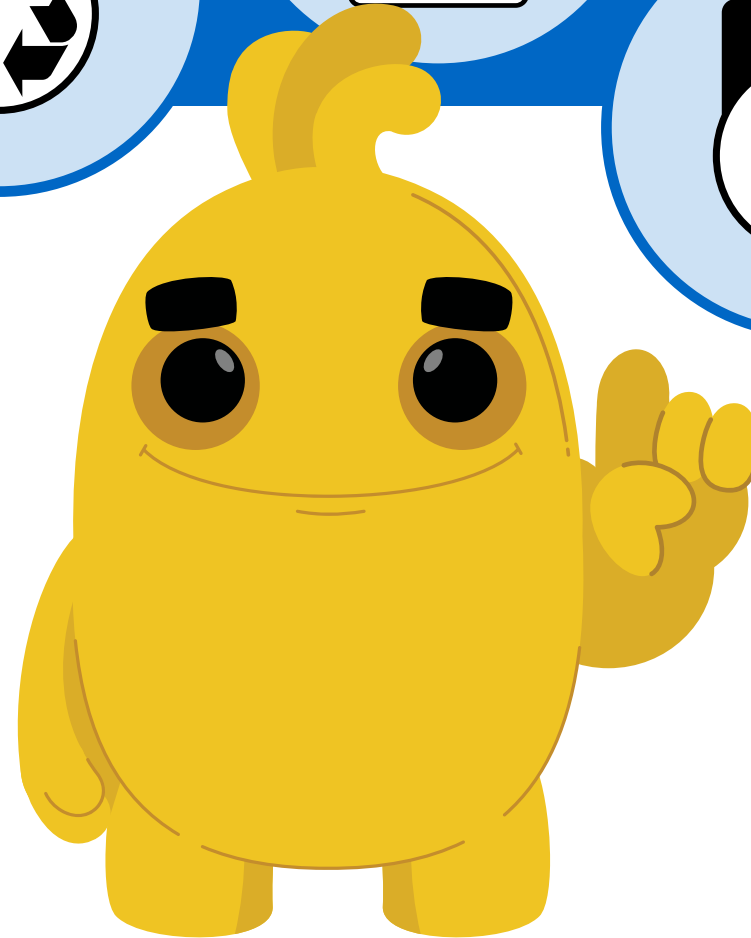


VERSION 1: APRIL 2022



# AUSTRALASIAN RECYCLING LABEL CONSUMER INSIGHTS REPORT 2022



THIS PROJECT RECEIVED GRANT FUNDING FROM THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT.  
DEVELOPED BY THE AUSTRALIAN PACKAGING COVENANT ORGANISATION AND PLANET ARK





**Brooke Donnelly**  
CEO, APCO  
APCO

## FOREWORD

Despite COVID-19's many challenges, sustainability remains at the forefront of Australian lives. Recycling is of particular importance – Australians care about recycling and consider it the most obvious way they can make a difference to their environment. Yet with so many competing priorities in our busy daily lives, it's essential that Australian industry and government continue to engage, inspire and educate consumers about environmental issues and keep recycling firmly on the radar.

Now in its fourth year, the ARL consumer insights survey is an essential part of the Australasian Recycling Label Program. This year's findings reflect the Program's growth and maturity - awareness is increasing substantially, consumers look to the label for information and it helps them make the right decision at the bin-face. This year's report also shows who is excelling at recycling and ARL awareness (youth audiences and women) and which demographics

have the greatest opportunity for change. This annual snapshot of shifting attitudes and beliefs is just one of the many tools available to help Australian businesses better communicate with their customers about recycling. For anyone who is still yet to get started on their ARL journey – I look forward to welcoming all of you into the program, as we work together to support consumers to make informed decisions about getting the right packaging in the right bin.





**Rebecca Gilling**  
co-CEO, Planet Ark



## FOREWORD

Misinformation and confusion are critical factors to overcome when it comes to improving recycling behaviour. Bad habits and beliefs take time to untangle. That is why trust, strategic education and the Australasian Recycling Label are such important elements for changing behaviour at the bin.

Awareness of the ARL has dramatically increased, by 60% over the past four years, with 3 out of 4 Australians now recognising it. That is thanks to the huge growth in the amount of packaging showing the ARL, investment in promotions through digital and non-digital platforms, as well as local government waste educators being champions of the program. But there are still plenty of knowledge gaps to fill.

