



Media Release

9th November 2015

Your top recycling questions answered

New National Recycling Week report illustrates benefits to people, profits and planet

What happens to recycling when it goes in the recycling bin? What are the common mistakes householders make in their kerbside recycling? How do Australia's recycling rates compare with the rest of the world?

A new report from Planet Ark Environmental Foundation, titled *All Sorted: Answering the Big Recycling Questionsⁱ*, answers all those burning recycling questions, including the top mistakes and main contaminants that confuse people. The report has been commissioned for National Recycling Week, which runs from 9th to 15th November.

Planet Ark surveyed 115 councils across Australia and asked them what the three most common recycling mistakes made by their residents were. Nine out of ten councils said that plastic bags and soft plastics in the recycling bin is one of the most common mistakes made by their residents; nearly half of councils reported residents mistakenly placing kerbside recyclables into the general waste bin; and food contamination of recyclables was the third most common mistake, highlighted by 23% of councils.

"There is a persistent myth that items collected for recycling end up in landfill, but in reality, it's not economic in most states for councils or waste companies to send recycling to landfill due to state waste levies," said Brad Gray, Head of Campaigns at Planet Ark. "So each of us plays an important role, as our recycling habits influence the success of the whole recycling system."

Depending on the material recycled, the item may end up locally in Australia or being sent overseas for processing and reuse. Some of the most common materials from kerbside collections are re-processed here in Australia, particularly paper, cardboard, aluminium, steel and PET plastic.

Recycling reduces and can even eliminate the need to extract raw materials, saving limited natural resources. For example, 75% of all of the aluminium ever produced is still in use today because it can be recycled infinitely.

It's not just the planet that benefits from our efforts, as business and people profit too. The process of recycling and composting creates more jobs than incineration and landfill, with 9.2 jobs in recycling for every 2.8 jobs in landfillⁱⁱ.

In addition, a study of almost 24,000 individuals across 27 countries found a significant positive relationship between recycling and life satisfaction. The result was linked with the positive emotions associated with altruistic behaviour and doing the 'right thing'ⁱⁱⁱ.

The kerbside recycling rate in Australia is currently 51%^{iv}, with the volume of waste continuing to grow. Due to its unique landscape and dispersed population, Australia faces different recycling challenges than those of Europe for example, where the recycling rate is 42%^{iv} but much is incinerated. New recycling processes, services and stewardship programs are continuing to develop to meet Australia's challenges.



“By keeping up to date with local recycling information and participating in government, community or industry take-back programs Australians can help us become a world leader,” said Gray. “Recycling has become part of our everyday lives and the more we do it the better it is for the planet, for profits and even for people.”

Looking to the future, new product stewardship schemes such as those that deal with TVs, computers, batteries and plastic bottles, will help promote the recycling and safe disposal of items that were routinely sent to landfill in the past. The new [Australian Recycling Label](#) has also just been launched to help reduce consumer confusion.

Visit RecyclingWeek.PlanetArk.org website or call the **National Recycling Hotline on 1300 733 712** for further information about any of Planet Ark’s National Recycling Week initiatives.

National Recycling Week is kindly supported by Associate Sponsors **Australian Packaging Covenant, Bingo Bins** and **‘Cartridges 4 Planet Ark’**.

- Ends -

ⁱ *All Sorted: Asking the Big Recycling Questions* – Planet Ark, October 2015

ⁱⁱ <http://www.environment.gov.au/protection/national-waste-policy/publications/employment-waste-management-and-recycling>, July 2009

ⁱⁱⁱ Welsch, H. & Kohling, J. Pro-environmental Behaviour and Rational Consumer Choice: Evidence from Surveys of Life Satisfaction. *Journal of Economic Psychology* **31**, 405–420 (2010).

^{iv} Corselli-Nordblad, L. In 2012, 42% of treated municipal waste was recycled or composted. (*Eurostat*, 2014)

About Planet Ark and National Recycling Week

Planet Ark Environmental Foundation is an Australian not-for-profit environmental organisation that was founded in 1992. We create simple, powerful and positive actions that help people, governments and businesses reduce their impact on the environment. Our vision is to create a future where people live in balance with nature.

Planet Ark’s National Recycling Week, founded in 1996, highlights the environmental benefits of re-use and recycling programs, while making participation enjoyable and easy through community events and programs.

For further information, interviews or images please contact Planet Ark’s PR team at pr@planetark.org, or:

Sara McGregor
02 8484 7205 | 0424 591 241

Rebecca Gredley
02 8484 7204

