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# Frequently Asked Questions

## Australasian Recycling Label Webinars



Sep 2018



Positive environmental actions, for everyone.

## Background

Planet Ark delivered webinars for Australian and New Zealand councils, waste management businesses and consultants to provide an overview on the consumer education campaign of the Australasian Recycling Label. This document contains the questions asked from participants about the consumer education campaign.

### What is the APCO Packaging Recycling Label Program?

The APCO Packaging Recycling Label Program is a nation-wide labelling program that will standardise the use of recycling information on-pack. The Program is delivered by [APCO](#) in partnership with Planet Ark and PREP Design, offered free and exclusively to all APCO Members. The scheme aims to increase recycling and recovery rates, and assist brand owners to design packaging that is recyclable at end-of-life.

### What is PREP?

[PREP](#) is an online tool that guides brand owners and packaging designers to help determine whether a packaging component is recyclable if disposed at kerbside in Australia and New Zealand. Uniquely, it provides feedback to the PREP user to explain why a component is not recyclable, which potentially allows for design changes prior to market release.

### What is the Australasian Recycling Label (ARL)?

The ARL is a set of standardised logos to effectively communicate recyclability on packaging. Its use is based on PREP recyclability results to provide clear recycling information to consumers on the correct disposal method for all separate components of packaging. The ARL was designed by Planet Ark to remove recycling confusion, educate consumers and reduce contamination of recycling streams at kerbside.



Figure 1: ARL example

### How does the Program work?

APCO Members have access to both PREP and the Australasian Recycling Label (ARL) as part of their APCO Membership. Members must agree to the two sets of Terms and Conditions to gain access to both tools. Members use PREP to assess the recyclability of their packaging, and use these evaluation results to determine which recyclability label is applicable on-pack.

# Webinar Questions

## Will plastic bags have a label on them too?

Plastic bags can have the ARL so as long as they have been assessed by PREP and the brand owner is an APCO Member.

## What might be a barrier for companies implementing the label?

To re-label a product, it can take some companies up to 4 years to re-design. Therefore if such re-labeling has been done recently, the brand would probably have to wait until the next re-labeling window to include the ARL.

## Is it compulsory by law?

No it is not, this is a voluntary scheme.

## Does it include compostable packaging?

The ARL provides instructions for kerbside recyclability. If compostable packaging is assessed by PREP, the instruction would be to place it in the rubbish bin, as currently we do not have a national kerbside organic waste collections.

## Do you have to be an APCO Member to use PREP?

Yes you do. The PREP and the ARL are exclusive and free of charge to all APCO Members as part of their annual membership. A link to become an APCO Member can be found [here](#).

## Will you be lobbying the government to set minimum recycling content?

No, Planet Ark is non-political. We want to see people, businesses and governments working together to protect our planet's ability to thrive. This means we will work with a range of businesses across a number of sectors and we endeavour to work with whichever government is in office to bring about genuine environmental change.

## Will education include clarification to look for the label instead of the plastics identification number?

Yes, we will always ask consumers not to use these numbers as a recycling instruction.

## Will this process encourage suppliers to change their packaging to reduce mixed materials?

As we are encouraging packaging designers to design for recyclability, we expect some changes in the materials they use.

## Will this help to reduce over packaging?

Because each separable component of the packaging must have a label, this could be a good incentive to reduce the amount of packaging. Having said this, it is important to keep in mind that any packaging reduction should not compromise the quality of the product.

## Do you have info packs for councils, waste educators and the media?

Yes, they will be available in the ARL website ([arl.org.au/](http://arl.org.au/) [arl.org.nz](http://arl.org.nz/)) from the 31st of October 2018.

## For people who do not want to return to store, will there be something on the package saying that it should go in the bin?

Not on the pack, but it will be part of the communications of the consumer education campaign.

## How does this link up to product stewardship schemes?

This scheme will play a significant role to achieve 100% recyclable, reusable or compostable packaging in Australia by 2025, because it is not possible to have the ARL without the recyclability evaluation report from the PREP. The program responds to the need for transparency in sustainability claims on packaging.

## What if the store won't accept items for the soft plastics?

As part of the consumer education campaign we will communicate that the "return to store" option means to take it back to participating Woolworths and Coles stores. We expect that the REDcycle program will grow in the future, which will mean that more stores will start having the soft plastic bins.

## Can Council access the PREP database?

Only if they are a supporter member of APCO and have agreed to the PREP Terms and Conditions.

### **Do you need to specify the type of plastic?**

Not on the label, but it is necessary for the packaging designer to specify the type of plastic when completing the PREP evaluation.

### **Who are the intended users of this tool?**

PREP is intended for packaging designers, manufacturers and brand owners so that they can design for recyclability.

The ARL is intended for consumers, as it will tell them what to do with each separable component of their packaging.

### **How many producers/distributors have agreed to implement this? And by when?**

As of the 28/SEP/2018. There are 121 PREP users and 58 ARL users. Numbers continue to increase every week.

### **Is there a maximum number of separable components that are allowed to use the label?**

No, it is expected that all separable components have a label, however this is a good example of how packaging designers can reduce or repurpose packaging to reduce the number of labels required.

