

# RECYCLING PLASTICS

The world of recycling is changing constantly. It is influenced by government, industry and consumers. Until recently, the majority of plastic packaging that was recovered for recycling was sent overseas.

Overseas demand for Australia's recycling has steadily diminished, and with the export of mixed waste plastic set to be banned by July 2021, it's essential that we find and develop local markets for recycling.

## WHAT HAPPENS TO THE PLASTICS YOU RECYCLE?

Council and our local recycling contractor are continually working to secure end markets (manufacturers who will use recycled materials) to expand the types of items we can recycle locally.

Currently, plastic bottles with the code 1 and 2, and food containers with the code 5 can go in your yellow-lid bin, as these types of plastics can be made into new products.

### NOT ALL PLASTICS ARE CREATED EQUAL

Some packaging with the code number 1, 2 and 5 is thinned out to form a particular shape, which makes it brittle or flimsy and unsuitable for our recycling. This includes fruit punnets, meat trays and magazine wrap, which go in the rubbish bin.

Plastic containers with the codes 1, 2 and 5 that can go in the mixed recycling bin include: milk and juice bottles, detergent bottles, yoghurt, margarine and ice cream tubs. Don't forget to remove lids and rinse containers.



# PLASTICS HACK

To help identify which plastics can be recycled, check the codes on the packaging. Most plastics with codes 1, 2 and 5 can be recycled in Hobsons Bay. All other plastic types cannot be recycled in your yellow bin.

Throughout Australia, you can recycle some code 4 plastics (low-density polyethylene, soft plastics) at participating supermarkets, through REDcycle

(redcycle.net.au). Plastic code 3s (PVC, such as cordial bottles) and code 7s cannot currently be recycled anywhere in Australia and go in the rubbish.

Locally, plastic code 6 (expanded polystyrene) can be recycled at Brooklyn Resource Recovery Centre and Green Wheel, in Sunshine West (fees may apply).



## RIC SYMBOLS

The International Resin Identification Coding System (RIC) on plastic packaging was developed to identify from which type of plastic resin a product is made. Each type is represented by a number, from 1 to 7, inside a triangular symbol – a symbol that looks a lot like the recycle symbol.

Naturally, consumers often interpret the RIC as a sign that the item can be recycled, but the presence of a code does not necessarily mean that it can be recycled.

Some packaging that's made locally also includes the Australasian Recycling Label symbols. These indicate how to separate packaging into its various parts and how to dispose of each part.

The range of everyday products available at supermarkets includes a mix of imported and locally produced products – and packaging. Always check the plastic codes on packaging when shopping, and choose packaging that can be recycled.

# THE PROBLEM WITH PLASTIC.

**PLASTIC PACKAGING IS USEFUL: IT'S LIGHT AND TOUGH, MAKES TRANSPORTATION EASY AND REDUCES SPOILAGE – DECREASING EMISSIONS. BUT THESE DAYS,**

## THE WORLD PRODUCES HUNDREDS OF MILLIONS OF TONNES OF PLASTICS EVERY YEAR

Most plastic ends up in landfill; a small portion is recycled. Estimates suggest that plastic takes 450 years to biodegrade fully, so plastics produced in the last century are still around in some form. As a result the world is saturated with plastic, and plastics pollution permeates our air, sea and soil. We need to reduce the volume of plastics produced, and recycle more.

Society has traditionally supported a linear, single-use economy in which items are used once, then thrown away.

By recycling plastics, we support a circular economy in which plastics stay in the resource pool and are recycled back into new products – reducing waste, energy usage and the need to use new resources.





# THE FUTURE OF PLASTICS IN AUSTRALIA

There's a strong focus on establishing more sustainable packaging in the future from all levels of government. The Australian Government committed to ensuring all Australian packaging is recyclable, compostable or reusable by 2025.

To achieve this it's targeting three main areas: packaging manufacturing; collecting, sorting and processing infrastructure; and developing end markets for recycled materials.

By targeting manufacturing, it hopes to support the packaging industry to use only materials that are recyclable and recycled. Currently, new plastics are

cheaper than recycled plastics, so there is little incentive for industry to use recycled plastics. However, there are compelling environmental savings.

According to Sustainability Victoria, producing plastics from recycled materials saves 88 per cent of the energy required to make plastic using raw materials of oil and gas.

The Victorian government's Recycling Victoria – A new economy, policy (2020) includes plans to introduce a container deposit scheme, and a statewide rollout of the four-bin kerbside service (implemented by Hobsons Bay in February 2020).

## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- Choose products packaged only in recyclable materials
- Only put plastic bottles with the codes 1 and 2, and containers with code 5 in your mixed recycling bin. Remove lids and place in the rubbish bin, and rinse containers
- Use a reusable water bottle and lunch box to avoid using plastic bottles and sandwich bags
- Take reusable shopping and produce bags to the supermarket to avoid the need for plastic carry bags
- Recycle soft plastics, such as cereal liner bags and pasta bags, at participating supermarkets through REDcycle ([redcycle.net.au](http://redcycle.net.au))
- Spread the word: knowledge is power

### FURTHER READING

- **Australian Packaging Covenant**, [www.packagingcovenant.org.au](http://www.packagingcovenant.org.au)
- **Recycling Victoria**, [www.vic.gov.au/transforming-recycling-victoria](http://www.vic.gov.au/transforming-recycling-victoria)

If you're in any doubt about which bin a household item can go in, check [hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au/recycling](http://hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au/recycling) for the interactive feature: Which Bin Does this Go in?

Or download the Recycling 2.0 app, available now on App Store and Google Play.

