

The Guardian

Coronavirus: Woolworths moves to ration toilet paper as panic buying empties shelves

#toiletpaper is all the talk online despite experts warning there is no need to stockpile as coronavirus cases increase in Australia

Panic buying Australians are 'really overreacting', experts warn
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No-paper trail: shelves for toilet rolls at Woolworths in Leichhardt, Sydney, after the rush of buying amid concerns over the coronavirus outbreak. Photograph: Lorena Allam/The Guardian

Guardian staff

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Supermarket giant Woolworths will begin rationing toilet paper as coronavirus panic buying leaves many store shelves empty.

On Wednesday, the company announced it had “moved to apply a quantity limit on toilet paper packs,” limiting customers to four per purchaser to “ensure more customers have access to the products”.

“It will help shore up stock levels as suppliers ramp up local production and deliveries in response to higher than usual demand,” the company said in a statement.

Supermarket shelves have been stripped bare as coronavirus and the fear of being caught without a domestic essential led to dozens of people panic-buying the tissue.

Also on Wednesday the Australian recycled toilet paper company Who Gives a Crap announced it had completely sold out of stock. In a statement headlined “holy crap” the company said that “panic buying madness” had exhausted its supplies.

“We also want to acknowledge that these are crazy times,” the company said in a statement which also encouraged its customers to remain calm.

“We feel it too. We’re thinking a lot about how we can do our bit to encourage kindness, empathy and calm. If you have spare rolls, see if your neighbours need some. Go and support your favourite Chinese restaurant. Watch some puppy videos.”

It came after the company’s co-founder and chief executive Simon Griffiths had Tweeted that sales had increased by eight times, with the leafy Sydney suburbs of Mosman and Balmain the heaviest purchasers.

Woolworths said the company was working to re-stock supplies with long-life food, also in high demand.

“The vast majority of the products in our range remain available for our customers as normal,” Woolworths said.

The phenomenon has become perhaps the very definition of rolling news - #toiletpaper has been trending on Australian Twitter.

Aghast shoppers have been tweeting pictures of empty shelves in supermarkets where row upon row of toilet paper once sat, and with it Twitter has been having some fun.

Some shoppers were confronted with a barren sight:

Even more barren:

More emptiness:

But where there was anger and despair ...

There was also observation ...

Others have pointed out that that’s a lot of toilet paper for a few weeks:

And ...

While a black market seems to be thriving ...

and ...

Meanwhile, some have pointed out that you don’t need toilet paper to ... well, clean yourself.

And here's a more over-engineered version:

But it hasn't all been panic and nonsense. In Adelaide, everything is very, very normal. Apparently.

Since you're here...

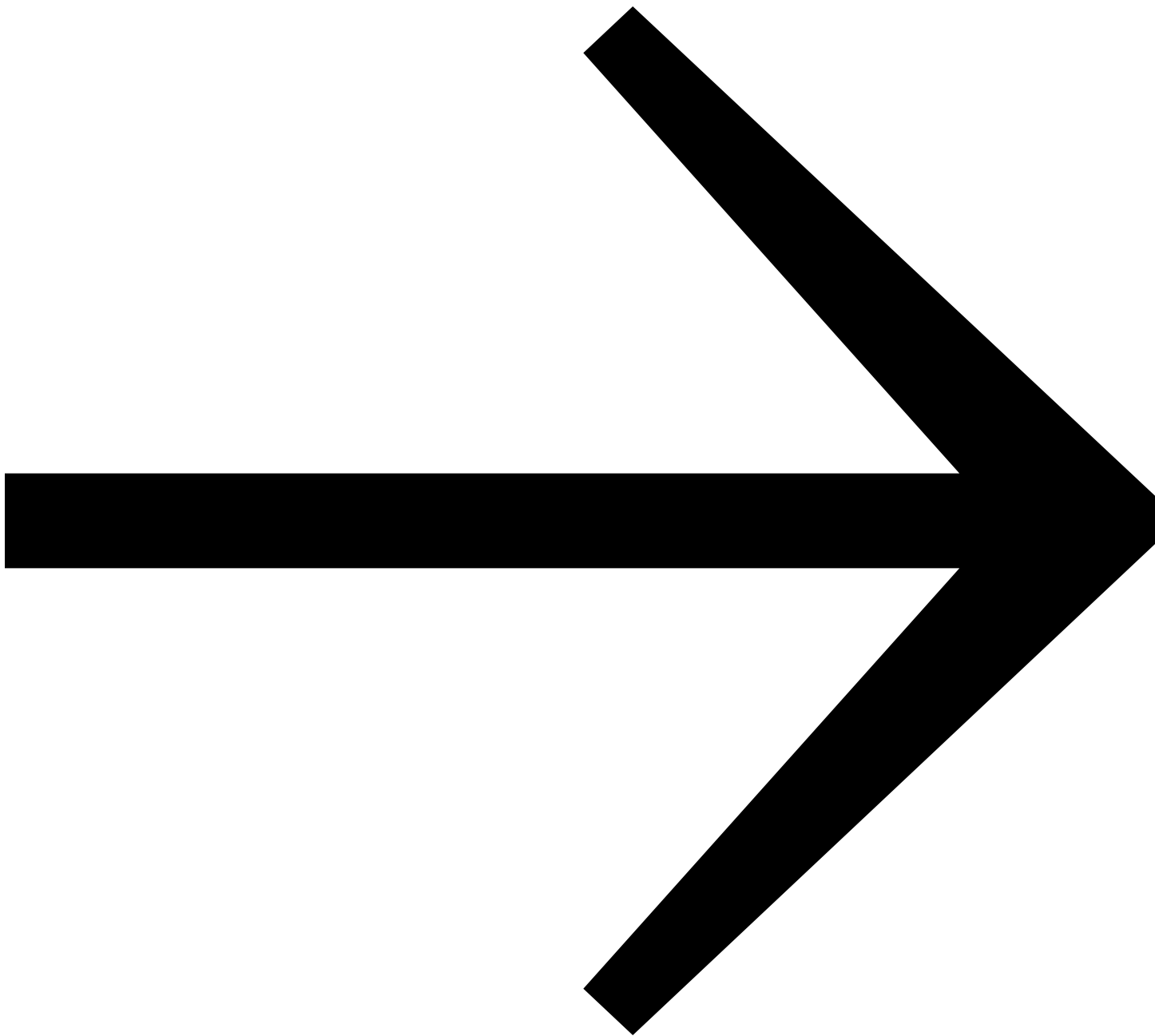
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