

The Role of Recyclers in the National Television and Computer Recycling Scheme

The Product Stewardship (Televisions and Computers) Regulations which commenced on 8 November bring a new, efficient and environmentally responsible approach to managing waste televisions and computers in Australia.

In 2007-08 a total of 138 000 tonnes of new television, computers and computer products were sold in Australia. In that same year 106 000 tonnes (16.8 million units) were disposed of. Only 10 per cent (by weight) of these products were recycled with the remainder to landfill.

The volume of televisions and computers reaching the end of their useful life is expected to increase to 181 000 tonnes or 44 million units by 2027-28.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOU?

Recycling organisations play a vital role in helping to manage and reduce e-waste.

The commencement of *the Product Stewardship (Televisions and Computers) Regulations*, which supports the rollout of the National Television and Computer Recycling Scheme, will increase the recycling of televisions and computers and this role is expected to increase.

WHAT IS THE SCHEME?

The Scheme is an industry-led and funded initiative that aims to reduce television and computer waste going to landfill and increase the recovery of resources. The Scheme will lift television and computer recycling from the current low rate of around 17 per cent to 80 per cent by 2021-22.

The scheme will collect and recycle televisions and computers, printers and computer products such as keyboards, mice and hard drives, but not other types of e-waste that householders may want to dispose of.

As it rolls out, the Scheme will provide people with greater choice for recycling when disposing of televisions and computers. Householders and small business will be not be charged to drop off their televisions, computers and computer products for recycling.

Collection services will be progressively rolled out by industry across Australia over the next two years and are likely to start being available in 2012 in some parts of Australia. By December 2013 the Scheme is expected to provide reasonable access to collection services in metro, regional and remote areas.

HOW DOES THE SCHEME WORK?

Importers and Australian manufacturers of relevant products who import or manufacture above a threshold are required to become members of an approved arrangement (known as Approved Co Regulatory Arrangements in the Act) that will collect and recycle covered products on their behalf. The approved arrangement will need to meet the outcomes specified in the Regulations - these include providing reasonable access to collection services across Australia by December 2013, meeting annual recycling targets and meeting a material recovery target.

Approved arrangements have flexibility in how they provide collection services, and will collect products from a range of sources including households and business. This could result in a variety of approaches, including fixed collection sites, take-back through retailers, periodic collections in remote areas and direct arrangements with large business.

Approved arrangements will have an administrator. The arrangement administrator's role includes selecting and contracting service providers for their approved arrangement.

The Role of the Recycler

As a recycler, there may be new business opportunities to become a service provider to approved arrangements.

If you contract with an arrangement administrator, you will need to be able to demonstrate that you can meet the relevant requirements of the Regulations. Arrangement administrators are required to assess the adequacy of environmental, health and safety policies

and practices applied to collection and recycling of products and you will need to meet their standards in this area. You will also need to be able to provide them with information required for annual reporting under the Regulations.

RECYCLING TARGETS

The Regulations specify recycling targets for the Scheme, which are set as a percentage of the estimated amount of television and computer waste generated in a financial year (waste arising). Recycling is defined in the Regulations as the initial processing of the product for the purpose of recovering useable materials, and includes disassembly or shredding of the product.

The percentage target commences at 30 per cent of waste arising in 2012-13 and increases each year to 80 per cent in 2021-22.

The Regulations allocate a recycling target to each approved arrangement based on the import and manufacture share of its members.



Electronic waste collection (Dragi Markovic, Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities)

MATERIAL RECOVERY TARGET

A material recovery target sets requirements for the minimum weight of materials that need to be recovered through the recycling process for further processing into useable materials.

Consistent with the objectives of the Scheme to maximise resource recovery and minimise waste to landfill, it is intended to complement the recycling targets in the Regulations by achieving good resource recovery and to limit the amount of material being sent to landfill.

The material recovery target in the Regulations has been set at 90 per cent, consistent with the estimated average material recovery rate currently being achieved by Australian recyclers of televisions and computers. The target does not come into effect until the 2014-15 financial year, to provide time to standardise measurement and reporting methodologies for material recovery.

E-WASTE RECYCLING AND OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY STANDARDS

It is important to ensure that e-waste is recycled in a safe and environmentally appropriate way throughout Australia. For this reason, Standards Australia is developing a joint Australian and New Zealand Standard for the collection, storage, transport, processing, handling, and re-use of e-waste. The Standard will set guidelines for the collection, storage, transport and treatment of end-of-life electrical and electronic equipment including televisions, computers and computer products. Public consultations on the Standard are expected to be held in early 2012.

Meanwhile, an Interim Standard for Collection, Transport and Recycling End of Life Televisions and Computers, developed by the Australian Information Industry Association and Product Stewardship Australia, is available on request by contacting e-waste@environment.gov.au

Safe Work Australia is also in the process of developing a Work Health and Safety Code of Practice (Code) for the e-waste recycling sector. The Code will aim to ensure the Australia wide adoption of work health and safety compliance requirements by the e-waste recycling industry, set out the occupational health and safety compliance requirements, and provide guidance on practical risk control and hazard identification.

FURTHER INFORMATION

If you are interested in becoming a service provider, please contact the department at ewaste@environment.gov.au for contact details of proposed arrangement administrators and a current list of approved arrangements.

You can find more information about the National Television and Computer Recycling Scheme on the Department's website at www.environment.gov.au/ewaste

Factsheet last updated 24 November 2011