### **What is the cost for businesses to participate?**

It depends on the annual turnover, a list of fees can be found [here](#).

### **What testing /research was done - especially when it comes to CALD audiences?**

We have not completed research around what works best for CALD audiences. We acknowledge the importance of having an inclusive campaign, however at this stage due to budget reasons, we are not able to do that type of research.

### **How old is the recycling information source stats?**

For Australia, Planet Ark annually updates what is accepted and what is not through the kerbside collection system. In New Zealand, WasteMINZ completes the equivalent. This information is then fed into PREP. PREP is also underpinned by a Technical Advisory Committee that is continuously reviewing PREP data.

### **Are the promotional materials only available in English?**

At this stage they are, however we will have them translated in the future.

### **Will these be nationwide promotional channels?**

Yes

### **Are the resources already available for Councils to access?**

Resources will be available from the 31st of October, or you can contact [alejandra@planetark.org](mailto:alejandra@planetark.org) if you need something before then.

### **Does PREP track the whole life cycle of the recycling process and not just sorting at the MRF?**

Yes, the PREP simulates the whole ecosystem - from when the bin gets picked up by a truck, transported, sorted at the MRF, and its behavior in the recycle markets.

### **Do you expect NZ to come on board the ARL based on discussions you have had with NZ local councils/businesses?**

Yes, we believe this is going to be the case as PREP also represents the New Zealand waste infrastructure.

### **What consideration was given to using existing labeling programs like what is used in the UK?**

We used some ideas and components from both the [OPRL](#) in the UK and the [how 2 recycle](#) label in the USA.

### **By when will the ARL be implemented by the companies that have signed up?**

Some of them have already started, but it depends on their re-labeling timeframes. We expect than in approximately 2-3 years, most products will have the ARL on them.

### **Planet Ark currently promotes recycling of Tetra Pak's but many councils do not collect these due to the technicalities of recycling them. Are they included in this program?**

Yes they are, we do encourage people to follow recycling instructions from their local council first, and the ARL second. Something is considered recyclable by the ARL if more than 80% of the population has access for that item

to get recycled through their local kerbside collection system.

### **Who will monitor that label information is correct?**

APCO will conduct annual audits to make sure all labeled products are correct in relation to PREP and the ARL. All participating companies have agreed to this when they agree to the Terms and Conditions of both tools.

### **Some items are generally only recyclable with added conditions (eg. Food washed out of food containers) will the campaign also focus on these components?**

If this action is what is necessary to be done, which generally depends on the type of package and type of food, then the ARL will have the instruction.

### **Have many recycling companies been consulted?**

The parameters and thresholds from the PREP have been researched, developed and expanded upon since 2007, with reviews of local and international guidelines, consultation with recycling industries and MRFs, and laboratory experimentation.

### **How do you imagine PREP will fit in with the day-to-day work of packaging designers within packaging production companies? Have you engaged with them directly to ensure this tool will fit in with their design process?**

Yes, as mentioned before, many companies have been using the PREP for a while now, and many more have already included it in their designing process.

### **What is the plan when there is no soft plastic recycling in stores in your region?**

In that case, the packaging unfortunately has to go into the rubbish bin. As part of the consumer education campaign, the message will be that whenever the instruction on the conditionally recyclable label is not followed, then the piece of packaging has to go into the rubbish bin.

### **What research did you use to get stats on recycling information sources, recycler types etc?**

Household waste and recycling research, NSW EPA, 2016.

Social Research on Household Kerbside Service Behaviours, Sustainability Victoria, 2014.

Make the Most of Waste Report, Auckland Council, 2014.

### **Will these labels just be on food items? Or all packaging?**

The ARL is for all types of consumer packaging.

### **Have any of the big businesses (Coles/ Woolies/ etc) committed to communicating the ARL?**

Yes, many large retailers have begun using PREP and the ARL. Some of them also have representatives in the Technical Advisory Committee and Marketing Advisory Committee, showing their support for the use of the ARL.

### **Can the soft plastics only be dropped off at major stores? i.e Woolies and Coles or is there exploration into other areas that you can drop 'Store drop off' ARL off such as major shopping centres, local councils etc?**

At this stage, it is only Woolies and Coles. The REDcycle program is run by a separate entity. The reason that these drop off points are accepted by the ARL, is that they meet the threshold of being within a 20km radius to more than 80% of the population. If more drop off points meet that threshold in the future, they can be assessed and included in the program if successful.

### **Is there a minimum size the ARL has to be on the label?**

The minimum size for the ARL artwork is 12mm high (not including instructional tab). For small packaging projects, where on-pack labelling area is limited, the Micro ARL may be suitable for use, where the height of the symbols can be decreased past 12mm, to as small as 8mm. The Micro ARL can only be used when the external surface area of the packaging is less than 100 cm<sup>2</sup>

### **Have you considered the potential impact of changing or reducing food packaging on increasing food waste/spoilage through the supply chain?**

That is not part of the program, the ARL focuses the recyclability of packaging. It is up to packaging designers to design packaging that is fit for purpose.

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