Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Essential Distribution Australia Pty Ltd ACN 118 700 771 Essential Franchise Pty Ltd ACN 118 700 762 Essential Wholesale NSW Pty Ltd ACN 118 700 780 J.S. & S Weddell Pty Ltd ACN 007 388 230 The Vital Ingredient (Retail) Pty Ltd ACN 088 389 217

(All Administrators Appointed) (collectively, "The Essential Ingredient" or "the Group")

26 September 2024



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

This document is dated 26 September 2024 and is subject to regular update at <u>https://insolvency.pwc.com.au/</u>.

This document is intended for use by the creditors of The Essential Ingredient group of companies and is not intended for general circulation, publication, reproduction or any other use than to assist creditors in the administration. This FAQ addresses both general queries and those specific to different groups of creditors (see appendices for the different creditor groups identified).

Regular updates and all other correspondence issued by the Administrators can be found on the PwC Essential Ingredient insolvency website: https://insolvency.pwc.com.au/groupEntityCases/the-essential-ingredient-group-of-companies-all-administrators-appointed/casePage

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1. Question & Answers – General

A. General

A1	Who are the Administrators?	Robert Ditrich, Rebecca Gill and Craig Crosbie were appointed as Administrators of The Essential Ingredient group of companies on 26 September 2024 . The Administrators are all partners of PricewaterhouseCoopers Australia (PwC), which is one of the largest multinational professional services firms in the world. You can find out more at <u>www.pwc.com.</u>
A2	Who are The Essential Ingredient group?	The Essential Ingredient group is a retailer and wholesaler of specialty ingredients, professional cookware and kitchen equipment. The Group has three retail stores located in Prahran Market (Vic), South Melbourne (Vic) and Crows Nest (NSW).
A3	What happened to The Essential Ingredient group? / Why did the administration come about?	Like many retailers, The Essential Ingredient group has faced a challenging economic and operating environment. The legacy of stock losses during the COVID closure and higher operating costs have all taken a toll on profitability. As a result, the directors have made the decision to place the Group into Administration in order to facilitate a sale of the business and assets as a going concern.
A4	Which companies have been placed into administration?	 Essential Distribution Australia Pty Ltd (ACN 118 700 771) Essential Franchise Pty Ltd (ACN 118 700 762) Essential Wholesale NSW Pty Ltd (ACN 118 700 780) J.S. & S Weddell Pty Ltd (ACN 007 388 230) The Vital Ingredient (Retail) Pty Ltd (ACN 088 389 217)
A5	What is a voluntary administration?	Voluntary administration is a process that can be initiated by directors, a secured creditor or a liquidator of a company when they believe that a company is, or is likely to become, insolvent. This means that the company is unable to pay its debts, or is likely to become unable to pay its debts as and when they fall due. The role of the voluntary administrator is to investigate the company's affairs, report to creditors and to recommend to creditors whether the company should enter into a deed of company arrangement, go into liquidation or be returned to the directors. For more information regarding administrations, please visit https://asic.gov.au/regulatory-resources/insolvency/insolvency-for- creditors/voluntary-administration-a-guide-for-creditors/?
A6	What is the implication of the Administration?	The Administrators are in control of the business and assets of the Group and are currently undertaking an assessment of the operations. The Group will continue to trade while a buyer for the business and assets is sought.
A7	How does voluntary administration differ from receivership or liquidation?	 Voluntary administration is different to receivership and liquidation. In each case, an independent and suitable qualified person takes full control of the company and/or its assets, however the goal/purpose is different for each appointment type: Voluntary administration – attempt to restructure the company to continue its operations, either in its current form or a restructured version

- Liquidation to wind up the company in an orderly and fair way for the benefit of creditors
- Receivership to collect and sell enough of the charged assets (this may include selling assets or the company's business) to repay the debt owed to the secured creditor.

