
Frequently Asked Questions Australasian Recycling Label



Positive environmental actions, for everyone.

What is the Australasian Recycling Label?

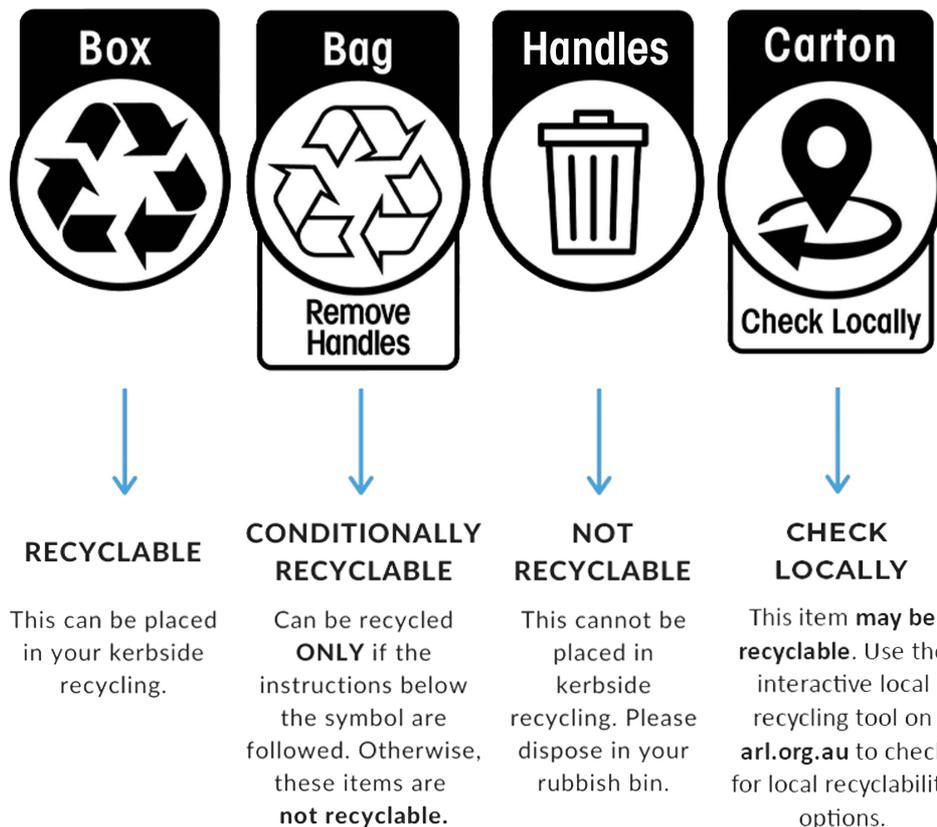
The Australasian Recycling Label (ARL) is an evidence-based labelling system that customers can trust to take the confusion out of recycling. The label provides easy to understand instructions about how to correctly dispose of every part of a product's packaging – whether it's a tray, a lid, a film etc. The Australasian Recycling Label was designed by Planet Ark and is a component of the Australian Packaging Covenant Organisation's Australasian Recycling Label (ARL) Program. It removes recycling confusion, educates consumers and reduces contamination of recycling streams at kerbside.

How does the Australasian Recycling Label work?

In many cases, a product's packaging is made up of several separable components. The ARL identifies how to correctly dispose of each package component.

The four classifications of recyclability under the ARL are:

1. **Recyclable:** The coloured/opaque recycling symbol means an item should go in kerbside recycling.
2. **Conditionally Recyclable:** The clear/transparent recycling symbol means an item is conditionally recyclable provided you follow the instructions under the symbol.
3. **Not Recyclable:** The bin symbol indicates an item can't be recycled and needs to go in the rubbish.
4. **Check Locally:** This item may be recyclable. Use the interactive local recycling tool on arl.org.au to check for local recyclability options. If no options are available locally, you will be prompted to place the item in the general waste bin.



What is different about the Australasian Recycling Label?

Australians care about the environment and want to do the right thing. But with hundreds of recycling labels out there getting recycling right can be confusing. Unlike other labels, the Australasian Recycling Label is an evidence-based system underpinned by the Packaging Recyclability Evaluation Portal (PREP). It is not possible for a piece of packaging to have the Australasian Recycling Label without a PREP assessment that backs up disposal claims.

What is PREP?