This year, the results of the ARL consumer insights survey show awareness of the label decreases as age increases. This is not unexpected as it is likely the recycling behaviours

of older Australians are more ingrained since they have been doing it longer. But it demonstrates just one of the opportunities we have to be strategic in our education and promotion.

Consumers want companies to help lead sustainability efforts and want to associate with brands that are being authentic in those efforts. They see recycling information as a brand responsibility so it is highly likely providing that information will help build trust in a brand. There are many shared benefits of the ARL program and the results in this latest consumer insights report are an encouragement to all stakeholders involved.



# CONTENTS

Understanding consumer awareness and attitudes to recycling is critical to empowering everyone to recycle better and more often. This report draws on the Australasian Recycling Label's annual consumer benchmarking research. The research findings revealed the following 5 key consumer insights:



This is an interactive document. The top toolbar and contents buttons allow you to navigate through the different sections of the guide.



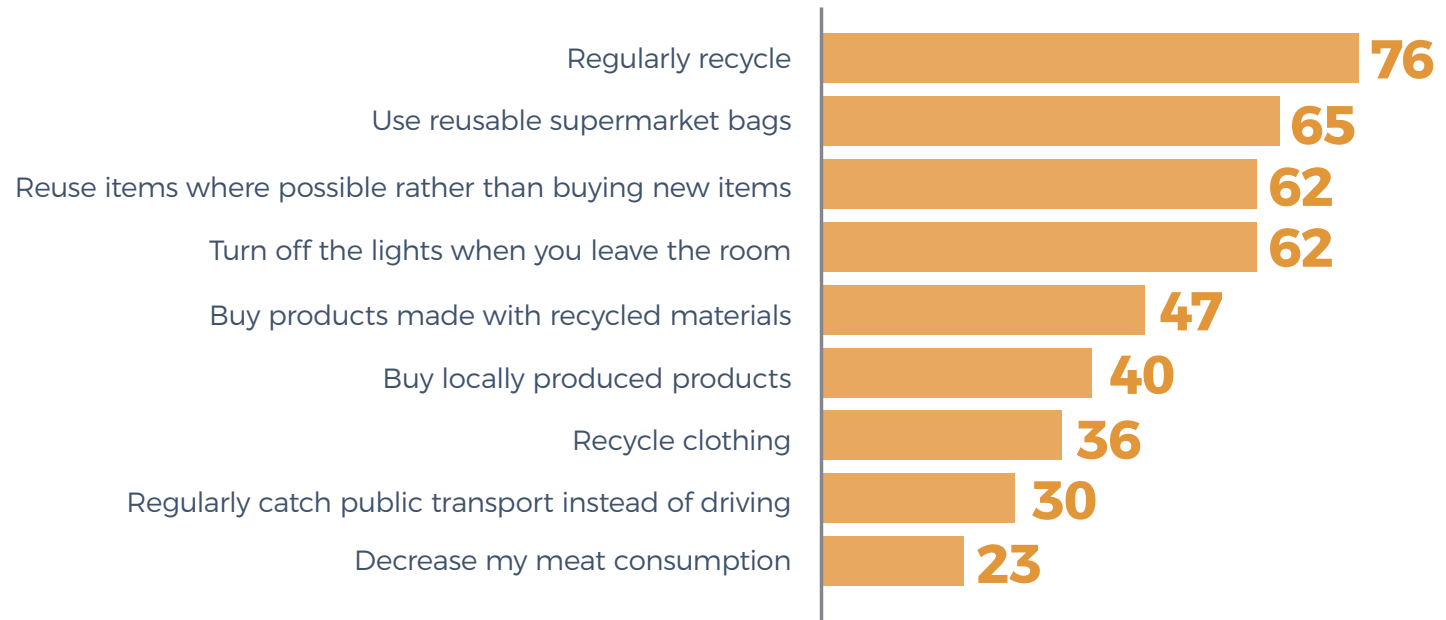
## Insight 1. Consumers value recycling

**More than three quarters of Australians consider recycling to be the most obvious way they can help the environment.**

Reusing materials, like shopping bags, and buying products made from recycled materials are also recognised as important ways people can make a difference.