B. Status of the voluntary administration / next steps

B1	How long will the voluntary administration process take?	The Administrators were appointed on 26 September 2024.
	·	The Administrators are required to convene a meeting of the
		Group's creditors for the purpose of enabling creditors to vote on
		the future course of each company (Second Meeting). Generally
		speaking, a voluntary administration takes approximately 25 to 30
		days unless an extension of the convening period for the Second
		Meeting of creditors is sought. At this stage, the Administrators do
		not intend to seek an extension to the convening period.
		You will receive formal communications setting out the next steps
		in the administration, including:
		a) The First Meeting of creditors (expected to be hold on or
		a) The First Meeting of creditors (expected to be held on or
		before 9 October 2024); and
		 b) The Second Meeting of creditors (expected to be held on
		or before 1 November 2024).
B2	When and where is the First	The First Meeting is held within 8 business days of the voluntary
	Meeting of creditors being	administrator's appointment. A notice of meeting and other
	held and what is the purpose?	information for this meeting will be issued to all known creditors.
		5
		The First Meeting will be held virtually at 11.00am AEST on 9
		October 2024 (i.e., there will be no physical meeting). Please
		follow the instructions in the Initial Circular to Creditors dated 26
		September 2024 if you wish to attend and vote at the meeting.
		At this meeting, the Administrators will provide creditors with an
		update on the progress of the administration.
B 3	When and where is the	The Second Meeting of creditors is expected to be held virtually on
	Second Meeting of creditors	or before 11 November 2024 (i.e., there will be no physical
	being held?	meeting).
	C C	0,
		A link to join the meeting will be sent to all creditors prior to the
		meeting.
		mooning.
		At the Second Meeting of creditors, registered creditors will have
		the opportunity to vote on the future of each of the Group
		companies.
D4	What is the likely systems of	It is too party to estimate the likely return to any ditera at this waint in
B4	What is the likely outcome of	It is too early to estimate the likely return to creditors at this point in
	the voluntary administration	time.
	process?	
		The Administrators will report to creditors prior to the Second
		Meeting of creditors. That report will detail the Administrators'
		investigations into the business, property, affairs and financial
		circumstances.

		 The Administrators' report will also provide an opinion on each option available to creditors (as listed below) and will recommend which option is in the best interests of creditors. Creditors will then vote on these options at the Second Meeting of creditors. The three options available to creditors to determine the future of each company are: a) The voluntary administration ends and control returns to the directors; b) The companies each execute a Deed of Company Arrangement (Deed) if one is proposed. A Deed is a binding agreement between a company and its creditors setting out how a company's affairs will be dealt with. It aims to maximise the chances of the company, or as much
		as possible of its business, continuing to exist, or providing a better return to creditors than would be achieved by winding up the company; orc) Wind up the companies (i.e. place them into liquidation).
B5	Is the Group continuing to trade during the voluntary administration?	During the Administration period the Group will continue to trade while we undertake an immediate sale process. Creditors will be notified promptly, as appropriate, of decisions made by the Administrators.
B6	Are the Administrators planning to make changes to the operations, close stores or make staff redundant?	The Administrators are currently assessing the operations and will undertake a sale of business process. As a result of the administration, some roles will be impacted. Impacted team members will be notified by the Administrators. Further information related to customers, suppliers and employees can be found in the appendices to this document.
B7	Sale of business or sale of asset enquiries	Please direct all expressions of interest for the sale of the businesses and/or sale of assets to: Contact: Andrew Khallouf, Associate Director – PwC Email: essentialingredientsale@au.pwc.com
B8	Media inquiries	For media inquiries please contact Lucy Hinton, director – PwC email <u>lucy.hinton@au.pwc.com</u>

C. Submitting a claim and creditors meetings

C1	How do I lodge a claim?	Please lodge your Proof of Debt (POD) and supporting documentation via email to essentialingredients@au.pwc.com.
		A copy of Form 535 – Formal Proof of Debt (General) and Form 536 Formal Proof of Debt (Employees) can be found in the initial circular to creditors and on the PwC insolvency website for The Essential Ingredient in the "Documents" section.

