



National Waste Policy Comment

About Planet Ark

Planet Ark Environmental Foundation is an Australian not-for-profit environmental organisation, founded in 1992, which aims to work with people and businesses to show them the simple ways in which they can reduce their impact on the planet - at home, at work and in the community.

Our objectives are;

- To protect and enhance the natural environment.
- To motivate and assist individuals and businesses to make simple and positive changes to their attitudes and actions in ways which will contribute to protecting and enhancing the natural environment.
- To educate individuals and businesses to be aware of their impact on the natural world.
- To protect the planet's ability to sustain life.
- To work alongside and with businesses in order to bring about positive environmental change.

Planet Ark's Waste Reduction and Recycling Campaigns

Planet Ark engages the public, businesses and local government in a range recycling and waste minimisation campaigns including:

- The RecyclingNearYou website and the National Recycling Hotline. These joint services, which received more than 1.25 million visits in 2008, provide a one-stop shop for recycling information for every local government area in Australia.
- National Recycling Week. Now in its 14th year NRW provides councils, and increasingly schools and workplaces, with educational resources that promote the environmental benefits of recycling and reuse initiatives. In 2008 a minimum of 145 councils hosted NRW related educational activities for their residents.
- The 'Cartridges 4 Planet Ark' program. The C4PA program is an effective extended producer responsibility program with the five participating manufacturers (Brother, Canon, Epson, Konica Minolta and Lexmark) paying for the collection, transportation, sorting and recycling of their used cartridges

as well as for the independent promotion and auditing of the program. In its six years it has diverted more than 10,000,000 cartridges from landfill.

- The new Festive Recycling campaign (which replaced the 'Cards 4 Planet Ark'). The Festive Recycling Campaign encourages people to reconsider their purchasing and waste generation activities during the Christmas and New Year periods – a time when Australians eat, travel, buy and dispose of more items than any other time of year.
- The Aluminium Can Anti-Littering and Recycling Campaign. Originally established to reduce the number of aluminium cans that become litter this campaign increasingly encourages people to consider the greenhouse benefits of recycling aluminium cans. The campaign is developed in partnership with the Aluminium Can Group – the industry body for the aluminium can manufacturers and recyclers.
- The Businesses-RecyclingNearYou website and hotline. Currently under construction, these joint services will link businesses, especially small to medium enterprises, with recycling and disposal services in their local regions. It will provide a one-stop shop for businesses as the RecyclingNearYou site does for householders.



National Waste Policy Consultation Questions

Consultation Question 1 - Are there opportunities to further coordinate harmonise or streamline approaches to waste management across jurisdictions?

From an education and community engagement point of view one of the key difficulties for the Australian public in regards to understanding what they can and can not recycle - both in their kerbside collection and through drop off and collection points – are the wide differences in collection systems and materials accepted.

The situation exists in many areas where one council collects plastics 1-7 while the neighbouring council only collect plastics 1-3. Similarly, in some areas councils collect e-waste on a regular basis while in other councils have a policy of refusing to pick up e-waste.

These differences make knowing what and how to recycle difficult for residents.

The Recycling Near You website and hotline (formerly National Recycling Hotline), provides information on kerbside collections as provided by every council in the country as well as drop off locations for items ranging from cork to computers and from motor oil to mobile phones. Having one central database of residential recycling services assists residents to recycle correctly, and by reducing the time and effort necessary to find an appropriate drop off location, is likely to result in greater recycling rates.

The National Recycling Hotline was developed, and supported for three years, with funding from the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts.

Recommendation: Provide resourcing for, and promotion of, a single, national recycling information and waste minimisation service to assist Australians to find locally relevant services quickly and easily.

Consultation Questions 11 and 15 – What, if any, place should there be for approaches that seek to avoid waste through changes in design, production and transport? What, if any, changes are needed to the way e-waste is managed?

