

Proposed Action Plan

All three levels of government, as well as the private sector and the community, are responsible for making sure we manage our resources sustainably.

Victoria's recycling system is broken but, with the right policy leadership and investment, it can be saved and strengthened. Unsustainable levels of waste generation and market failure must be addressed.

We've identified five key actions each tier of government should take to rescue our recycling system. These actions are focused on achieving lasting beneficial change. They are not quick fixes, but urgently need to be implemented.

Victorian Government

Action 1: Invest in recycling infrastructure

Commit greater quantities of Sustainability Fund money to bolster sorting and processing capability in Victoria. We urgently need more capacity in our materials recovery facilities across the state.

Action 2: Fund and support market development

Commit greater quantities of Sustainability Fund money to drive demand for recycled content. Support research and development to increase uptake of new uses for recycled materials. Set mandatory procurement targets for Australian recycled material by government agencies. Incentivise procurement of Australian recycled content by others. Support the MAV to develop procurement options for councils.

Action 3: Introduce a container deposit scheme

Commit to introducing container deposit legislation into parliament this year and work with the MAV and councils to ensure it achieves the best outcomes for the community. Victoria and Tasmania are the only Australian states yet to commit to a scheme.

Action 4: Bolster community education

Commit greater quantities of Sustainability Fund money to develop and deliver a consistent state-wide community education campaign focused on:

- making waste-wise decisions
- putting pressure on producers to reduce waste
- what can and can't go into recycling and the costs of getting it wrong.

The education campaign should use the channels that most effectively reach the community and apply learnings from other successful government campaigns.

Action 5: Strengthen industry oversight / regulation

Recycling is considered an essential service by most, yet the few large operators we have in Victoria operate under a veil of secrecy. The State must improve transparency and accountability within the industry. Access to robust and credible data on market conditions, and costs and revenue within the recycling sector is essential to achieve best value for the community.

IMMEDIATE PRIORITY

In the immediate short-term, we call on the Victorian government to provide funding relief to councils affected by the SKM closures to cover unbudgeted additional costs arising from the urgent need to find alternative options for the community's recycling.

With more than half a billion dollars of unspent landfill levy income sitting in the Sustainability Fund, the Victorian government has the means to both support councils in the short term and to drive meaningful change to the system for the longer term.

The time for action is now.

Federal Government

Action 1: Mandate product stewardship

Introduce mandatory product stewardship for all products that generate waste. Put clear and binding targets within the *Product Stewardship Act* to drive action by industry. This approach would align with the polluter-pays principle, incentivising designers and producers to take responsibility for the environmental impacts of their products.

Action 2: Tackle consumer packaging

In partnership with state and territory ministers, review the *National Environment Protection (Used Packaging Materials) Measure 2011* to impose mandatory participation and binding obligations across the consumer packaging chain. As an interim measure, clarify obligations on industry so that it's easier to hold them to account.

Action 3: Strengthen the National Waste Policy

In partnership with state and territory ministers, adopt an action plan for the National Waste Policy that includes firm and ambitious targets and timelines that fast-track our transition to a circular economy.

Action 4: Regulate / ban production and importation of hard-to-recycle materials

Action 5: Standardise package labelling and certify use of recycled content

Mandate adoption of the Australasian Recycling Label for all consumer packaging sold in Australia and adopt a certification system for recycled content in line with the US or European models.

Local Government

Action 1: Collaborate for market expansion

Working with the Victorian government, investigate and support options to collaboratively procure kerbside recycling services with the aim of enhancing competition and attracting new investment in recycling in Victoria.

Action 2: Educate the community

Continue to develop and support delivery of community education that focuses on reducing waste and minimising contamination in recycling bins. Undertake regular bin audits to reduce contamination in kerbside recycling.

Action 3: Buy recycled

Wherever feasible, support market development via procurement of recycled content, both for corporate operations, services and infrastructure programs.

Action 4: Explore stream separation

Working with industry, pilot collection services that separates glass from the rest of kerbside recycling to reduce contamination of material.

Action 5: Advocate to and work with the federal and state governments to achieve the reforms outlined in the sections above. It is these tiers of government that have the powers to create a responsible and sustainable recycling system.