### Recycling is seen as the obvious way to help the environment

Most helpful for the environment (%)

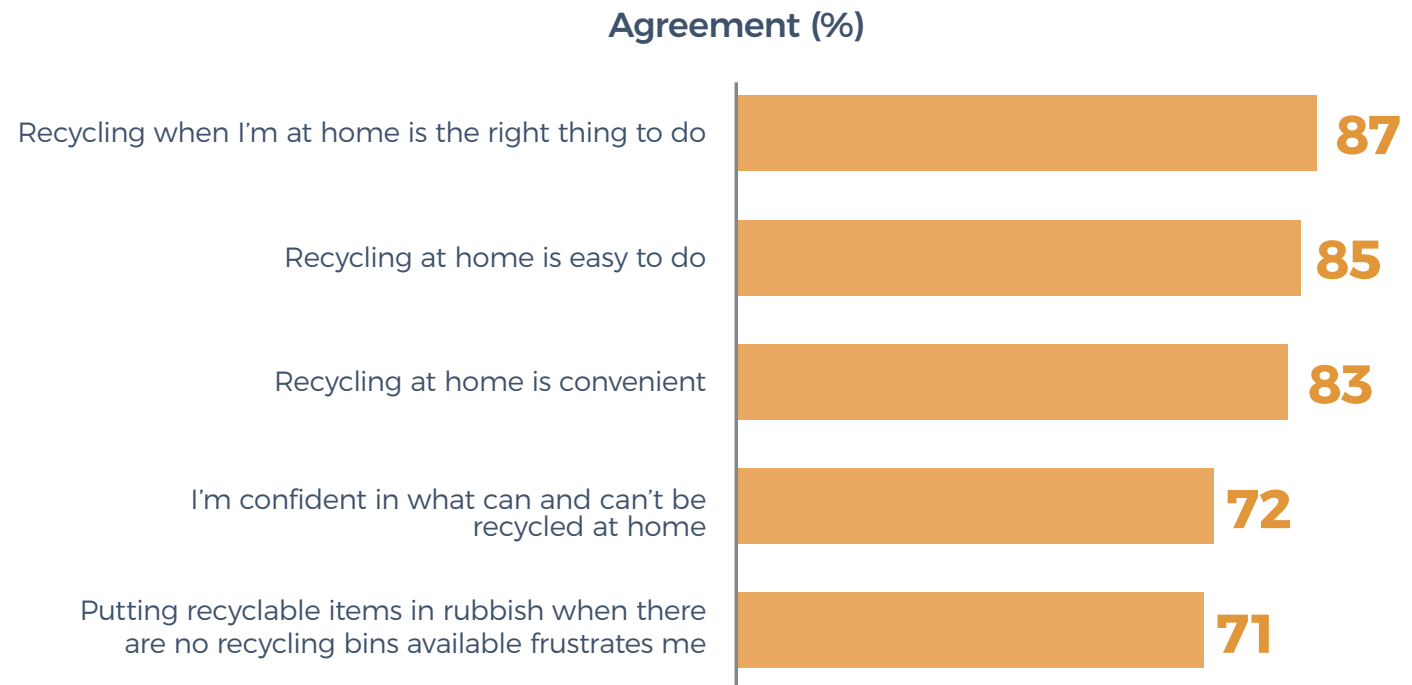




## Insight 1. Consumers value recycling

**Recycling is now an established norm. More than 8 out of 10 Australians consider recycling at home to be easy, convenient and the right thing to do.**

Despite this, some people are still lacking confidence at the bin, with 3 in 10 people still not completely confident about what can and can't be recycled.



