

National Television and Computer Product Stewardship Scheme

A national, industry-led scheme for recycling of televisions and computers is expected to be phased in from the end of this year, following the passage of the Australian Government's Product Stewardship legislation to help reduce hazardous substances, avoid and reduce waste, and increase recycling and resource recovery.

Waste is a growing issue in Australia. In the four years to 2007, the amount of waste grew by nearly a third to around 44 million tonnes – equivalent to over 2000 kilograms per Australian per year. Hazardous waste doubled over the same period.

The nature of waste is also changing, with more electronic and other complex goods entering the waste stream. Certain products pose a particular challenge as they have increasingly short lives, and contain not only materials that can be recycled but also hazardous substances.

Australia's obligations, particularly around hazardous and toxic materials and waste, are also evolving. In the nation's interest, and as a responsible global citizen, Australia is party to a number of international conventions which seek to reduce and manage waste and hazardous substances.

Through its endorsement of the National Waste Policy, the Australian Government is implementing a 10-year vision which puts our nation on a path to producing less waste and managing waste as a resource to deliver economic, environmental and social benefits.

This includes investing \$23 million over five years to support the implementation of this policy, which was agreed through the Council of Australian Governments in 2010.

SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

Central to this policy is the principle of product stewardship, where responsibility for the environmental impacts of a product throughout its life (from design to production through to disposal) is shared by everyone involved in the production, supply and use of that product.



Electronic waste collection (Dragi Markovic, Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities)

Product stewardship takes many forms, for example when people recycle packaging or when companies re-design their product to reduce hazardous substances, they are being good product stewards.

The Product Stewardship Bill, passed in the Australian Parliament on 22 June 2011, fulfils a key Australian Government commitment under the Council of Australian Governments' National Waste Policy. The Bill is expected to come into effect by August, following Royal Assent and proclamation.

PRODUCT STEWARDSHIP BILL

The Product Stewardship Legislation sets a framework to help manage the environmental, health and safety impacts of products. It will support and encourage voluntary action, and provide regulatory support where needed. The implementation of the legislation will help reduce hazardous substances, avoid and reduce waste, and increase recycling and resource recovery.

Following a decision by all Australian environment ministers in 2009, televisions and computers will be the first products to be regulated under the legislation.



Electronic waste collection (Dragi Markovic, Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities)

Industry-led national scheme

The new industry-led national scheme for recycling of televisions and computers will be phased in from late 2011, with consumers able to dispose of end-of-life products free of charge at designated drop-off access points. Access to collection and recycling services will be progressively rolled out Australia-wide over five years.

The scheme is designed to help reduce illegal dumping and divert television and computer waste from landfill.

A joint government and industry implementation working group has been established to develop the operational arrangements for the national scheme. A television and computer stakeholder reference group, that includes local government associations, has also been set up to help with the design of the scheme.

Voluntary local government participation

Local government participation in the scheme is voluntary. Industry and local councils may choose to partner with industry in the implementation of the scheme. Given local differences, these partnerships are likely to vary across the country.

The scheme provides for industry-funded arrangements for the transport, reprocessing and recycling of televisions and computers, including disposal of residual waste. There may be more than one industry-funded arrangement, and each arrangement will have an administrator.

Local councils may choose to negotiate a partnership with television and computer industry arrangement administrators to provide designated collection services. These arrangement administrators will be responsible for overseeing the management of access points and the manner in which they accept products.

Local councils' partnerships with arrangement administrators could be structured in a number of ways, for example:

- co-locate collection sites at existing facilities
- service contracts with local councils to operate collection sites on the arrangement's behalf, or
- short term site arrangements for focussed take back events as opposed to permanent collection sites.

Access to collection services

The scheme will aim to ensure that the community has reasonable access to collection services in metropolitan, regional and remote areas, within five years of scheme commencement.

The phased roll-out plan aims to address the practical and logistical issues involved in developing collection infrastructure and recycling capacity to meet public demand. Over time, the scheme is likely to result in a wide variety of collection services or access points, including permanent access sites, temporary take-back events, mobile services and mail-back facilities.

Further information

For enquiries about the Stakeholder Reference Group or for more information about the scheme please contact ewaste@environment.gov.au