		For the avoidance of doubt, any POD submitted in relation to the First or Second Meeting will not be relevant for any future right to a distribution from the administration. In the event there is a distribution to creditors, we call for Formal Proofs of Debt and will perform a formal adjudication of all claims.
C2	What is a POD?	A POD, or Proof of Debt, is a form completed by a creditor which details how much the creditor is owed.
C3	What do I need to do before the First Meeting of creditors?	Submit your informal POD and Proxy Form (where relevant) via email to essentialingredients@au.pwc.com.
		All PODs and Proxy Forms will need to be submitted <u>by no later</u> than 4pm Australian Eastern Daylight Time on the day prior to the meeting.
		Detailed instructions will be provided to creditors in the initial circular to creditors to facilitate attendance at the First Meeting.
		It is <u>not compulsory</u> for you to attend the First Meeting and non- attendance will not affect the validity of any claim you may have against the companies. You may also attend the First Meeting as an observer (i.e., without voting rights), in which case, you do not need to register to vote.
		To keep up to date with correspondence from the Administrators please go to <u>https://insolvency.pwc.com.au/,</u>
C4	How do I attend and vote at the Second Meeting of creditors?	In order to vote at the Second Meeting, creditors will need to submit a POD and (where necessary) a Proxy Form via email to <u>essentialingredients@au.pwc.com</u> .
		If you completed a POD with respect to the First Meeting you will not need to complete a POD again for voting purposes at the Second Meeting (unless you require changes to be made).
		All Proxy Forms will need to be submitted <u>by no later than 4pm</u> <u>AEDT on the day prior to the meeting.</u>
		Relevant links and detailed instructions will be provided to creditors in due course to facilitate both their attendance and voting at the Second Meeting.
C5	I want to nominate a proxy for the creditors' meetings	A creditor who is a natural person and is attending a meeting via virtual meeting technology does not need to provide a proxy. All other creditors (companies, etc) will need to complete and lodge a proxy form to be able to vote.
		A new Proxy Form is required to be completed for each creditors' meeting (i.e., previous meeting proxy forms are invalid for the Second Meeting).
		If a corporate creditor wants to be represented at the First or Second Meeting, it must appoint an individual (i.e., natural person) to act on its behalf by providing an executed Proxy Form.
		Individuals may choose to appoint a representative to vote on their behalf by executing a Proxy Form.

		A creditor can choose to appoint the Chairperson to vote on their behalf.
		Completed proxy forms need to be emailed to the Administrators at essentialingredients@au.pwc.com
C6	Can you confirm what is owed to me?	Please submit your claim and relevant supporting documentation via email to <u>essentialingredients@au.pwc.com</u> .
C7	I have a Personal Property Securities Register (PPSR) interest, how do I notify the Administrators?	If you have supplied goods to one of the companies on consignment or have registered a security interest on the PPSR, you can notify the Administrators of that interest via email to <u>essentialingredients@au.pwc.com</u> .
C8	Can I offset monies owed to the company with outstanding monies owed by the company to me?	No, a right of set-off cannot be enforced between pre and post appointment periods.

D. Communications with creditors

D1	Where can I get a copy of the Reports to Creditors or other public communications issued by the Administrators?	 When issued, reports to creditors and other key communications issued to stakeholders can be found on either: 1. PwC insolvency website for The Essential Ingredient - <u>https://insolvency.pwc.com.au/;</u> or 2. by emailing us on <u>essentialingredients@au.pwc.com</u>
D2	Who can I contact if I have questions about the administration?	To the extent you require the Administrators assistance, emails can be sent to <u>essentialingredients@au.pwc.com.</u> We will review all queries received and respond accordingly. We will also update our FAQs to reflect the key themes and concerns that arise throughout the administration period. Please refrain from contacting the PwC switchboard directly.

