



RecyclingNearYou Annual Report III

For the third year in a row, locating recycling options for computers and other electronic items has been the number one priority for visitors to Planet Ark's RecyclingNearYou.com.au site. Four of the six most popular enquiries fall under the broad category of electronic waste. For the first time, council-provided services also appeared in the ten most popular searches. Of particular interest to site visitors has been the options available for large and unusual items.

There were 1,248,063 visits to the site in the year from 1st May 2010 to 30th April 2011. This represents a 32% decrease over the same period during 2009/10.

Electronic Waste Enquiries

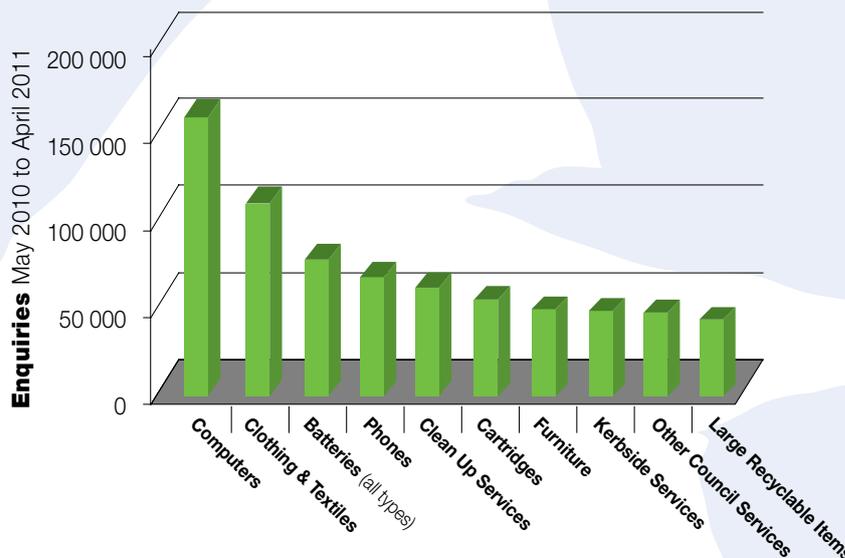
The relative importance of electronic waste to Australians is demonstrated by the fact that four of the six most searched materials fall under this category. In total:

- 149,770 enquiries relating to computers and electronics.
- 74,020 enquiries relating to batteries (single use and rechargeable).
- 63,245 enquiries relating to mobile phones.
- 54,071 enquiries relating to printer cartridges.

It is clear that where electronic waste is concerned, Australians are aware of the importance of recycling, and are committed to finding recycling solutions.

Computers and Electronics

Despite the demonstrated willingness of Australians to recycle computers and electronics, there is currently no national collection and recycling program for these products. The confusion between localised, manufacturer-based, and council or charity-run schemes is reflected on the site. Where there are recycling options, there are often fees associated with them and/or they may require significant travel for the person trying to recycle. In many areas, particularly those furthest from capital cities, there are no realistic options.



The much-anticipated national computer and TV recycling scheme will be launched later in 2011 and rolled out Australia-wide over five years. The *National Television and Computer Product Stewardship Scheme* will be funded by the TV and computer manufacture and importation industries, and will provide a network of free collection points around the country. Consumers may be charged a small fee when they purchase new equipment to cover the future cost of collection and recycling.

The program aims to lift the recycling rate for TVs and computers from 10% to 80% in the first 10 years of operation, and it will prevent millions of electronic items from being sent to landfill.

The debate around the forthcoming scheme received extensive media coverage during the 2009/10 reporting period, and is likely to have contributed to the significant increase in site visits last year.

Batteries

To coincide with National Recycling Week 2010, Battery World in partnership with Varta launched Australia's first free, nation-wide recycling collection program for all types and brands of household batteries. Used household batteries can now be dropped into any Battery World store for recycling. There are also a number of smaller scale or localised battery

collections around the country, such as the trial BatteryBack program run in partnership with Sustainability Victoria and the (Perth) Eastern Metropolitan Regional Council program that has seen the establishment of collection points through the six councils in eastern Perth. Some councils also provide battery recycling options for their residents. However this can come at a considerable cost to councils, particularly if they are required to pay commercial recycling rates through private companies.

