

Metal waste recovery in Victoria 2008–09

The Victorian Recycling Industry Annual Survey 2008–09 collects information on the Victorian reprocessing industry via a voluntary survey. Victorian reprocessors of secondary-use materials (waste material) report on their reprocessing activities over the financial year. The survey, commenced in August 2009, sought data from 90 Victorian reprocessors. A total of 72 out of the 90 reprocessors provided data for the survey, representing an 80% response rate. It is estimated that the respondent reprocessors cover over 90% of the material recovered in Victoria by weight. An additional 36 plastic reprocessors surveyed for the 2009 National Plastics Recycling Survey¹ were also included in the report findings.

For more information or to download a copy of the Victorian Recycling Industry Annual Survey 2008–09 report, please refer to the Sustainability Victoria website www.sustainability.vic.gov.au

The information presented is an extract of the metal waste recovery figures from the report.

Recovery and trends

Victorian metal waste recovery reached almost 1.1 million tonnes in 2008–09. This represents a decrease of 19% or about 250,000 tonnes from 2007–08. This is despite an increase of 37% in metal waste exported overseas to almost 450,000 tonnes. The large decrease in metal recovery for reprocessing locally can be attributed to a significant drop in metal prices in late 2008 to their lowest levels in 20 years.

Information received suggests that the reduced metal prices did not cause an increase in metal waste being sent to landfill but resulted in the reprocessors reducing the amount of scrap metal they received, which forced collectors and generators of scrap metal to hold onto their metal waste until prices improved. Metal recovery is considered to have the highest recovery rate of all the material categories due to its high value as a resource.

Figure 1 below shows that Steel (including packaging steel) made up the greatest proportion of metal waste recovered up 12 percentage points to 82%. This increase is attributed to the reporting of the Other & mixed metal waste category which went from less than 1% in 2006–07 to 15% in 2007–08 and then back down to less than 1% for the current reporting year. The Aluminium (incl. cans), Batteries, and Non-ferrous metals categories remained proportionally consistent to the previous year.

Figure 1 Composition of metal wastes (by weight) recovered for reprocessing, Victoria 2008–09

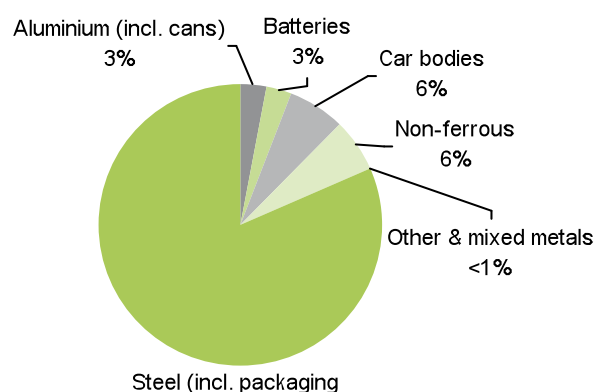
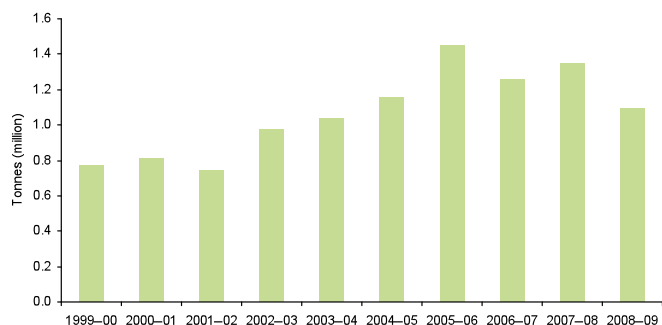


Figure 2 shows that overall the domestic and export markets for recyclable metals had been increasing over the previous six years until 2008–09, with a spike in 2005–06 due to a large increase in exports that year.

Figure 2 Metal waste recovered for reprocessing, Victoria 1999–00 to 2008–09



Sources of recyclables

Figure 3 shows that the sources of metal waste received for reprocessing, predominantly from the commercial and industrial sector, were down 13 percentage points to 62%. The proportion of material sourced from interstate or overseas increased to 4% in 2008–09. Material sourced from the municipal sector increased to 17%, up 11 percentage points, which is partly due to the drop in metals recovered through the commercial and industrial sector. Metals sourced from the construction and demolition sector remained steady increasing by one percentage point.

Figure 3 Source sector of metal waste (by weight) received for reprocessing, Victoria 2008–09

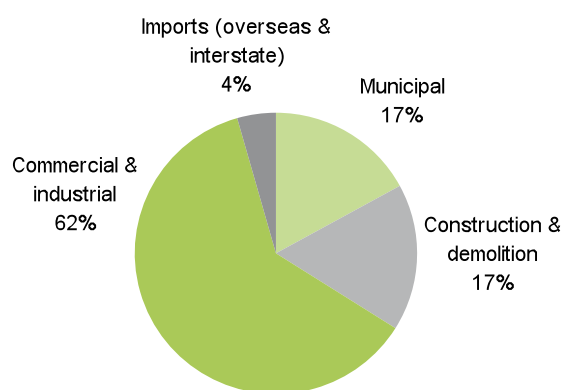


Table 1 Metal waste material recovered in Victoria for reprocessing, Victoria 1999–00 to 2008–09

	Aluminium (incl. cans)	Batteries	Car bodies	Non-ferrous	Other & mixed metals	Steel (incl. packaging steel)	Total metal waste recovered
Tonnes ('000)							
1999–00	35	-	-	35	-	698	768
2000–01	44*	-	-	24*	-	745*	813*
2001–02	33	29*	-	12*	-	667	741*
2002–03	41	35	60	28*	-	807	971*
2003–04	62	30	80	13	-	848	1032
2004–05	88	33	65	19	-	951	1157
2005–06	83	34	78	19	-	1234	1448
2006–07	63	15	120	65	1	997	1261
2007–08	51	36	26	77	206	955	1350
2008–09	51	36	26	77	206	955	1350

* Evaluation and cross-referencing of reported and actual data has led to an adjustment of previous financial year data.

1. 2009 National Plastics Recycling Survey, report to the Plastics and Chemicals Industry Association