



Media Release

February 2018

China challenge an opportunity for the Australian recycling industry

Planet Ark announces its position on China's restriction of paper and plastic recycling imports

Planet Ark, Australia's leading source of consumer and business recycling information, has said that whilst China's restriction on the import of waste materials has presented a short term challenge, in the long term the Australian recycling sector can flourish as consumers, businesses and the government build a circular economy.

Dubbed the 'National Sword', the restrictions, announced in July of 2017 by the Chinese government, took effect on January 1 2018 and stopped the import of 24 categories of waste material above a specified contamination level. For paper / cardboard and plastics, the contamination rate has been set at 0.5%.

It has been reported that in Australia alone, 619,000 tonnes of materials per annum may be affected by the restrictions, including paper, cardboard and plastic. These materials will need to be stockpiled until it is viable for them to be processed in Australia, or sent overseas to countries such as Malaysia and Vietnam for recycling.

China's decision has also led a recycling division of Visy to no longer accept kerbside recycling collected from 22 regional councils in Victoria.

Planet Ark's believes that this is everyone's challenge to face. Consumers should reduce recycling contamination by making sure that what they're putting in bins can be recycled, and help to promote the domestic recycling industry by buying products made from locally recycled materials.

Businesses need to design their packaging for recyclability and work together to increase the amount of recycled content in their products and packaging.

Governments should provide short term support for councils affected by the restrictions and provide incentives for Australian businesses to recycle and manufacture products made from recycled materials.

Planet Ark CEO Paul Klymenko has said that Planet Ark's wealth of information on recycling can help consumers and business make informed decisions that improve recycling outcomes.

"China's National Sword policy is one of the greatest challenges faced by the Australian recycling industry, and we're treating it as such. We welcome opportunities to collaborate with federal, state and local governments to help Australians become more conscientious recyclers by reducing contamination and producing cleaner recycling streams."

Planet Ark will continue to provide guidance to Australian consumers, business and government using the following tools:

- RecyclingNearYou.com.au – a 'one stop shop' of recycling information for the householder.
- BusinessRecycling.com.au – a site designed to meet the recycling needs of businesses.
- The Australasian Recycling Label - a collaborative effort between Planet Ark and the Australian Packaging Covenant Organisation (APCO) that allows brand owners to label products with standardised information on how to recycle each component of their packaging.

Planet Ark encourages Australians to use these resources and play their part in reducing recycling contamination and building the circular economy.

About Planet Ark

Planet Ark Environmental Foundation is an Australian not-for-profit organisation with a vision of a world where people live in balance with nature. Established in 1992, it is one of Australia's leading environmental behaviour change organisations with a focus on working collaboratively and positively. Planet Ark promotes and creates simple, positive environmental actions – for everyone.

Media: For more information and interviews contact Sarah Thompson, Communications Manager on 0420 892 450 or sarah@planetark.org