



Product Stewardship - Taking Responsibility

The products we use everyday have an impact on the environment. Items from packaging and food to clothes and electronics need inputs of energy and raw materials including water to make, store and transport them.

When a product reaches its end of life more energy is used for its disposal, including for transport to landfill or it may be illegally dumped. Products then breakdown and may release hazardous substances or greenhouse gases. Products in landfill also represent a loss of valuable resources. For example, every time a TV ends up in landfill the valuable materials it contains, like copper, are lost to the economy. Reducing waste generation in Australia is a challenge.

Sharing Responsibility

Over the past few years governments and a growing number of businesses have started to take a different approach called extended producer responsibility or product stewardship.

Product stewardship works to minimise the health and environmental impact of a product over its entire lifecycle from design, production, distribution, sale and use to disposal, recovery, reuse and recycling.

Currently the cost of managing the end of life of a product is borne by the consumer, governments and councils as clean-up and landfill costs. Product stewardship schemes help to share that responsibility among industry, government and consumers. Greater responsibility is placed on the party that can have the largest positive impact, which is usually the manufacturer or importer.



E-waste takes many forms

Responsible Design

In Australia product stewardship has predominantly taken the form of collection and recycling programs that are easily accessible by consumers and funded by the manufacturers or importers. When the manufacturer or importer is responsible for the cost of managing the end of life product there is an incentive to design for improved recyclability and sustainability. Improved product design can minimise resources used, and waste and emissions generated. This could mean:

- removing toxic chemicals,
- replacing hard to recycle materials with easily recyclable materials and/or
- constructing the product for simple disassembly.



Industry funds the National Television and Computer Recycling Scheme

Product Stewardship in Action

There are a number of product stewardship schemes in action in Australia at present operating under different models, including co-regulatory and voluntary product stewardship schemes.

The National Television and Computer Recycling Scheme

The [National Television and Computer Recycling Scheme](#) is the first, and to date the only, co-regulatory stewardship scheme operating under the *Product Stewardship Act 2011*. The scheme is funded and managed by

television and computer industry and is regulated by the Australian Government which sets targets for access to collection, environmental outcomes and collection volumes. In its first year of operation, 2012-13, the scheme, which operates through industry groupings called 'co-regulatory arrangements' collected 40,813 tonnes of material, more than doubling the collection volume of the preceding year.

Cartridges and Mobiles

The 'Cartridges 4 Planet Ark' program, which has been operating for more than 11 years, is an example of an industry operated and led program. Many of the major cartridge manufacturers - Brother, Canon, Epson, HP, Konica Minolta and Kyocera - came together on a voluntary basis to take responsibility for their products. They cover the cost of collecting, processing and recycling their cartridges as well as promoting the program to consumers. In that 11 years more than 25 million cartridges have been diverted from landfill.

MobileMuster is the first accredited voluntary product stewardship scheme under the Australian Government's Product Stewardship Act and is the official recycling program of the Australian Mobile Telecommunications Association (AMTA). Since 1998 MobileMuster has collected over 8.8 million handsets and batteries through its extensive nationwide network.

Sustainable Packaging Design

The Australian Packaging Covenant (APC) is an agreement between government, industry and community groups to identify and fund solutions that lead to more sustainable packaging. The signatories to the APC make a commitment to sustainable design, use and recovery of packaging. A key objective of the APC is to embed product stewardship as a normal part of business across the supply chain.



Sustainably designed packaging is a key factor in product stewardship.



'Cartridges 4 Planet Ark' is one of the most successful voluntary extended producer responsibility programs

FluoroCycle

FluoroCycle is a national scheme that aims to increase recycling of mercury-containing lamps such as fluorescent lights, and reduce mercury waste that goes to landfill. The scheme is industry-led and has been funded by Lighting Council Australia since July 2013. Prior to this the Australian Government funded the scheme from its inception in 2010.

Further Information

For more information about product stewardship see:

[National Waste Policy Factsheet - Product Stewardship](#)

[The Global Product Stewardship Council](#)

[National TV and Computer Recycling Scheme](#)

['Cartridges 4 Planet Ark'](#)

[MobileMuster](#)

[Australian Packaging Covenant](#)

[FluoroCycle](#)



Associate
Sponsors



Planet Ark Environmental Foundation

Level 3/15-17 Young Street Sydney NSW 2000
T 02 8484 7200
RecyclingWeek.PlanetArk.org