



12 November 2012

Media Release

National Recycling Week highlights further opportunities to recycle

Australian households and businesses are sending almost 22 million tonnes of waste to landfill each yearⁱ, which is the equivalent of 416 Sydney Harbour Bridges. As much of this waste is recyclable, there's room for improvement in the areas of packaging and paper, food and garden scraps, and a need to move beyond kerbside recycling to tackle complex techno-trash.

A new report from Planet Ark shows that Australians are generally great recyclers at home. The report, titled *Second Nature: Recycling in Australia*ⁱⁱ, has been commissioned ahead of National Recycling Week, which runs from 12-18 November.

National Recycling Week highlights the environmental benefits of re-use and recycling programs, while making participation enjoyable and easy through of community events and programs.

Recycling has a long history in Australia. Rations, scarcity and austerity in the first half of the 20th century meant that people recognised the inherent value of the food, energy and materials they used, so they wasted very little.

Kerbside recycling schemes were introduced in the 1980s and early 1990s, initially in Sydney, and then spread to other major centres and more recently to regional areas.

“Making products from recycled materials preserves natural resources – it’s also an easy way to save energy,” says Planet Ark’s Manager of Recycling Programs, Janet Sparrow. “For example, making an aluminium can from recycled material uses just 5% of the energy needed to make one from virgin materials.”

There has been a significant increase in the recycling rate for packaging over the years, with the overall levels climbing from 39.2% in 2003, to 63.1% in 2011.

On the other hand, advances in technology and our thirst for hi-tech products and fashions are creating new and rapidly growing waste streams. Electronic or e- waste is now the new frontier for waste and recycling.

About 16.8 million TVs, computers and computer products are disposed of each year in Australia, which equates to 106,000 tonnes of e-waste. Only about 10% of this is currently recycled and the problem is growing.

Fortunately, research from the Australian Bureau of Statistics shows that e-waste recycling is starting to catch on, and that nearly a quarter of households recycled or reused electronic equipment during the 12 months to March 2012.

However, much of what is sent to landfill is organic material, including food scraps, garden cuttings, timber and paper. When organic material breaks down without oxygen in a landfill, it produces methane, a potent greenhouse gas 21 times more powerful than carbon dioxide.

The average Australian household generates almost a tonne of food waste each year, much of which could be avoided.

Workplace recycling is another area for improvement, as 33% of waste sent to landfill comes from the commercial and industrial sector. To help bring Australia's good recycling habits from home to work, Planet Ark has designed BusinessRecycling.com.au to help businesses find recycling options in their local area.

Events and initiatives throughout National Recycling Week include the Tetra Pak Schools Recycle Right Challenge, The Big Aussie Swap, the Recycle Right Quiz and the Friday File Fling. Community members are urged to host their own events or join one held by their local council or community group.

Visit RecyclingWeek.PlanetArk.org website or call the **National Recycling Hotline on 1300 733 712** for further information about any of Planet Ark's National Recycling Week initiatives.

National Recycling Week is kindly supported by Major Sponsor **Tetra Pak** and Supporting Sponsors **The Aluminium Can Group, Century Yuasa, the Australian Packaging Covenant** and **'Cartridges 4 Planet Ark'**.

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ⁱ *2010 National Waste Report* - Environment Protection and Heritage Council and the Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, 2010

ⁱⁱ *Second Nature: Recycling in Australia* – Planet Ark and Tanya Ha, October 2012

To arrange an interview or for further information, interviews or images please contact:

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