

National Recycling Label launched amidst stagnating recycling rates

Boomerang Alliance welcomes the launch of the new **National Recycling Label**, announced today by the Australian Packaging Covenant Organisation (APCO). The new voluntary labelling regime represents a potentially significant step towards improved recycling rates for Australia's valuable resources. The launch draws further attention to the APCO's *National Recycling and Recovery Surveys 2015-16* – also released this week – which highlight the continuing stagnation of recycling rates in Australia for paper packaging, glass containers, aluminium packaging and steel cans.

The new labelling system – as yet, not mandatory - will allow consumers to make informed purchase decisions, while offering producers an effective framework to understand the recyclability of their packaging choices right along the supply chain.

The scheme will also highlight the deficiencies in Australia's own domestic recycling capacity, in turn, identifying infrastructure opportunities for business and government, while driving design innovation around alternative materials.

“Consumer sentiment is driving a revolution at the shopfront as shoppers reject the excessive levels of packaging that we continue to see on the shelves,” Jeff Angel, Director of the Boomerang Alliance said today, “APCO's National Recycling Label empowers consumers to reject products that don't stack up, which will drive producers to seek out a more recyclable alternative for their packaging.”

“With the loss of China as an export market for our plastics and a lack of recycling capacity at home, much of our packaging will now go straight to landfill,” Mr Angel added. “The National Recycling Label reflects Australia's domestic recycling capabilities, so giving the consumer choice on the recyclability of their packaging will go some way to addressing this issue. But it should be made mandatory and be accompanied by more incentivisation from government to develop a viable industry around resource recovery and reuse.”

With container deposit schemes (CDS) being rolled out across Australia and resource recovery rates continuing to improve, a rare opportunity exists to reinvigorate the Australian recycling sector, while working towards the achievement of a national zero waste objective.

“The high quality, uncontaminated stream of materials being recovered by CDS programmes around the country adds enormous value to these resources, improving their refinement for reuse,” Mr Angel said, “Stronger regulation around packaging standards and mandatory recycled content requirements would help to support the development of an effective circular economy model, with viable recycling infrastructure and a wealth of employment opportunities at its heart.”

Boomerang Alliance congratulates APCO, Planet Ark and PREP Design on this progressive initiative and we encourage APCO members to enthusiastically support and adopt the new labelling regime. Concurrently, we call on the Commonwealth and State Governments to seize this opportunity to drive a circular economy and stimulate the development of recycling infrastructure that will make Australia the world leader in resource recovery and reuse.

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Jeff Angel – Director, Boomerang Alliance

Jeff Angel is Director of the Boomerang Alliance, a collaboration of 47 allied groups and the Total Environment Centre. Jeff has worked for policy, business and legal changes across a wide spectrum of environmental issues (city and country) for over 40 years including protection of rainforests and wilderness, air quality, urban river regeneration, Sydney's Green Games, land clearing, endangered species and climate change. He has been prominent in debates about waste and recycling and led the campaign for the introduction of a container deposit system in Australia.

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