



What a waste!

Australians are among the highest waste producers in the world. We generate almost 41 million [1] tonnes of rubbish each year – that is about 1.9 tonnes from each of us. Half of this rubbish is either being dumped in the environment or sent to landfill where it cannot be recycled.

The Problem

Rubbish: Tonnes of problems

Waste of resources:

All waste materials represent an investment of water, energy and natural resources, such as coal, oil or trees. Once waste goes to landfill, virgin material has to be taken from our environment to produce new products.

Greenhouse gases:

As waste rots in landfill, carbon dioxide and methane are created. The latter is a major greenhouse gas, which contributes to global warming 21 times more than carbon dioxide. [2]

Landfill space and contamination:

It is difficult to find suitable locations for landfills. At current rates of waste disposal, we are soon running out of space. Landfills produce a toxic liquid, called leachate. Leachate is a mixture of organic acids, dissolved chemicals and rainwater. It can contaminate surrounding land and waterways. [2]

Threat to marine life:

Every year over 6 million tonnes of rubbish are dumped into the world's oceans. 80% of this waste is plastic and has led to an estimated 46,000 pieces of plastic for every square mile of ocean and is responsible for killing more than a million seabirds and 100,000 mammals every year. [5]

Recycling: Loads of benefits

Recycling is the process by which waste materials are diverted from the waste stream, sorted and used to produce new products. Manufacturing new products using recycled materials requires far less energy, water and resources than using virgin materials.



To reduce the impact of rubbish on our environment refuse, reuse or recycle a product. The benefits of recycling:

- conserves natural resources, such as coal, oil, minerals and trees.
- saves a large amount of water and energy in the production process, e.g. making aluminium from recycled material instead of bauxite requires up to 95% less energy [2].
- cuts greenhouse gases by reducing the amount of rubbish breaking down in landfill and saving energy during the production process.
- extends landfill life as well as protects land and waterways as contamination with leachate is minimised.
- saves lives of marine animals if plastic and other recyclable material is disposed of properly.

Did you know?

Every 10 tonnes of recyclable materials recovered is equivalent to taking 4 cars off the road permanently. [3]

Recycling one tonne of paper and cardboard saves 13 trees and 2.5 barrels of oil. [7]

Each aluminium can recycled saves enough electricity to run a TV for 3 hours. [6]

An individual who lets their daily newspaper go to landfill will cause 350 kilograms of extra carbon dioxide each year. [9]

Don't put broken drink ware into your recycling bins. Just 5 grams of glass from drink ware is enough to contaminate an entire ton of recyclable glass. [6]

Each year household recycling in Victoria saves 8, 960 mega litres of water alone. That's the water consumption of 3,370,000 people for one week. [10]



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How to recycle

Kerbside recycling

Most council provide households with a dedicated recycling bin for kerbside collection.

What goes in the recycling bin?[8]

Plastics

Milk bottles, ice cream & takeaway containers, juice & cream containers, all other products with the plastic identification codes 1-7 (check with your local council which codes they support)

Aluminium & Steel:

Empty steel cans, aluminium soft drink cans, clean aluminium foil & pie trays, empty aerosol cans

Paper, Cardboard & Cartons:

Newspapers & magazines, cardboard, cereal & food boxes, office paper, envelopes & mail, empty milk & juice cartons

Glass:

Empty glass bottles & jars



What doesn't go with kerbside recycling? [8]

Plastic bags, nappies, ceramics, cookware & crockery, oven-proof glass, medical glass, light bulbs & broken drinking glass, syringes, polystyrene, hazardous and liquid waste.

Check with your local council to find out exactly which materials they accept.

Recycling organic waste

47% of Australia's household waste is made up of organic waste like food scraps and garden cuttings. [2] Recycling can turn organic waste into valuable gardening and farming products, such as fertiliser, mulch and conditioner.

Is there a kerbside recycling bin for organic waste?

Most council provide a bin for your garden cuttings. Some council now also collect organic kitchen waste in this bin, but a lot don't. Please check with your council.

What else can I do?

Create a compost heap, bokashi bin or worm farm for your organic waste. You will get some great rich, healthy soil for the garden in return.

Other recycling

There are many options to recycle some of your other waste materials, such as e-waste, batteries, mobile phones, printer cartridges, polystyrene and plastic bags.

- You can search for recycling options for each product at www.recyclingnearyou.com.au or call the National Recycling Hotline: 1300 733 712.

- Check Clean Up Australia's fact sheets at www.cleanup.org.au/au/NewsandMedia/fact-sheets-index.html.

- Go to our website at www.cleanup.org.au/au/LivingGreener/waste.html.

FAQs on recycling

How clean should the rubbish be? The material doesn't have to be spotless, but should be clean of food scraps and dry when placed in the bin.

What happens with plastic lids?

All lids have to be removed from bottles and jars and thrown into the garbage. They cause problems in the recycling process when left on.

Does one plastic bag in the recycling bin matter? Recycling rubbish placed in plastic bags cannot be sorted. Even worse, plastic bags can get stuck in the sorting machinery.

What is waste contamination? Contamination occurs when a non-recyclable item is placed in the bin and makes other material useless for recycling.

References

- 1) Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, www.environment.gov.au
- 2) Australian Bureau of Statistics, www.abs.gov.au
- 3) DECC NSW, www.environment.nsw.gov.au
- 5) UNEP, Marine Litter: A Global Challenge (2009), www.unep.org
- 6) Planet Ark, www.planetark.com.au
- 7) Cleanaway, www.cleanaway.com.au
- 8) Visy Recycling, www.visy.com.au/recycling
- 9) CUA Activity Sheet Resource Rubbish
- 10) EcoRecycle Victoria, Local government data collection 2002 – 2003 Kerbside Waste Management Services.