

Tougher drive to reduce industrial packaging waste

National Environment Protection and Heritage Councillors agreed in December that more needs to be done to reduce the large amount of industrial packaging waste going to landfill. New, tougher targets out to 2008 are being set to try to ensure this is achieved.

Referring to the National Packaging Covenant, an agreement between government and industry set up five years ago to address the rising environmental impact of packaging waste, Australia's Environment and Heritage Minister, Senator Ian Campbell, said that while some good progress had been made, current amounts of landfilled waste were unacceptable.

'I congratulate industry on what's been achieved so far, but frankly our record in how much packaging waste is being sent to landfill is not good enough and needs to be improved,' Senator Campbell said.

'I urge governments, industry and NGOs to use the forthcoming consultation package and work together to develop achievable but ambitious targets for the council to consider in April next year.'

The proposal to strengthen and extend the covenant by five years included establishing performance indicators and a

new governance and compliance regime to ensure transparent annual reporting, and to help signatories actually follow through their obligations under the covenant.

The revised covenant also aims to conserve resources by encouraging better design and production processes around packaging, and to increase reuse and recycling. New measures are to include more collection points in public places, offices and industrial sites.

Councillors also addressed the need for the recycling of common products like car tyres and televisions by the companies that sell them. A discussion paper outlining new ways to support voluntary action by industry was released at the meeting.

'Television and tyre producers have asked governments to support planned product stewardship schemes and we welcome their efforts to keep their products out of landfill,' Senator Campbell said.

'We expect that setting out a clear mechanism to ensure everyone is competing on a level playing field will motivate voluntary action by other industry groups as well.'

In Victoria, meanwhile, the Top 30 Project has engaged the



Ex-industrial product makes up a huge proportion of landfill waste.

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State's largest generators of manufacturing related industrial waste in a voluntary program to reduce the amounts being landfilled. The program is being reinforced by a new waste exchange database, developed and funded by EPA Victoria in conjunction with the Victorian Waste Management Association, which will provide a free-of-charge forum for waste generators and potential recyclers to make initial contact and develop mutually beneficial partnerships.

'The database will put waste, which would otherwise be sent to landfill, into the commercial domain as a potential resource,' said EPA Victoria chairman,

Mick Bourke. It will help 'develop the type of partnership forged between Pilkington and Alex Fraser, which has seen significant environmental and economic benefits,' he said.

Now part of an ongoing cooperation, glass manufacturer Pilkington's landfilled waste reduced by a striking 98% after pairing up with Alex Fraser Recycling and finding that high pH silicate material could be safely used in road base.

More information:

About the Conservation Covenant: www.deh.gov.au/industry/waste/covenant/
About the Victorian Waste Exchange database: www.wastepro.com.au

An encouraging increase in used-oil recycling

The Government's Product Stewardship for Oil Program, which provides industry incentives to collect and recycle used-oil, seems to be working very well. About 80% of Australia's used oil was collected and recycled last year, increasing volumes from 160 million litres to over 230 million litres per year, a rise of 40%.

Since 2000 the federal government has provided over \$10 million to fund state and

local government networks of used-oil collection facilities. Technology development has also been addressed, and Australia's first re-refining plant is now operating in New South Wales, producing over 5 1/2 million litres of as-new lubricating oil last year.

According to the Environment and Heritage Minister Senator Ian Campbell, more than 700 used-oil collection facilities have been funded

so far, with more planned. 'In particular, we'll be focusing on the recycling of used oil in remote Australia and Indigenous communities,' he said, outlining the government's plans to build on the success of the program and widen understanding about used-oil handling.

'Disposing of used oil the wrong way can pollute land, water and infrastructure. One litre of used oil can contaminate up to one million litres of water.'



Stockpiles of waste oil can now be valuably processed. istockphoto