The current recycling rate of household batteries is as low as 6%, which means 183 million household batteries, weighing about 8,000 tonnes, end up in landfill each year. Research undertaken by Planet Ark in 2010 revealed that although most people currently put their used batteries into the garbage bin, 98% said they would recycle their household batteries if an easy option were available. It is clear that although there is now a national network through which household batteries can be recycled, there is a great need for more battery recycling options around the country.

Other types of batteries are recycled through specific programs. Mobile phone batteries are collected through the **MobileMuster** program, which has free recycling satchels at every Australia Post outlet, and car batteries are collected through the extensive **Century Yuasa** network (among others).



Mobiles and Printer Cartridges

The third and fourth most searched electronic waste product types, mobile phones and printer cartridges, have voluntary extended producer responsibility programs underpinning their collection and recycling. The **MobileMuster** and **'Cartridges 4 Planet Ark'** programs have extensive collection networks around Australia.

MobileMuster is the Australian Mobile Telecommunications Association program and is funded by a fee placed on all participating manufacturers' mobile phones imported into Australia. The **'Cartridges 4 Planet Ark'** program is a partnership between Planet Ark, recycling company Close the Loop, and six participating manufacturers; **Brother, Canon, Epson, HP, Konica Minolta and Lexmark**. These manufacturers cover the cost of collecting, transporting, and recycling their own cartridges as well as promoting the program. They are taking responsibility for the cartridges they produce.

Clothing and textiles

Locating recycling options for clothing and textiles was the second most popular search executed on RecyclingNearYou from 1 May 2010 to 30 April 2011. In total over 106,000 enquiries were received relating to charity stores and collection points that reuse and refurbish items. While clothing and textiles is not a material category commonly collected by councils at the kerbside, there is a demonstrated public desire to divert these items from landfill if possible.

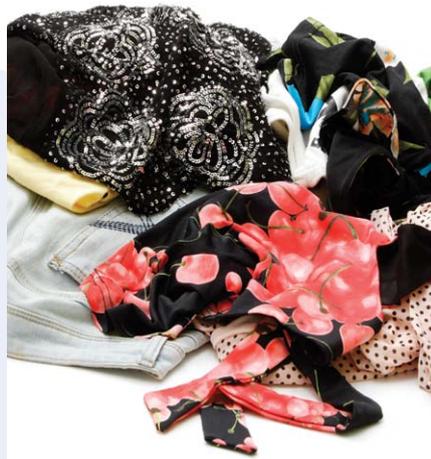
Clean up services

For the first time, council-managed kerbside clean up or hard rubbish collections appeared in the five most searched product and service types. Between 1 May 2010 and 30 April 2011, there were 60,201 online searches for kerbside clean up options. Typically these services allow for the collection of around 1 cubic metre of (non hazardous) items that are too large to be placed in the kerbside bins e.g. items of broken furniture, whitegoods, and mattresses. In metropolitan areas, councils often provide a minimum of 2 clean up services per year that may be scheduled in advance or booked by residents when required (depending on the council). In regional and rural areas these types of services are less common, and householders are more likely to transport larger items to local waste facilities themselves.

Recycling hotline and email

The recycling hotline (1300 733 712) and email address (recycling@planetark.org) are key supporting features of the RecyclingNearYou website. They provide access to recycling information for Australians that are unable to use the internet, and allow for complicated or 'out of the ordinary' enquiries and responses.

From 1 May 2010 to 30 April 2011, there were 3,035 hotline and 685 email enquiries received.



BusinessRecycling

Although there was a decrease in visits to RecyclingNearYou during this reporting period, some of this reduction may be attributed to the June 2010 launch of Planet Ark's BusinessRecycling.com.au. The website (and supporting hotline) provides a comprehensive directory of recycling, reprocessing and transport businesses with the aim of increasing recycling rates within Australian small to medium businesses. In the same reporting period, BusinessRecycling received 182,585 site visits. Some of these visitors may have previously used RecyclingNearYou to locate possible workplace recycling options.



About RecyclingNearYou

Planet Ark established the RecyclingNearYou.com.au website and hotline in partnership with Sensis and the Australian Government, to provide Australians with a one-stop-shop for recycling information. RecyclingNearYou contains 34 product categories that site visitors can search to find local recycling or disposal options, where they exist. The site also provides information about a range of local services such as regular kerbside collections, drop off facilities for various types of materials, and other services such as council clean up or hard rubbish collections.

Since the site and hotline were launched in November 2006 there have been more than 6 million site visits, 17,000 phone calls and 3,950 email enquiries.

Further Information

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Acknowledgements

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