

MEDIA RELEASE

2 JULY 2021

RETAIL INDUSTRY UNITES IN CALL FOR CALM DURING LOCKDOWNS

The National Retail Association (NRA), Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Association (SDA) and Shopping Centre Council of Australia (SCCCA) have called for consumers to remain patient towards retail and shopping centre staff as parts of Australia remain in lockdown.

The three organisations argue that under no circumstance should customers abuse staff whether it be in the form of yelling, swearing or physical aggression

Shopping centres and some retailers have stayed open throughout the pandemic to supply the community with essential goods and services. These workers are on the front line, interacting with the public every day, and often responding to Government restrictions that take rapid effect.

Aggressive and violent behaviour towards staff is not limited to so-called 'panic buying' and is occurring across all retail categories and jurisdictions. It is also occurring where staff are making reasonable efforts to remind customers to follow Government rules such as the wearing of face masks or using a QR Code check-in.

Dominique Lamb, CEO of the NRA said: "It's incredibly concerning that our members continue to report high-levels of abuse and violent behaviour towards their staff,"

"Retailers are doing everything they can to serve the community and operate in a COVID-Safe manner, and no matter how anxious and frustrated some people might be, there is never an excuse to abuse a retail worker".

Gerard Dwyer, National Secretary of the SDA said: "No one should have to be abused for simply doing their job, particularly given retail workers have continued to be on the front line and in many cases are young people doing a part-time or casual job."

"Our industry cannot succeed without hardworking and dedicated employees, and any type of abuse is completely unacceptable, and when you have 85% of retail staff reporting they have been subjected to verbal abuse from a customer and 14% reporting physical violence – you know we've got a crisis on our hands." Mr Dwyer said.

Angus Nardi Executive Director of the SCCA said: "We're united with the union and retailers on this issue, and sadly we've seen incidences in areas such as food courts along with road rage incidents within car parks.

"Our members are operating shopping centres that are supplying the community with essential goods and services.

"We are focused on doing the right thing and in some cases, abuse and aggression towards our staff is the result of them simply reminding people to follow Government rules such as wearing a face mask or using a QR Code check-in".

Dominique Lamb is available for interviews.

Please contact the NRA's media unit on 0467 792 013 or 07 3221 9222.

Gerard Dwyer, National Secretary of the SDA - contact Jim Middleton on 0418627066

Angus Nardi, Executive Director of the SCCA - 0408079184