PREP is an online tool that guides brand owners and packaging designers to help determine whether a packaging component is recyclable if disposed at kerbside. Uniquely, it provides feedback to the PREP user to explain why a component is not recyclable, which potentially allows for design changes prior to market release.

PREP simulates the recycling ecosystem and has the capability to evaluate the technical recyclability of a package considering its weight, shape, size, inks and glues. It then maps it against the population percentage that has access for that item to be recycled via the council kerbside recycling service, using the data from RecyclingNearYou.com.au which gets updated annually.

What is the ARL Program?

The ARL Program is a nation-wide labelling program that will help consumers better understand how to recycle packaging effectively and assist brand owners to design packaging that is recyclable at end-of-life. Provided by the Australian Packaging Covenant Organisation (APCO), in partnership with Planet Ark and PREP Design, this program aims to increase recycling and recovery rates and contribute to cleaner recycling streams.

How does the Program work?

APCO Members have access to both PREP and the ARL as part of their annual APCO Membership fee. Members use PREP to assess the recyclability of their packaging and use these evaluation results to identify which recyclability label goes on their packaging. The program is administered by APCO, who conducts audits annually to ensure the label is used correctly by brand owners.

Central to the ARL program governance structure are the committees that provide representation from stakeholders across the value chain to ensure decisions made are robust, evidence based, and meet the developing needs of the ARL program. This structure has been an established part of APCO's administration of the program since March 2018, through various iterations as the former Marketing and Technical Advisory Committees (MAC and TAC), several material subcommittees, and the 2022 ARL Advisory Committee (AAC).

In 2023, the ARL program underwent a governance structure review. The primary decision-maker for the program is the Internal Review Committee (IRC), which will interact with subcommittees that cover APCO's various topics.

This committee has final decision-making authority over the ARL. It reviews all recommendations from the management team and other governance and advisory committees. It is responsible for making decisions about the ARL program aligned to program principles and informed by accurate and well-evidenced information.

Is the use of the Australasian Recycling Label mandatory ?

The Australasian Recycling Label is currently a voluntary program. However, the scheme has been adopted by a significant proportion of the Australian business community and is expanding rapidly.

Why does a piece of packaging not have the Australasian Recycling Label even though the brand is a program participant?

Sometimes it can take several years for brands to change their packaging. For many brands it is necessary to use all the current stock before placing packaging with new labelling on shelf.

Why does my council not accept certain items that the Australasian Recycling Label says are recyclable?

The Australasian Recycling Label has different thresholds on recycling kerbside access levels, this means that in some rare cases, the Australasian Recycling Label will not be applicable to your council for certain pieces of packaging:

1. **Recyclable:** More than 80% of the population has access to council kerbside recycling for that piece of packaging.
2. **Check Locally:** Between 60% and 80% of the population has access to council kerbside for that piece of packaging.
3. **Not Recyclable:** Less than 60% of the population has access to council kerbside recycling for that piece of packaging.

I am a brand owner/packaging manufacturer, how can I get the Australasian Recycling Label on my packaging?

Please contact the Australian Packaging Covenant Organisation at memberservices@apco.org.au.

What role does the Australasian Recycling Label play in current waste education campaigns?

Research shows that the first place where consumers look for packaging disposal information is the package itself. The Australasian Recycling Label supports current waste education campaigns by providing consumers with the tools to make an informed decision. Launching in October 2020, Planet Ark and APCO's Check It! Before You Chuck It campaign has been developed to remind Australians to look for the ARL on packaging every time they are at the bin and to follow its instructions to dispose of their packaging correctly.

The centrepiece is a creative suite featuring a cast of visually engaging characters, which includes an animation and a catchy song. The animation and the jingle encourage consumers to look for the ARL each time they are at the bin in order to properly dispose of packaging and reduce contamination in the waste stream.

What role do governments play in the Program?

Governments, particularly local councils, play an important role in the Australian Recycling Label (ARL) program. Local councils contribute significantly to the ARL program by providing valuable data through the annual Kerbside Access Level data survey that informs the collection thresholds in PREP. Moreover, the Australian government has recognised the importance of the ARL in the National Waste Policy Action Plan. This plan highlights the ARL as a critical action area for increasing consumer awareness and improving recycling practices nationwide. Similarly, the ARL was called out in the National Plastics Plan, demonstrating its significance in the broader context of plastic waste reduction and sustainability efforts.