2. Question & Answers – Detailed appendices

Appendix A – Customers

General		
A1	What does the administration mean for customers?	During the Administration period, the Group will continue to trade while we undertake an immediate sale of business process.
A2	Are my consumer rights impacted?	As a consumer, your rights may be affected. Please refer to additional details provided by the ACCC - <u>https://www.accc.gov.au/consumers/protecting-yourself/when-a-business-goes-bust</u>
A3	What happens to goods that damaged in transit?	No change to the pre-existing policy. If an order arrives damaged, we will arrange either a replacement or refund.
Α4	I have a gift card – can this be redeemed for goods?	Gift cards issued prior to 26 September 2024 cannot be redeemed during the Administration. This does not mean that the gift cards are void – should a purchaser be found for the Group, a purchaser may choose to honor the gift cards on issue.
A5	I have ordered goods online prior to 26 September 2024, will they still be delivered?	Yes, the Group will continue to trade as normal during the Administration. Should there be any changes to online operations, the Administrators will advise customers.
Returns		
A6	Can I return a product purchased prior to 26 September 2024?	Customer seeking the return of products made prior to the appointment of Administrators will be treated has ordinary unsecured creditor and as such, returns will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Appendix B – Suppliers & other unsecured creditors

B1 I am a supplier/ unsecured All creditors of Group are creditors in the voluntary a	administration
creditor of the Group and have of the relevant company. Your debts currently cannot not been paid.	•
Amounts owed to you as at 26 September 2024 will your claim in the administration of the relevant comp	
It is important to note that a voluntary administration restrictions on creditors being able to enforce their ri generally cannot enforce a claim, recover property, e security, commence an action to place a company ir or act on a personal guarantee.	ights. You enforce any
ASIC guidance on voluntary administration is availal www.asic.gov.au	ble at
B2What does this mean for suppliers?The Administrators are now in control of the busines operations of the Group.	ses and

B3	How do I continue to supply the Group throughout the administration period?	 The Administrators have imposed controls and procedures regarding the purchase of goods and services as outlined below. ASIC guidance on voluntary administration is available at www.asic.gov.au The Administrators are continuing to operate and trade the businesses while we undertake a sale of business campaign. We will not accept liability for any goods purchased or services rendered by suppliers that are not made in line with the Administrators' purchasing procedures as outlined below: If there are any outstanding or unfulfilled orders placed by one of the Group companies prior to our appointment, please contact your usual contact to obtain an updated purchase order from an authorised signatory to proceed with the order; and Authorised signatories are limited to the Administrators and specified PwC staff. Please immediately: Close any existing account(s) in the Company's name and send a final invoice/statement to [your usual contact]. The balance of all outstanding invoices as at the date of our appointment will represent an unsecured claim against the relevant company. We will contact you if we require a new account created titled [Company name] (Administrators Appointed). This account will be used for any orders made after 26 September 2024 being the date of our appointment and approved in writing by an authorised signatory.
B4	Why should I continue to supply the Group?	Continuing to operate as usual will give the Administrators the best chance to sell the business and assets of the Group and ensure ongoing employment for staff. This will also improve the likelihood of unsecured creditors receiving a return on their pre-appointment debt.
B5	How long will it take to get my money back?	It is difficult to determine at this stage what, if any, return will be available for creditors and the timing of any such return. Information with respect to this query will be addressed in the Administrators report to creditors and at the Second Meeting.
B6	What is the likelihood I will get my money back?	It is difficult to determine at this stage what, if any, return will be available for creditors and the timing of any such return. Information with respect to this query will be addressed in the Administrators reports to creditors and at the Second Meeting.
B7	I am an overseas supplier (i.e., do not reside in Australia) is the process different for me to get my money back?	No, you will complete the same process as any other creditor in the administration.

B8	Can I take my stock back if I have not received payment?	No, stock is property of the relevant Group company, and it cannot be recovered except in limited circumstances. If you have registered a security interest on the PPSR, please refer your question to <u>essentialingredients@au.pwc.com</u> .
B9	Can I get a copy of the creditors listing of the specific company in the Group?	You will need to request this information directly. Please email essentialingredients@au.pwc.com.

