

RESOURCE RECOVERY

As our population increases, the amount of waste we produce does too. Resource recovery is an umbrella term used to define the reduction of our waste through conversion of waste materials into a resource. Resource recovery, by its very nature, promotes all waste as a resource and is concerned with the waste leftover after businesses and the community have already reduced, re-used and recycled their waste. Resource recovery involves a range of systems and production processes to reduce waste sent to landfill, capture recyclable/reusable items from the rubbish, and convert the wastes into resources such as compost and/or energy. Examples of resource recovery include organic waste (food and green waste) recovered for composting to create soil conditioners and the recycling of spent items such as steel or plastics to be reprocessed into the same type of product or used to create new ones.

Our current waste disposal methods can affect land, air,

water and quality of life for humans and the plants and animals we rely on. To reduce the negative impacts of discarded resources will require changes in the way we purchase and consume products as well as in the way we view resources once their initial use is complete.

While resource recovery diverts or 'saves' waste from disposal, it also reduces the amount of virgin resources that need to be extracted and processed for the manufacture of new products. A recent national study into kerbside recycling has shown that the avoided environmental cost of production generated by kerbside recycling is 20 times greater than the environmental cost of collection and disposal of the material (National Packaging Covenant Council).

Reference: National Packaging Covenant Council, documents available at <http://www.packcoun.com.au/covt.html>

WHAT CAN I DO?

There are innumerable ways to reduce waste and recover resources in our everyday lives. While the links below provide a wealth of information, here are some examples to get you going!

- Avoid excessive packaging or unnecessary items in the first place curb consumption!
- Choose to bulk buy appropriate products and use recycled/recyclable packaging
- Choose products that are recyclable or made from recycled materials and those packaged with only one kind of recyclable packaging as it is much easier for reprocessing.
- Choose durable products able to be reused (for example, ceramic or glass cup over a paper cup)
- Support businesses involved in the remanufacture and sale of recyclable products, or who encourage reusable bags and bulk purchases.
- Compost or worm farm organic waste
- Separate recoverable resources for recycling-check with your local council on what specific items are able to be recycled in your locality, or check for yourself at www.recyclingnearyou.com.au
- Sell unwanted items, for example at garage sales or school fairs, or donate them to organisations like charities, schools and community groups
- Reuse items such as bread bags, jars and containers

MORE INFORMATION

- www.tams.act.gov.au/live/Recycling_and_Waste/schools/teachers - ACT NOWaste focuses on waste minimisation and diversion from landfill.
- <http://www.crra.com/> - California Resource Recovery Association has great organisations, ideas and links to other resource recovery projects and groups
- <http://www.grrn.org/> - Grassroots Recycling Network provides info on positive citizen actions, useful projects and communication between interested people
- <http://www.rfb.com/> - the Canadian Resource Recovery Fund Board is a non-profit corporation aiming to ensure maximum environment and social benefits through responsible waste management.