



6 Facts and stats

* Ideal to assist in the toolbox talks

General

- The Australian people are passionate about recycling. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 97% of all households participate in the national kerbside recycling system.
- Australians create about 28 million tonnes of garbage every year. Just over one third of this material is recovered for recycling.
- Australia is one of the highest producers of waste per head of population in the world. In 1999, Australia ranked second, behind the USA, in terms of domestic waste generation.
- Approximately 66% of households are composting in Victoria.
- Each year, household recycling in Victoria saves 309,964 tonnes of greenhouse gases – equivalent to taking 51,661 cars off the road for a year.

Kitchens

- According to Waste Audit and Consultancy Services, on average \$15.25 worth of undamaged crockery, cutlery and cloth tableware is accidentally disposed of per business every day.
- Almost 90% of the 'waste' in caterers' and restaurant bins is potentially recyclable, reusable or compostable.

Food

- According to Waste Audit and Consultancy Services, approximately 25% of total waste generated by commercial kitchens and food retail outlets is food. Of this, 60% is plate scrapings and 40% is preparation waste, such as peelings etc.
- Planet Ark research has found that around 3.28 million tonnes of food is thrown out by Australian homes and businesses each year.
- Australians threw away more than \$5.2 billion worth of food and drink in 2004. Half of Australian households admit to discarding \$1000 a year in fresh food alone, while one in seven households throws away more than \$2500 worth each year.
- Putting food waste into landfill can lead to the generation of methane, a greenhouse gas.
- Food waste does not compost readily in landfills because it has no oxygen to assist organic material to break down.
- Each kilogram of food waste consumed by worms and microbes creates 400 grams of rich compost that can be used to fertilise the food we eat.
- Used cooking oil is processed into stockfeed for chicken and pigs or converted to biodiesel – a low-emission fuel.

Glass

- A major contaminant of glass recycling is ceramics. A piece of ceramic about the size of a fingernail can contaminate 20 tonnes of glass, making it useless.
- Of the glass recycled in 2002/03, 85% was manufactured back into glass containers.
- Recycling glass saves 74% of the energy it takes to make glass from raw materials.
- Recycled glass is not only being reused to form glass containers. Crushed glass is increasingly being used as functional and decorative features in gardens and landscaping.

Aluminium

- Recycling aluminium saves a significant amount of energy. Producing 20 cans from recycled materials uses the same power as making one can from raw materials.
- Once an aluminium can is recycled, it's back on the grocery shelf as another aluminium can in 60 days.

Steel cans

- Steel is 100% recyclable, which means it can potentially be recycled over and over again without reducing the quality of the end product.
- Recycling steel cans saves 87% of the energy it takes to make new cans from raw materials, i.e. iron ore and coal.

Paper and cardboard

- In 2002–03, Australians used 4 million tonnes of printing, writing and packaging paper and cardboard, a 10.2% increase from 2001–02.
- Victoria's newspaper recycling rate is a record 77%! This means Victoria, along with NSW, is one of the best newspaper recyclers in the world.
- Over 4.8 million telephone books were converted into cardboard products during 2003–04, saving 3,400 tonnes of greenhouse gases – equivalent to taking 575 cars off the road.
- Producing paper from recycled paper pulp uses 60–70% less energy and 55% less water than manufacturing from virgin pulp.
- Paper and cardboard disposed to landfill is a significant contributor to methane gas, which in turn is a significant contributor to global warming.

Plastics

- Crude oil, gas, coal and waste from petroleum refining all go into making plastics - and these materials come from non-renewable resources.
- Some of the uses of recycled plastics includes clothing, strapping, pallets, fence posts, wheelie bins and outdoor furniture.
- Australians consume more than 1.3 million tonnes of plastic every year - more than 71 kg for every person.
- Visy Recycling processes over 100 million plastic milk containers and close to 250 million soft drink bottles each year.

