



Recycling – Is it a load of rubbish?

ENVIRONMENTAL SAVINGS

ENERGY

Recycling makes used materials available again for the manufacturing of new products. This often results in a more efficient use of both energy and raw materials. For example, making aluminium from recovered aluminium cans and other aluminium scrap takes 95% less energy than using raw materials. As a result, significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions are achieved when recycled aluminium feedstock is used instead of virgin raw materials.

Last year Australians recycled over two billion aluminium cans. The energy saved from this effort is enough to power 270,000 homes for one year – that's equivalent to all the homes in Tasmania and the Northern Territory combined!*

WATER

With the continued drought across Australia, the issue of water conservation has been gaining significant coverage and prominence. Fortunately, households participating in kerbside recycling schemes can make a significant contribution to water saving. For example, the water saved from recycling newspapers last year was equivalent to the annual water usage of 150,000 people.*

DIVERSION

Every hour of every day, more than 2,000 printer cartridges end up in Australia's landfills. Every year, this results in 18 million printer cartridges being dumped. Planet Ark is working with major print companies such as Lexmark, Hewlett-Packard, Brother and others to reduce this appalling figure. The 'Cartridges 4 Planet Ark' program has so far collected and recycled over 3 million printer cartridges – this is equivalent in weight to 38 Boeing 737 planes!

SAVED RESOURCES

Last year, Australian consumers bought 30 million rolls of 'SAFE' toilet tissue. By doing so, Australians helped the makers to recycle over 8,500 tonnes of clean waste office paper.

COMMUNITY VALUE

Recycling has many community benefits. According to The Australian Council of Recyclers, the recycling related industries directly employ over 10,000 people, whilst indirectly creating almost 28,000 jobs. The capital investment in recycling and remanufacturing facilities exceeds \$6 billion.

With 95% of Australians recycling (ABS, 2003), recycling has become a 'social norm' for Australians. This is evidenced through the 15 million tonnes of materials recycled each year.

There are also many recycling or reuse programs collecting goods for disadvantaged people. Community groups collect aluminium cans to raise cash to fund good causes. Second hand stores and charity clothing bins are other examples where key parts of the community benefit – indeed, the Salvation Army is Australia's oldest recycling organisation! Lions Clubs International has also been collecting eyeglasses around the world for more than 80 years through their 'Recycle for Sight' program. People in countries such as Australia, USA and Canada donate and collect the glasses, which are then recycled by being given to people in developing countries

* Benefits of Recycling Calculator 2006, Dept. of Conservation & Environment NSW.