

RECYCLING

Recycling is the process where a waste product is remade into either the same product or something different. For example, plastic soft drink bottles can be remade into bottles, or crate boxes, or even fleece jackets! Recycling helps conserve landfill space and raw materials such as minerals, petroleum and timber, and allows valuable resources to continue being used for a longer period of time. By reducing the necessity for raw materials activities such as logging and mining occur less and less – a win for the community and the environment.

Making goods from recycled materials also helps to reduce air and water pollution, as less energy is needed in most recycling processes and disposal to landfill (creating harmful greenhouse gases and leachate) is no longer necessary. However, in Australia, recycling faces some major hurdles. As we have larger amounts of natural resources available for processing than other countries, some raw materials cost less than recycled ones. Therefore, the cheaper cost of raw materials often makes it a better economic decision than the use of recycled materials.

Due to the sometimes-isolated nature of many Australian communities, the cost of transporting recycled materials to processing plants is too much for these communities to afford and potentially recyclable materials are sent to landfill. If collections are contaminated, recycling viability is also decreased from a sorting and processing perspective. This increases costs for not only the collectors and the recyclers, but also the community.

Recycling benefits the environment and our communities because it reduces waste going to landfill, uses less energy than manufacturing new products, reduces environmental impacts, recovers valuable resources, can reduce the cost of garbage disposal and has the potential to generate income for the community. While this is so, we should remember that the issues surrounding recycling quality of recyclables, market demand, community perception, economic viability and the support of the community all play a role in the success of recycling.

WHAT CAN I DO?

- There is a lot of variation amongst individual councils and recycling collection materials. <http://www.recyclingnearyou.com.au/> allows you to search for those materials you can recycle in your locality. If still unsure, check with your local council.
- Ensure only items collected by your council are included in your collection.
- As well as your council's recycling program, many other items can be recycled. For example, laser cartridges and ribbons, car parts and motor oil, building materials and metals. Ask at your local waste facility.
- Use your purchasing power to steer clear of items and packaging that is throwaway or disposable and that can't be recycled in your local area. The Buy Recycled Business Alliance allows you to seek out and support businesses committed to environmental leadership who use recycled content products and materials. Available at <http://www.brba.com.au/>
- Reject plastic bags – they don't break down and can't be accepted for recycling, so keep them out of your recycling
- Recycling isn't garbage, so treat the material you put into the recycling bin just like you would want to receive it clean!
- Food waste can be turned into healthy, natural fertiliser for your garden, so feed it to your compost bin or worm farm, or put it into your organics collection.
- Keep garbage where it belongs, in your garbage bin, not with the recycling.

MORE INFORMATION

- www.recyclingnearyou.com.au - Search for local recycling information.
- www.wastenet.net.au/default.asp?pid=1494 - click on recycling for a great overview as well as numerous links
- www.zerowastewa.com.au - This site is mostly related to those items recyclable from council collections and where they go
- www.kesab.asn.au - scroll down the 'recycle' section. In particular, 'recycling issues' provides valuable information on the necessary quality your recyclables should have