Appendix C – Employees

C1	What is happening to me as an employee of the Group?	The business will continue to trade during the administration.
		The Administrators are currently assessing the Group's operations and will undertake a restructure as well as a sale of business campaign. The Administrators anticipate there will be strong interest from prospective buyers and we hope to preserve as many jobs as possible.
		Please continue to attend your place of employment in line with your current contracted terms unless instructed otherwise by the Administrators.
		Further guidance and correspondence will be provided to staff impacted by the restructure.
C2	My employment has been terminated. When/how do I obtain a	Please send an email to <u>essentialingredients@au.pwc.com</u> if you require a separation certificate following the end of your employment.
	separation certificate?	We will endeavour to provide separation certificates by return email and/or by ordinary post within five (5) business days.
C3	How do I find out what I am owed?	The Administrators will be assessing each employee's entitlements and will communicate with you further regarding this as the Administration progresses.
C4	When will my employee entitlements be paid?	Employee entitlements accrued prior to the Administrators being appointed are generally not paid during the voluntary administration process.
		We understand wages have been paid up to 25 September 2024. The Administrators will pay ongoing employees their wages from 26 September 2024 in the ordinary way.
		Any amounts owed to you relating to the period prior to the appointment of Administrators (i.e., before 26 September 2024) will be a claim against the relevant company and payable in priority to other claims against that company.
		The timing of the payment of outstanding entitlements is mostly dependent upon when the company which employed you has sufficient funds to make payment, which as referenced earlier, will be discussed at the Second Meeting of creditors.
		In the event that the company which you are employed by is placed into liquidation, unpaid employee entitlements may be paid to you

		under the Commonwealth Government's Fair Entitlement Guarantee (FEG). See <u>https://www.dewr.gov.au/fair-entitlements-guarantee.</u>
		The Administrators will advise employee creditors should FEG apply.
C5	Is my superannuation paid up to date?	We will confirm in writing the balance of any outstanding superannuation contributions once we have had the opportunity to review the Group accounts.
		Please advise if you believe your superannuation entitlements have not been paid to this date.
		Any amounts owed to you relating to the period prior to the appointment of Administrators (i.e., before [26 September 2024]) is a claim against the relevant company and is payable in priority to other claims against that company.
		Any superannuation accrued and payable during the period of the administration will be paid in the ordinary course.
C6	What happens to the wages/super/annual leave/long service leave owed to me?	For employees who have been terminated, claims for arrears of wages/salaries, superannuation, outstanding holiday pay, pay in lieu of notice and any redundancy pay due to you following the termination of employment, will have priority for payment over other creditors pursuant to the Corporations Act.
		To the extent these entitlements have not already been paid, it is likely you will need to wait until the outcome of the Second Meeting of creditors before you receive any outstanding entitlements.
		Please note that if you intend to resign during our appointment, you may not be entitled to any redundancy or pay in lieu of notice.
		Payment of your entitlements will be dependent on the level of funds recovered from the sale of assets.
		If the Group is subsequently placed into liquidation, the Federal Government's FEG scheme which is administered by the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, may be accessed to pay amounts outstanding to you. Should this occur, we will provide you with further information and assistance on accessing this scheme.
		Information is also available at <u>https://www.dewr.gov.au/fair-entitlements-guarantee</u> . Please also refer to "Voluntary administration: A Guide for Employees" available on the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) website <u>www.asic.gov.au</u>
C7	What is the Commonwealth Government's Fair Entitlement Guarantee Scheme ('FEG')?	 FEG is a legislative safety net scheme operated by the Commonwealth Government ('the Government') for employees of insolvent entities that have been placed into liquidation. Under the scheme, you may be able to claim for amounts owing for wages, annual leave, long service leave, payment in lieu of notice and redundancy. You may be eligible to receive assistance under FEG for the following employee entitlements: 1. Wages (to a maximum of 13 weeks)