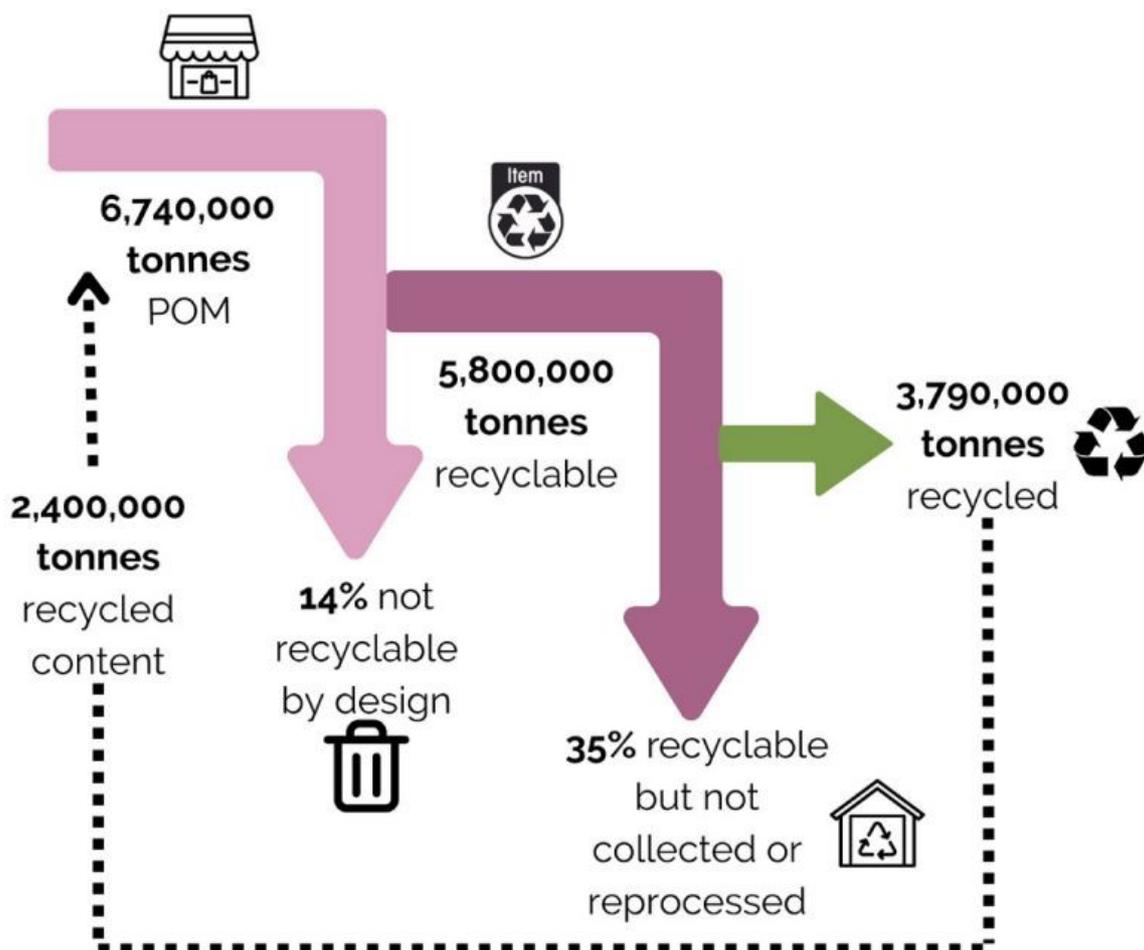
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Is the packaging actually getting recycled?

In Australia, the recycling process recovers and diverts around 49% of packaging consumed¹. Unfortunately, recoverable materials are often lost before they can be collected for sorting at material recycling facilities (MRFs) or via container deposit schemes (CDS). These losses can be attributed to incorrect disposal of packaging waste by households and businesses.

This means that recycling efforts and accurate and consistent on-pack recycling information have never been more important. It is possible to increase recycling rates in Australia; however, it is necessary that government, consumers, the waste industry and companies play their part.



Based on information from the [Australian Packaging Consumption and Recovery Data 2020-2021](#). APCO will soon release the updated (2021-2022) data.

¹ Australian Packaging Consumption & Resource Recovery Data, APCO: <https://www.packagingcovenant.org.au/documents/item/3164>

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