hours to current staff to stock shelves and serve Australian customers. While many of these will be Australian workers, international students will also be able to increase their hours," Mr Tudge said.

The measures will be administered by the Department of Home Affairs and are available to major supermarkets including Woolworths and Coles, and only for existing employees in their

existing roles. Other supermarkets are able to register with the Department if they believe the changes will assist them.

“The changes are short term and will be reviewed regularly to ensure they are working and that they are still required,” Mr Tudge said.

“We will continue to listen to businesses as the coronavirus situation develops and may consider expanding these measures to assist other sectors if and when required. We will also consider providing flexibility with other temporary visas should the need arise.”

Minister for Education Dan Tehan said the changes would help supermarkets meet immediate demand with their existing work force and allow international students to support themselves.

“Our government is working to minimise the impact of COVID-19 in the higher education sector, this includes the impact on students supporting themselves while they study,” Mr Tehan said.

“This initiative will give international students more flexibility to work while studying and also allow employers to meet demand during a busy period.”

Employers are still required to abide by all relevant Australian workplace laws. Students have the same rights under Australian workplace law as all other employees.

More information is available on the Department of Home Affairs website or the Global Service Centre on 131 881.

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