		2. Annual leave
		3. Long service leave
		 Payment in lieu of notice (to a maximum of 5 weeks) Bodundanay new (to a maximum of 4 weeks new year of
		Redundancy pay (to a maximum of 4 weeks per year of service).
		The Government assesses your claim in conjunction with information provided to them by the liquidators – refer to the FEG website for more information <u>https://www.dewr.gov.au/fair-entitlements-guarantee</u> .
C8	When will I learn more about my employee entitlements?	The Administrators will write to your regarding your entitlements as soon as possible. Further information regarding this will be provided in the Administrators' report to creditors prior to the Second Meeting of creditors.
C9	What happens if I am on annual leave or about to take annual leave?	If you are on annual leave you should return to your job on the due date as usual.
		The Administrators intend to honour any annual leave requests submitted prior to their appointment. However, please contact your direct manager to confirm the dates and arrangements.
C10	Can I take annual leave or long service leave during the Administration if it was not	Please submit all leave requests to your direct manager in line with pre-appointment practices.
	approved prior to 26 September 2024?	The Administrators will review all requests for leave and where possible, may approve them in limited circumstances.
C11	What happens to my job if the business / Group is sold?	 In the event that the business is sold or restructured, we hope that this will allow for, either: the continuation of employment per current arrangements; or a transfer of employees to the new owners.
		We will provide regular updates regarding the status of the voluntary administration process.
C12	If I have resigned and am currently awaiting a payout for the balance of my leaves, am I now a creditor to the business instead of an employee?	All employees (past and present) are classified as priority creditors for any outstanding entitlements, that is any entitlements will be paid in priority to ordinary unsecured creditor claims.
C13	I am a casual employee and have been terminated, will I receive a redundancy payment?	No, typically casual employees are not entitled to a redundancy payment.
C14	All other queries	The Administrators will continue to update this FAQ document with additional information on a regular basis.
		Please provide particulars of your query to your direct manager in the first instance, and they will forward it to the Administrators if they are unable to answer your query. A PwC staff member will be in contact with you to further address your query if not otherwise resolved.
		Otherwise, please contact us at <u>essentialingredients@au.pwc.com.</u>

Appendix D – Landlords

D1	I am a lessor and am owed money for unpaid rent (or other amounts under the lease agreement) by a company in the Group – when will I be paid?	Any amounts owing to you at the date of our appointment will rank as an unsecured debt against the relevant company in the Group, as will any amounts due under the lease for early termination of the agreement.
		Administrators are not personally liable for rent incurred during the first five business days after the appointment date, pursuant to section 443B of the Act.
D2	The lessee has paid amounts in advance, what do I do with the income received in advance?	The Administrators intend to trade on the Group while they conduct their investigations. During this time, we anticipate the premises will continue to be occupied by the relevant Group company.
		The Administrators will provide separate correspondence to landlords throughout the duration of the administration to keep them updated.
D3	Will the relevant Group company continue to lease my property and, if so, when will I be paid for any post appointment rent?	The Administrators may choose to exit a lease early due to a decision to close certain store(s). The Administrators will separately correspond with the impacted lessors in this instance.
D4	If the leased premises continues to be occupied by the Group, where should I send my invoices?	Please continue to send your invoices to your existing Group accounts payable contact.
D5	How does invoicing work now that the Group is in administration?	 Please immediately: Close any existing account(s) in the name of the relevant Group company and send a final invoice/statement to your usual contact. The balance of all outstanding invoices as at the date of our appointment will represent an unsecured claim against the relevant Group company. The Administrators intend to provide more specific instructions to landlord creditors with respect to making a claim in due course, subsequent to the review of various lease and other relevant agreements. Open a new account for the relevant company titled "[Company name] (Administrators Appointed)". Complete and return the Vendor Creation Form (VCF) – essentialingredients@au.pwc.com. We are unable to facilitate payment to landlords and suppliers post out appointment without a valid VCF.
D6	Can you confirm what is owed	We are unable to provide an estimate at this stage, please
	to me?	estimate the value of your claim.
D7	When will I find out if you intend to exit my premises?	To the extent any stores are closed, Landlords will be notified directly by the Administrators. The Administrators do not intend to exit any stores during the sale of business campaign.

D8	How long will the sale process	To the extent this becomes applicable, further details will be
	take? And when will I be	provided in due course.
	informed who a potential new tenant may be?	