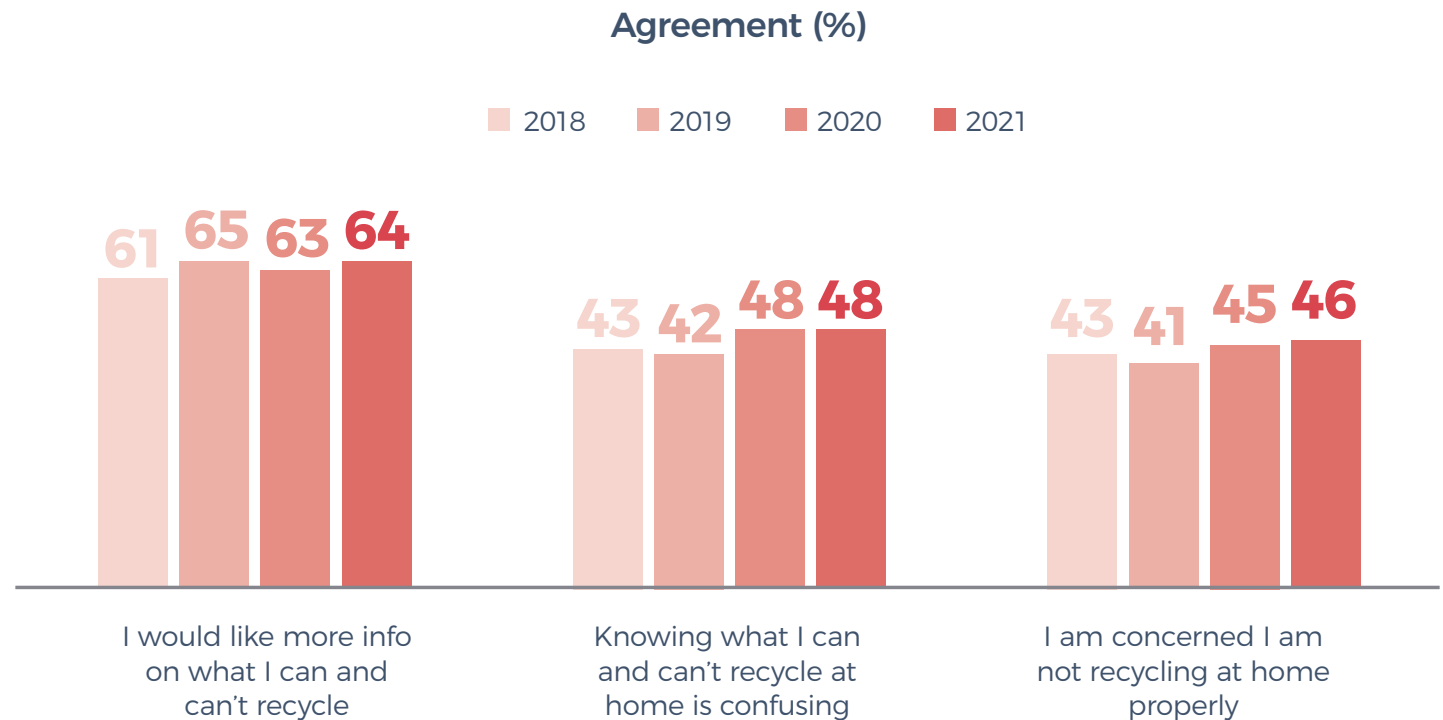
**Key finding:** More than 8 out of 10 Australians consider recycling at home to be easy



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

**Recycling confusion is still an issue, with close to half of Australians concerned that they aren't recycling correctly.**

Appetite for information about recycling remains steady, with 2 in 3 consumers interested in receiving more information about what they can and can't recycle.



