

# APCO Position Statement

## ‘Check Locally’ for flexible plastic (Australia only)

*This position statement demonstrates how the Check Locally logo meets the recovery needs of flexible plastic packaging placed on the market in Australia.*

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The Australasian Recycling Label (ARL) is a labelling system for Australia and New Zealand that provides consumers with easy-to-understand recycling information on packaging. The ARL has four labels: Recyclable, Conditionally Recyclable, Not Recyclable and Check Locally.

The ARL labelling system is based on an assessment of recyclability that considers technical recyclability, access to kerbside collection, and end markets. More detailed information can be found on page 19 of the [ARL Program Manual](#).

For flexible plastic packaging in Australia, the ‘Check Locally’ labelling approach is required, given its unique systemic collection challenges and forecast. ‘Check Locally’ requires consumers to visit the website, [arl.org.au](http://arl.org.au), for up-to-date local flexible plastic disposal advice.

‘Check Locally’ for flexible plastic currently does not meet the population accessibility criteria, which requires at least 60% of the population to have access to a collection point. This deliberate approach was taken to enable an evolving collection market, avoid unnecessary packaging waste, reduce the risk of misleading consumers and prevent valuable material from being sent to landfill.

Flexible packaging formats labelled with the ‘Check Locally’ logo meet the needs of the flexible plastic market in Australia by:

- **Ensuring brand owners design for material recovery**

In conjunction with the launch of the ‘Check Locally’ logo in 2023, the ARL program has adjusted the flexible plastic assessment thresholds to align with CEFLEX (Circular Economy for Flexible Packaging) guidelines. CEFLEX guidelines are forward-looking and based on what is currently considered best practice for mechanical recycling processes globally.

The guidelines aim to support local infrastructure development by expanding end-market opportunities for flexible plastics through designing for the circular economy. As a result of this alignment, there are strict eligibility criteria for applying the ‘Check Locally’ logo on-pack. This enhances the quality and value of recycled flexible plastics, making them more attractive to recycling companies and end-market users. Manufacturers can help drive the demand for recycled flexible plastics by ensuring that packaging materials meet these guidelines. Having a label for brand owners to deliver against will improve the quality of materials and deliver better end markets for flexible plastic.

- **Allowing for consumer recycling where available**

Prominent on-pack labelling presents the best channel for businesses to help their customers recycle packaging correctly, with 3 out of 5 Australians looking to product packaging for recycling information. (Source: ARL Consumer Insights Report 2023)

By prominently displaying the 'Check Locally' ARL logo on packaging, consumers can seek out local recycling options and proactively recycle their flexible plastic at nearby collection points. The label not only increases awareness of these facilities but also allows for the capture of valuable material where facilities exist.

Third-party consumer testing has demonstrated the significant impact of the 'Check Locally' label on consumer behaviour. The testing revealed that over half of consumers will likely scan the on-pack barcode to obtain up-to-date recycling information. This high engagement rate underscores the potential of the 'Check Locally' label to drive informed recycling behaviour, making it a valuable tool in promoting responsible consumer behaviour.

- **Providing an adaptable solution that reflects an evolving collection reality for flexible plastic**

Long lead times are often required to update packaging artwork. Packaging design and production processes are typically planned well in advance, often over several years. The 'Check Locally' label minimises the need for multiple transitions while the flexible plastic collection landscape is evolving in Australia, providing consumers with a stable and consistent disposal message. This foresight ensures that packaging remains relevant and accurate as recycling infrastructure comes online for these materials.

This approach was called out as being a solution to reducing the risk of misleading consumers on collection options by the ACCC, as noted below:

*"The key feature of the proposed "Check Locally" Australian Recycling Label to provide consumers with current flexible plastics disposal information is the website search or check they will need to do through the 2D barcode or using the URL. This has the advantage that brand owners will not need to be regularly amending labelling and packaging as the flexible plastics recycling market evolves and changes, reducing the risk of misleading consumers."*

The "Check Locally" instruction embodies the adaptability and commitment needed in this shifting landscape. The label enables accurate, localised recycling information. It takes into consideration the market realities for businesses and reprocessors and provides accurate information to consumers. A national scheme is anticipated to take several years to reach maturity, and the 'Check Locally' label provides the best possible outcome for reducing flexible plastic waste, minimising the risk of consumer misinformation and encouraging design for circularity.

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**Questions?** Contact: [apco@apco.org.au](mailto:apco@apco.org.au)

**More information on Check Locally eligibility:** [ARL Program Manual](#)