



Council Input Survey Results

Introduction

In preparation for National Recycling Week 2008 (NRW08) Planet Ark surveyed councils from around the country. The survey asked councils to identify the priority areas and materials for recycling. It also asked councils to identify what activities they had undertaken in support of previous National Recycling Weeks, with special emphasis on those activities that had been deemed successful.

The aim of the research was to gather input from councils to inform the development of the aims, objectives and strategies for NRW08, especially those relating to councils.

This document outlines the results of that survey.

The Respondents

In total Planet Ark received 146 responses to the survey.

Councils ranging from metropolitan Melbourne and Sydney to regional Queensland and North-Western Australia were amongst the respondents.

45% of respondents were from metropolitan councils, a further 46% were from rural councils and the remaining 10% represented remote councils.

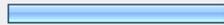
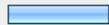
98% of respondents work for a council, with 1% of respondents from a regional waste group and a private company.

Recycling Priorities

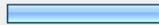
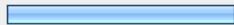
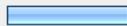
From a given list, councils were asked to identify which specific recyclable materials and recycling aims were a High, Low or Not a priority for their council. The results are as follows.

Working With Businesses

'Increasing recycling participation rates for small to medium businesses.' 36% of councils identified this as a high priority, 41% as a low priority and 20% as not a priority.

5. Increasing recycling participation rates for small to medium businesses.			Response Percent	Response Count
High Priority			36.0%	50
Low Priority			41.0%	57
Not a Priority			19.4%	27
Unsure			3.6%	5
			<i>answered question</i>	139
			<i>skipped question</i>	9

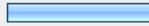
When asked whether “**Increasing recycling participation rates for large businesses**” was a priority, only 30% of councils responded that it was. A further 43% identified this area as a low priority and 24% said it wasn't a priority. Working with large businesses has not been an area in which many councils have traditionally been involved. Considering this, the fact that 30% identified this as a high priority is quite surprising.

6. Increasing recycling participation rates for large businesses.			Response Percent	Response Count
High Priority			29.5%	41
Low Priority			43.9%	61
Not a Priority			23.7%	33
Unsure			2.9%	4
			<i>answered question</i>	139
			<i>skipped question</i>	9

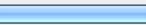
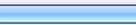
Organic Waste

We asked two questions regarding organic waste. Firstly, was “**increasing the recycling rates for food and kitchen scraps**” a priority? 35% of councils said it was not a priority. 33% identified it as a low priority while 28% said it was a high priority. Of the nine categories, food and kitchen waste proved to be the lowest

priority. As there are a number of councils around the country introducing food scrap collection or currently running trials it is expected that this area will grow in importance over the coming years.

4. Increasing recycling rates for food and kitchen scraps.			
		Response Percent	Response Count
High Priority		28.0%	40
Low Priority		33.6%	48
Not a Priority		35.7%	51
Unsure		2.8%	4
<i>answered question</i>			143
<i>skipped question</i>			5

When asked whether “**Increasing recycling rates for garden (green) waste,**” was a priority, almost 40% of respondents identified this as a high priority, 29% identified it as a low priority and 27% said it was not a priority.

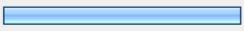
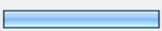
3. Increasing recycling rates for garden (green) waste.			
		Response Percent	Response Count
High Priority		39.9%	57
Low Priority		29.4%	42
Not a Priority		27.3%	39
Unsure		3.5%	5
<i>answered question</i>			143
<i>skipped question</i>			5

Hard Waste

When asked to prioritise “**Increasing recycling rates for items (other than e-waste) such as whitegoods, furniture, toys, tools, etc,**” 47% identified it as a high priority, 31% identified it as a low priority and less than 20% as not a priority.

Collection and disposal of these items has a significant resource impact for many councils so it’s not surprising that increasing recycling rates is not seen as a priority by a relatively small number of councils.

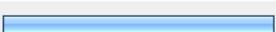
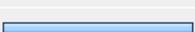
When asked to identify which particular hard waste items were of most importance respondents said: whitegoods 27%; all recyclable items 22%; furniture and mattresses 17%; car parts and metal 13.5%; then an array of items including batteries, car batteries, chemical and bulk cardboard.

8. Increasing recycling rates for items (other than e-waste) such as whitegoods, furniture, toys, tools etc.			Response Percent	Response Count
High Priority			46.9%	67
Low Priority			30.8%	44
Not a Priority			19.6%	28
Unsure			2.8%	4
If a priority, please specify which items. view				60
answered question				143
skipped question				5

Electronic Waste

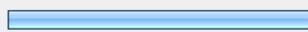
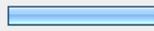
Electronic waste is a controversial area for many councils. Rate payer funded e-waste collection and recycling can be seen as externalising producers costs. The ABS estimates that e-waste is growing three times faster than municipal waste.

It is therefore, not surprising that when asked to prioritise “**Increasing recycling rates for e-waste (mobiles, computers, video recorders etc)**,” 51% of councils identified it as a high priority. This was one of only four survey categories seen as a high priority by a majority of respondents. A further 36% of respondents identified e-waste as a low priority and only 10% said it wasn’t a priority at all.

