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AUSTRALASIAN RECYCLING LABEL – SME FUNDING ANNOUNCEMENT

Frequently Asked Questions



General questions – About the ARL Program

What is the Australasian Recycling Label?

The ARL Program is an on-pack labelling scheme that helps consumers to recycle correctly and supports businesses to design packaging that is recyclable at end-of-life.

Since the ARL Program launched in 2018, more than 500 organisations have joined, including many of Australia's best-known brands and retailers.

The ARL Program was developed by the Australian Packaging Covenant Organisation (APCO) in partnership with Planet Ark and PREP Design. It is supported by all Australian governments to help make recycling easier.

The ARL Program features two key elements:

- The Packaging Recyclability Evaluation Portal (PREP) – an online tool that assess packaging recyclability in the Australian and New Zealand recovery systems.
- The Australasian Recycling Label – an on-pack label that provides clear and simple instructions about how to recycle all of the separable packaging components.

How will the ARL improve the sustainability of my packaging?

The ARL improves packaging sustainability in two important ways:

1. It helps businesses to design packaging that can be recycled at end of life.

Recyclability is fundamentally a design issue and businesses need help to design with confidence that their packaging is acceptable in the Australian and New Zealand recycling facilities.

When it comes to packaging, even the smallest details can have an impact on recyclability, including the packaging shape, size, weight, inks, adhesives and the materials used.

For every item of packaging, the ARL Program's PREP tool considers all of these factors, as well as the availability of collection services, what will happen to the packaging in a Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) and in subsequent processing facilities, such as paper mills and aluminium smelters.

By aggregating this information into a simple online platform, PREP empowers businesses to understand whether their packaging is recyclable, non-recyclable, or conditionally recyclable – provided consumers follow a set of instructions during disposal. If a piece of packaging is not recyclable, PREP also helps businesses to understand what changes they need to make to improve it.

2. The ARL helps consumers to put the right packaging in the right bin.

Consumers play an important role in increasing the amount of packaging that gets successfully recycled in Australia. Research shows Australians know that recycling is important, however, with more than 200 recycling labels currently on market, inconsistent or inaccurate packaging labelling and communications mean that many Australians are getting recycling wrong.

The ARL is an on-pack label that helps customers in Australia and New Zealand to correctly recycle their packaging.

Packaging can be made up of a range of different components and materials, and many of these require different disposal methods. Some belong in the bin, some can be recycled, while others require special instructions in order to be recycled correctly. This includes materials like soft (or 'scrunchable') plastics, which need to be returned to the REDcycle collection bins in participating retail stores.

The ARL provides all of this information - on one easy label.

What evidence is there that the ARL actually works?

Every year, APCO and Planet Ark conduct benchmarking research to understand how widely the ARL is recognised by Australians and how effective it is in improving their recycling behaviours. Research conducted in 2020 found five important insights:

Insight 1: Consumers value recycling.

Australians care about recycling. Survey participants listed recycling as the single most important behaviour they can take to improve the environment. Australians also think recycling is easy, convenient and the right thing to do.

Insight 2: Consumers want information on how to recycle right.

When it comes to recycling, consumers are still struggling with confusion. Product packaging is the first place that people look for advice and those checking their packaging recyclability are checking regularly.

Insight 3: Awareness of the ARL Program continues to grow.

While recognition of other labels on the market has decreased or remained consistent, since 2018, consumer awareness of the ARL has grown significantly. Awareness of the ARL is particularly high among younger audiences. Product packaging is also the most common place consumers remember seeing the label.

Insight 4: Consumers value the ARL.

Consumers say the ARL helps them to recycle more – with 1 in 5 reporting they would recycle a lot more if the ARL was on their packaging. Three quarters of Australians want to see the label on every item of packaging – while just under half say the ARL would influence their decision to buy a product.

Even a label showing that an item is not recyclable is considered a positive, transparent action for brands to take.

Insight 5: The ARL improves recycling behaviours.

The ARL helps consumers get the right packaging in the right bin. When tested on how to recycle 7 common packaging materials and formats, the ARL consistently improved consumer recycling behaviours.

What are the benefits of joining the ARL Program for my business?

For time-poor business owners, knowing where to start to improve the sustainability of your packaging can be daunting.

The ARL Program cuts through the confusion. It provides a simple pathway for business owners to reduce the harmful impact of their product packaging on the environment. The evidence-based program provides all of the tools and resources required for a business owner to:

- Assess the recyclability of their product packaging, including whether it belongs in the waste or the recycling bins.
- Apply an accurate recycling label to help their customers to dispose of packaging correctly.
- Communicate with their customers about how to recycle packaging using the label.

Using the ARL also brings a number of tangible benefits for businesses.