**Key finding:** Almost half of people are concerned they are not recycling correctly at home

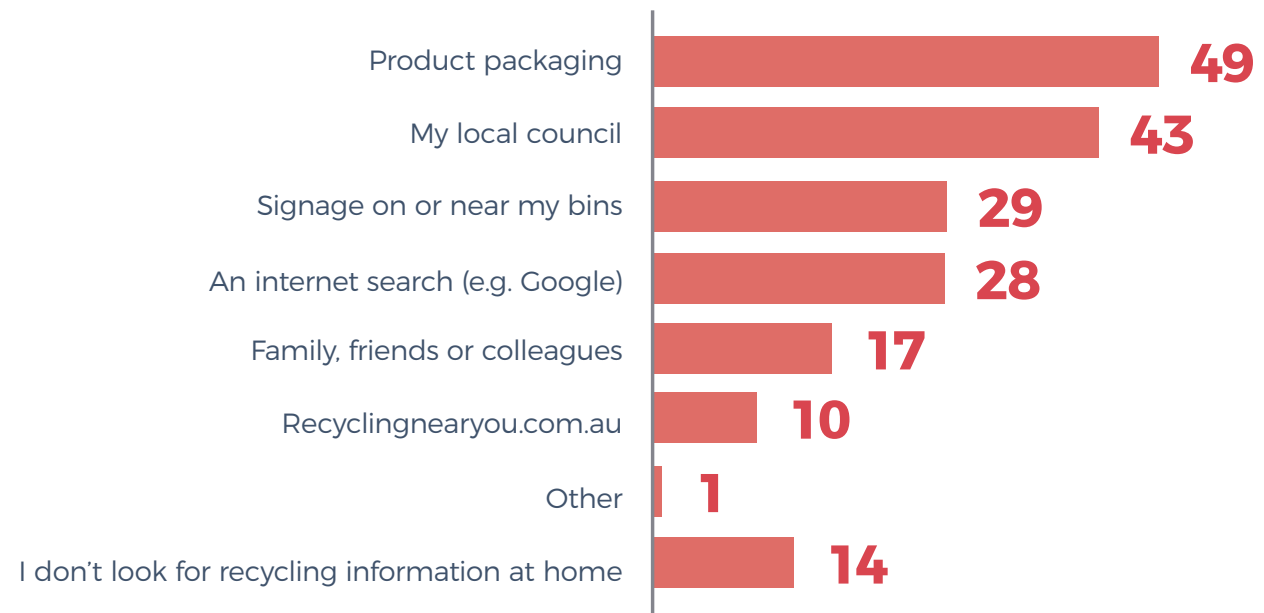


## Insight 2. Consumers want information on how to recycle right.

**Product packaging and local councils remain the two most common sources of recycling information that consumers turn to.**

On-pack labelling continues to provide a powerful opportunity for businesses to communicate to their customers about recyclability.

Information source for recycling specific products (%)



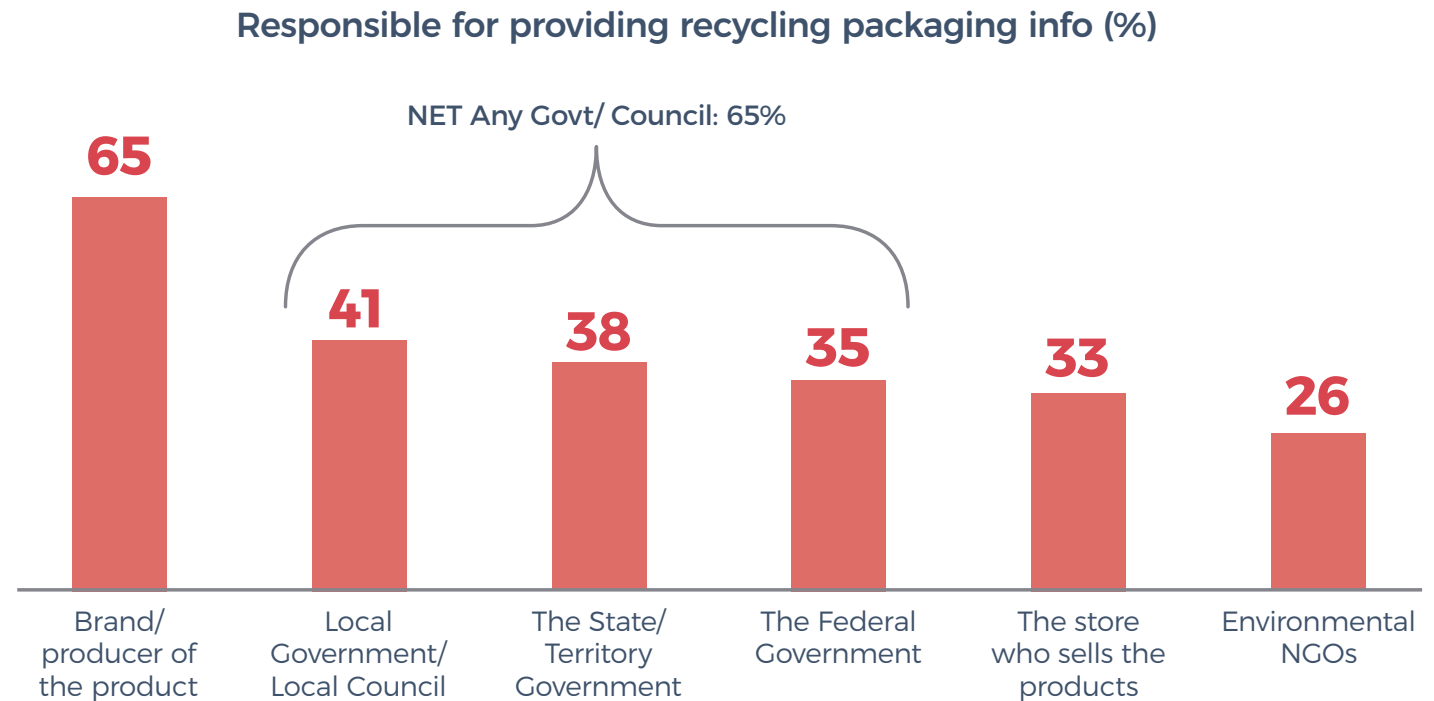
**Key finding:** 14% of people are still not looking for recycling information at home