Australia is in the early stages of implementing effective Extended Producer Responsibility frameworks for managing a range of key waste streams. The recent decision by the EPHC to develop a regulatory impact statement for electronic waste is a positive step in the development of a national program for the recycling of this problematic and growing waste stream.

There are a number of examples of successful voluntary extended producer responsibility schemes, most notably the Publishers National Environment Bureau, Aluminium Can Group, and the 'Cartridges 4 Planet Ark' program. Over the past six years the 'Cartridges 4 Planet Ark' program has brought together many of the major cartridge manufacturers (Brother, Canon, Epson, Konica Minolta and Lexmark and, until their recent withdrawal to establish their own program, HP) and the Australian recycling company Close the Loop, to divert more than 10,000,000 cartridges from landfill. Many were returned to their original equipment manufacturer for their reuse and remanufacturing processes while the remaining were recycled using an patented Australian-developed processes.

In both the electronic waste and cartridge industries there are manufacturers that show an active willingness to implement effective extended producer responsibility programs for the items they produce, however, there are also companies that are not willing take responsibility. By free-loading on collection programs like the 'Cartridges 4 Planet Ark' program or refusing to take responsibility for their products these companies delay the effective development of nationally accessible recycling programs.

There are numerous examples, like the IT and television sectors, of industries where responsible and proactive producers are willing to act to reduce their environmental impact by 'design for disposal' changes and establishing effective recycling programs but have been held back by other producers who are unwilling to act.

Recommendation: The speedy establishment of a co-regulatory framework to ensure a level playing field for businesses producing priority products so that environmentally responsible companies can compete effectively with free-loading or inactive companies.

Consultation Question 12 – What changes could be made to improve management of the municipal waste stream and those of the commercial and industrial sector and the construction and demolition sector?

Reducing the amount of waste from businesses forms a key plank in any effect waste minimisation policy. Research carried out by the NSW Department of the Environment and Climate Change¹ (DECC) has highlighted the need for easily accessible recycling information. Research carried out by Pollinate, conducted on behalf of Planet Ark², showed that only around 50% of Australia's businesses are recycling any of the packaging consumables used on their premises.

¹ Strategies for Increasing Resource Efficiency Among SMEs (Draft 2008)

² Pollinate Green Research Report NRW 2007

For the most part larger businesses have the resources to develop policies and procedures allowing them to access appropriate waste reduction and recycling services. Smaller businesses, like local retail outlets, restaurants and cafes small-scale manufacturers, not-for-profit organisations and so on have fewer resources to invest in finding appropriate recycling services.

A small business may need to seek information about recycling and disposal for a wide range of products and materials. A café or restaurant for example, is likely to need to source information about food organics, cooking oil, glass, metal and plastic packaging, paper and cardboard, corks, cling wrap, electronic waste, shop fittings, furniture and more. Searching for a recycling or disposal option for each of these products can represent a significant cost in terms of time.

By building on the lessons and success of the RecyclingNearYou.com.au website and hotline Planet Ark and its partners will provide a one-stop shop of recycling and disposal services, at regional level, available to all Australian businesses. This service, called Business-RecyclingNearYou, will bring together businesses, governments and recycling service providers to assist SMEs to find local services thereby, increasing commercial and industrial and construction and demolition recovery rates.

No state or territory jurisdiction has a comprehensive and current database of recycling and disposal services and Planet Ark believes it would be inefficient for such databases to be developed independently in numerous jurisdictions. Businesses trade across state borders and establishing seven such databases would represent a gross duplication of effort.

Recommendation: Develop policies that encourage the establishment of a co-ordinated national approach, across state and territory borders as well as between industry sectors, of a one-stop recycling and disposal information service to enable small to medium enterprises to find relevant information quickly and easily.

Contact Details

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Disclaimer

The views expressed in this response are those of Planet Ark alone. Although various partner or sponsor organisations are reference above Planet Ark is not speaking on their behalf.