

## Simple step saves mattresses from landfill

**Where do old mattresses go to die? 'Landfill' is the answer, and this can be a significant economic burden for local councils as landfill costs rise. South Gippsland Shire Council has instituted a simple program to tackle the problem.**



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Humans spend about a third of their lives sleeping, which makes mattresses the most used items in the home.

After 8–10 years, when the springs break and the middle sags, most people invest in a new mattress.

Eric Neville is Environmental Projects Officer at South Gippsland Shire Council.

‘Most old mattresses in our area were heading straight to landfill,’ says Mr Neville. ‘From a purely practical point of view, they were taking up a lot of landfill, which is becoming increasingly costly.’

Mattresses are also made of valuable materials, most of which are recyclable.

‘The foam and fabric is sent to landfill, but the steel springs and wooden frames can be recycled,’ says Mr Neville.

South Gippsland Shire Council’s first attempt at a mattress recycling program was unsuccessful.

‘They would sit in the weather and get wet and it didn't work,’ says Mr Neville.

‘It was an Occupational Health and Safety risk for our staff and contractors.’

An application for \$6500 of funding from Sustainability Victoria to help purchase shipping containers at three of the council's transfer stations turned the program around.

'It's a simple solution, but it means we can store the mattresses so that they can be safely handled and transferred for recycling.'

Initial estimates of the number of mattresses diverted from landfill was around 400 single and 500 double mattresses per year, which has since been exceeded.

'Last financial year we processed 622 single and 658 double mattresses. So the success of the program is growing as awareness grows in the community,' says Mr Neville.

To find out how to recycle your old mattress, contact your local council. There are also private service providers who can come and collect mattresses from you to be recycled or re-used.

Source: Sustainability Victoria

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