9. Increasing recycling rates for e-waste (mobiles, computers, video recorders etc).			Response Percent	Response Count
High Priority			50.7%	71
Low Priority			35.7%	50
Not a Priority			10.0%	14
Unsure			3.6%	5
answered question				140
skipped question				8

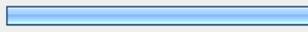
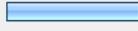
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Around 90% of Australians have access to kerbside recycling and about 90% of those individuals recycle at least some of the materials they use in the home. However, there is much discussion about whether residents have a clear picture of the full positive impact that recycling has. When asked to prioritise “**Linking recycling to environmental outcomes (reduction of energy use, water use and carbon emissions),**” almost 57% of council respondents identified this as a high priority. A further 28% identified it as a low priority and 12% said it wasn’t a priority at all.

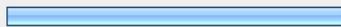
7. Linking recycling to environmental outcomes (eg reduction of energy use, water use and carbon emissions).			
		Response Percent	Response Count
High Priority		57.6%	80
Low Priority		28.1%	39
Not a Priority		12.2%	17
Unsure		2.2%	3
<i>answered question</i>			139
<i>skipped question</i>			9

Packaging Materials

When asked to prioritise “**Increasing recycling rates for key packaging materials (e.g. steel or aluminium cans, glass bottle, plastics),**” 59% of respondents identified this as a high priority, 25% as a low priority and 11% as not a priority. When asked to identify which materials were of most interest, respondents answered: all materials 22%; aluminium cans 45%; steel cans 33%; glass bottles 28%; all plastics 25%; cardboard 24%; and paper 24%. A range of other products were also mentioned by a small number of respondents including Plastic No 5 (4.5%), Plastics 4, 6 and 7 (3.5%), plastic bags (3.5%) and newspaper (1.5%).

2. Increasing recycling rates for key packaging materials (eg steel or aluminium cans, glass bottles, plastics).			
		Response Percent	Response Count
High Priority		58.7%	84
Low Priority		25.2%	36
Not a Priority		11.2%	16
Unsure		4.9%	7
If a priority, please specify which materials. view			76
<i>answered question</i>			143
<i>skipped question</i>			5

With 64% of councils rating it as a high priority, contamination is the single biggest issue for councils. 24% rated contamination as a low priority and only 11% said it wasn't a priority.

1. Decreasing contamination (eg food, drinking glass, polystyrene) in household recycling.			
		Response Percent	Response Count
High Priority		64.4%	94
Low Priority		24.0%	35
Not a Priority		11.0%	16
Unsure		0.7%	1
<i>answered question</i>			146
<i>skipped question</i>			2

National Recycling Week Activities

Councils have always played a central role in Planet Ark's National Recycling Week (NRW). Planet Ark works with our sponsors to develop resources and generate media that promotes recycling generally, and the aims of National Recycling Week (NRW) specifically. But it is councils that provide most of the on-the-ground, community level recycling education and services, making them a fundamental element in the success of NRW.

For this reason we wanted to garner a picture of what activities councils had undertaken for past National Recycling Weeks and to find out which they thought were effective at getting the recycling message out to residents.

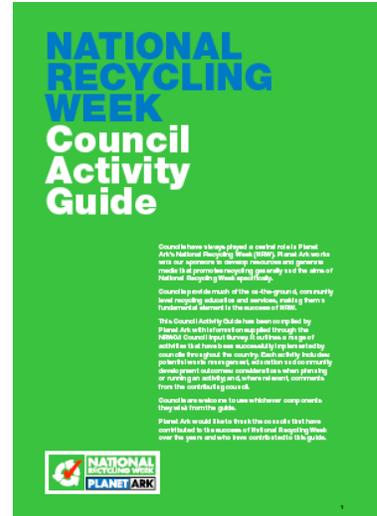
It was clear from responses that councils had undertaken a huge range of activities including: town clean up; light bulb collection; e-waste collection; public place trial; RNY promotion; clothes swap; school visit; steel can campaign; poster and artwork competitions; and so on.

From the array of activities that councils had undertaken in support of national recycling week six emerged as being especially effective. They include:

- Material recovery facility or transfer station tours,
- Composting or worm farming workshops,
- Community Displays (at shopping centres, malls and schools),
- Running kids' colouring and educational activities,
- Holding phone, cartridge and other e-waste collections, and
- Issuing press releases to the local media.



A number of respondents that identified themselves as being new to the waste education or council areas suggested that information on the activities undertaken by other councils would be useful in helping them develop and run activities to promote their councils recycling activities. To this end Planet Ark has developed the *National Recycling Week Council Activities Guide*. This resource gathers together information from survey respondents and lists a range of points to consider if running such an activity. This resource can be downloaded from RecyclingWeek.PlanetArk.org/Councils.



Conclusions

Planet Ark hosts National Recycling Week each November with the general aim of improving the environmental outcomes of recycling. Recycling has positive environmental impacts in a range of ways including resource conservation, energy and water savings, greenhouse reductions and diversion from landfill. As councils are the key supplier of recycling services and education to the Australian public it is essential that they hold a central place in National Recycling week.

The results of this survey have been used to help refine the aims and objectives for NRW08. Reducing contamination, increasing the recycling rates for a range of materials and linking recycling to its broader environmental impacts are all central aims for this year's National Recycling Week.

Thank You

Planet Ark would like to acknowledge and thank all the council employees who provided input to this survey.



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