



Taking the Byte Out of Waste

Recycling computers and other electronics has emerged as the number one concern for visitors to Planet Ark's Recycling Near You web site and callers to the National Recycling Hotline. (Background to these services is given below.) Indeed, various categories of electronic waste make up 4 of the top 5 product enquiries - a clear demonstration that Australians are keen to find ways to deal responsibly with this growing problem.

There were 1,347,898 visits to the site in the year from 1st May 2008 to 30th April 2009. All figures below are for this period.

Electronic Waste

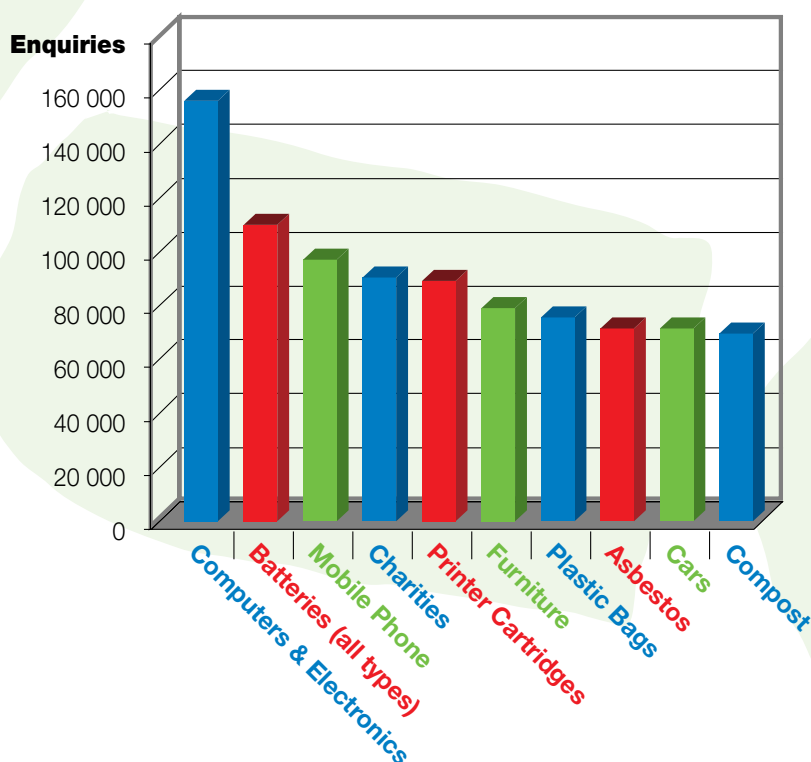
The RecyclingNearYou site has 32 specific product categories that visitors can search to find local recycling or disposal options, where they exist.

The relative importance of e-waste is demonstrated by the fact that various categories make up 4 of the top 5 product enquiries. They are

- Computers and Electronics with 151,088 individual enquiries,
- Batteries (both single use and rechargeable) with 105,359
- Mobile Phones with 93,077, and
- Printer Cartridges with 81,471.



Web and Phone Enquiries



With 151,088 enquiries the "Computers and Electronic Waste" category is the most sought after information by far. In fact, it had 45,000 more enquiries than the second category, batteries.

Computers and Batteries

It is an unfortunate reality that there is not a standardised national program addressing the collection and recycling of the two most searched products on the site. In terms of computer recycling the site and hotline provide information on the wide array of potential options including specific company take-back programs, not-for-profit and community refurbishing and donation programs, options for bulk or business collections, minimum stock numbers, costs and so on. Finding an appropriate recycling option can be difficult and in many areas, particularly rural locations, there are no real options.



As with computers there is no national recycling program for single-use batteries. The site lists the small number of local collection programs or business based options.

Mobile Phones and Printer Cartridges

The third and fourth e-waste categories, mobile phones and printer cartridges, present a very different picture. Both of these products have voluntary extended producer- responsibility programs underpinning their collection and recycling. The MobileMuster and 'Cartridges 4 Planet Ark' programs have an extensive network of collection points around Australia, all of which are listed on the site and through the Hotline. A quick search of the site reveals literally thousands of drop-off locations.

MobileMuster is the Australian Mobile Telecommunications Association recycling program. 'Cartridges 4 Planet Ark' is a partnership between Planet Ark, recycling company Close the Loop and manufacturers Brother, Canon, Epson, Konica Minolta and Lexmark.

The Other Top Ten Searches

The fourth most commonly searched category, with 85,000 enquiries, is 'Charities'. This reflects people searching on specific council pages for charity shops in their local area. The site has an extensive database of charity stores including the major chains like Vinnies, The Smith Family and the Salvation Army as well as independent stores. This combined with the 'Furniture' category, which is similarly found on individual council pages, shows that Australians are keen to give their unwanted items a second chance at being useful. The site refers visitors to the Yellow Pages search function to find local options for their furniture.

Plastic Check-out bags are the seventh most searched product. Although

plastic bags are collected for recycling through all major supermarkets they have a very low recycling rate of just 3%.

Asbestos is the eighth most common category. The site refers visitors to the relevant state or territory government agency responsible for the safe disposal of this dangerous product. In the ACT for example visitors are referred to the "Asbestos Awareness" site while in NSW visitors are referred to the NSW EPA.

Cars are the ninth most searched category. Where there is an accredited member of the Auto-Parts Recycling Association of Australia the site refers visitors to that business. When no such member exists the visitor are referred to the Yellow Pages search function.

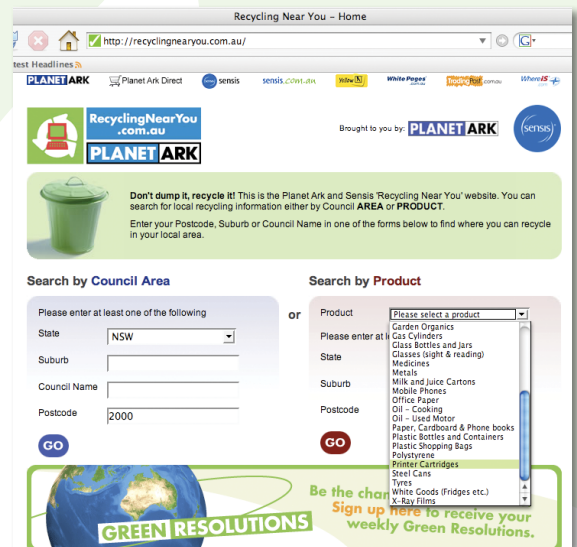
The final category, 'Compost', provides information on home-based organic waste composting system like worm farms, compost bins and mulching.

About RecyclingNearYou and the Hotline

Planet Ark established the RecyclingNearYou.com.au website and National Recycling Hotline, in partnership with Sensis and the Australian Government, to provide Australians with one-stop-shop for recycling information. These twin services are the premier recycling information service in Australia.

Since the site and hotline were launched in November 2006 there have been more than **3,006,000 visits and 13,441 enquiries** respectively.

The dual services provide a comprehensive database of recycling information including:



- The kerbside and other council operated services for every council in Australia, including green waste collections, hazardous and hard waste drop off details and replacement bin information, and
- Local recycling and drop off options for a wide range of products including: Batteries (reusable and single use); Car Tyres; Cars; Computers and Electronic Waste; Construction and Demolition Waste; Corks; Gas Cylinders; Glasses (eye and sight); Mobile Phones; Medicines; Office Paper; Oil – Cooking; Oil – Used Motor; Plastic Bags; Polystyrene; Scrap Metal; and X-Ray films.

Further Information

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Planet Ark developed RecyclingNearYou in partnership with Sensis. The National Recycling Hotline was developed in partnership with the Australian Government.