Research shows that consumers care about the environment and Australians are increasingly supporting brands and businesses doing good things – like providing packaging that is recyclable. By being part of the ARL Program, businesses can show a tangible commitment to packaging sustainability. When a business owner includes the ARL on their product packaging, it clearly demonstrates that as an organisation they care about the environment and take their sustainable packaging obligations seriously.

The ARL Program also helps businesses to meet their sustainable packaging commitments. This includes meeting Australia's 2025 National Packaging Targets and meeting their compliance requirements under the National Environment Protection Measure.

What are the environmental benefits of the ARL?

When we dispose of our waste correctly, there are a number of benefits for the environment and for society. These include:

- It reduces the amount of packaging unnecessarily entering landfill or ending up as litter in the natural environment.
- It reduces the contamination levels in the recycling stream and provides a clean supply of material that can be used again in future products.

- It ensures more packaging and products can be made from recycled materials in the future, which places less strain on finite natural resources.

Is the ARL mandatory?

The ARL Program is not mandatory, however it has been supported by all Australian governments to help make recycling easier.

Under the National Plastics Plan published in March 2021, the Australian Government has committed to work with businesses to apply the ARL on at least 80% of supermarket products by December 2023. The Australian Government is also committed to helping small to medium enterprises (SMEs) to apply the label on their packaging.

What other businesses are using the label?

Since the launch of the label in September 2018, more than 500 organisations have joined the ARL Program, including many of Australia's best-known brands and retailers, with tens of thousands of products already carrying the label in market.

What does the ARL Program cost to participate in?

The ARL Program is free and exclusive to all APCO Members.

Do I need to be an APCO Member to use the ARL?

Yes, the ARL is only available to APCO Members.

What support is available for me?

APCO has a range of ARL tools and resources to support businesses on their ARL journey. These include:

- Educational webinars
- Tutorial videos
- APCO User Guide
- Case studies of other businesses that have joined the ARL Program.

To find out more visit: www.apco.org.au/sme-program-for-the-arl

Additional questions

Will I need to change my packaging if I join the program?

Businesses that join the ARL Program are required to assess the recyclability of their packaging using the PREP tool. If a business discovers they have non-recyclable packaging, they can at this stage choose to change it to make it recyclable. Changing to recyclable packaging allows them to apply the recyclable label and provides them with the peace of mind that they are providing the best packaging to their customers. Businesses with existing recyclable packaging do not need to change their packaging to apply the label.

Will this mean I need to provide more expensive packaging?

Joining the ARL Program requires a business to assess the recyclability of their packaging. If a business discovers they have non-recyclable packaging, they can at this stage choose to change it to make it recyclable. Changing to recyclable packaging does not mean more expensive packaging. Many recyclable materials are inexpensive and easy to source in Australia. There are many packaging manufacturers that provide easy to recycle packaging.

From my first contact with APCO to the label being on my packaging – typically, how long does it take?

There are several steps every business needs to take in order to use the label on their packaging. These are:

1. Sign up as an APCO Member
2. Pay Membership fees to be compliant
3. Agree to PREP terms and conditions and nominate your users
4. Conduct PREP assessments
5. Agree to the ARL terms and conditions
6. Draft your first artwork
7. Provide APCO your first ARL design and PREP report for approval, before going to print.
8. First artwork approved – your organisation is not required to submit any further artworks for approval, however the team always welcome any questions you may have for support on conducting PREP assessments or artworks, particularly for complex packaging or artwork designs.

The time it takes to apply the label on an item of packaging varies for every business. The APCO team is on-hand to help businesses at every step of the process.

Where exactly does the label have to go on the packaging?

There is no set place for the ARL to be placed on-pack, however it is recommended that the ARL should be placed in a space that consumers are familiar with finding recycling information e.g., next to barcodes, on the back of pack. This is not compulsory and can be placed anywhere on-pack provided consumers can find this information (i.e., not printed on the inside of a box)

I buy all of my packaging from overseas – how am I expected to use this label?

Businesses can apply the ARL to packaging that has been sourced locally or internationally. The ARL Program has resources available to help businesses communicate their needs to international suppliers. Alternatively, if you would prefer to change suppliers, there are also a range of packaging manufacturers that provide recyclable packaging for the Australian market.

Can I simply apply a label on existing packaging (so I don't need to waste existing stock)?

Businesses can conduct a PREP assessment and apply the label on new or existing stock.

Will I need to hire packaging specialist staff?

No, the ARL Program provides all of the support required.

Can the ARL be applied to all packaging formats?

The ARL is designed to support the recycling of packaging in the kerbside system. It is currently not available for B2B packaging.

I already have recycling information on my packaging – why do I need another one?

The ARL Program is the only evidence-based recycling information label available in the Australian market. It has been supported by all Australian governments and identified as a world-leading example of best practice packaging labelling by Consumers International and the UN Environment Programme (UNEP).



To contact APCO please visit our website
www.apco.org.au