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

When it comes to accountability, Australians consider brands and governments equally responsible for providing packaging recyclability information.

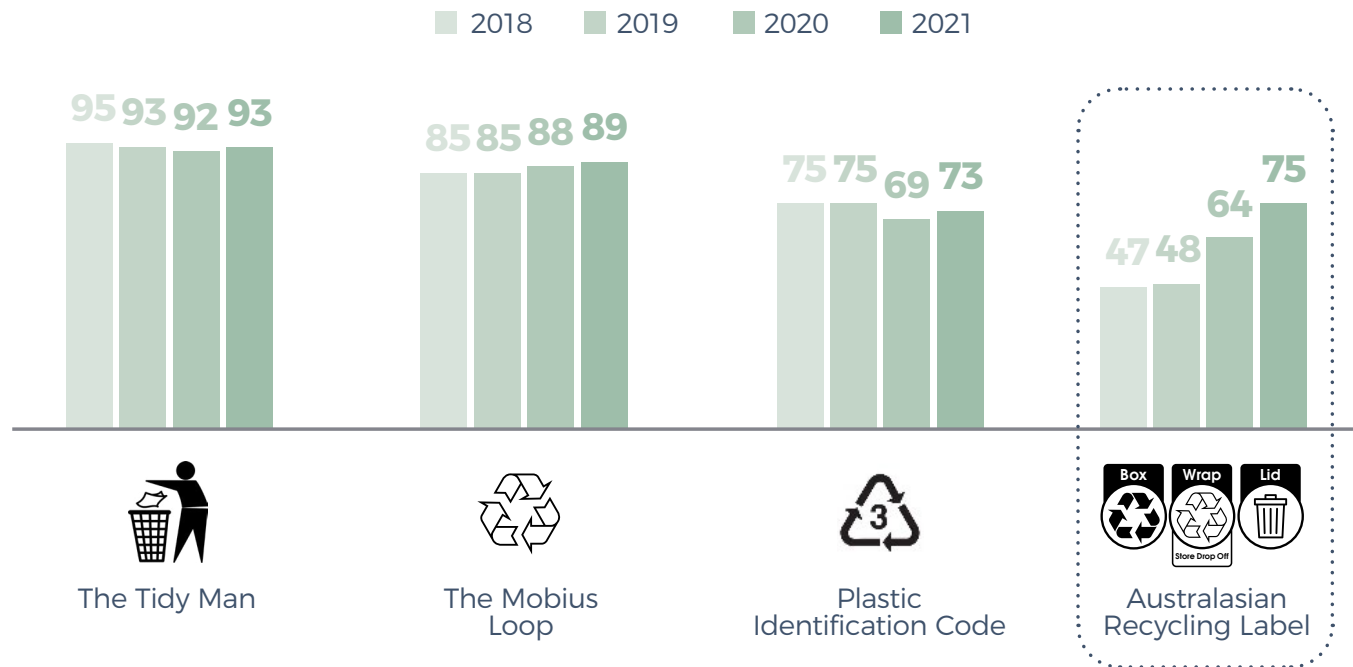




# Insight 3. Awareness of the ARL Program continues to grow.

While recognition of other labels on the market has remained consistent, since 2018, consumer awareness of the ARL has grown significantly and is expected to reach awareness in line with well established symbols like the mobius loop and the 'Tidy Man'.

How aware are consumers of common recycling and disposal logos? (%)



**Key finding:**

Since 2018, consumer awareness of the ARL has increased by 60%

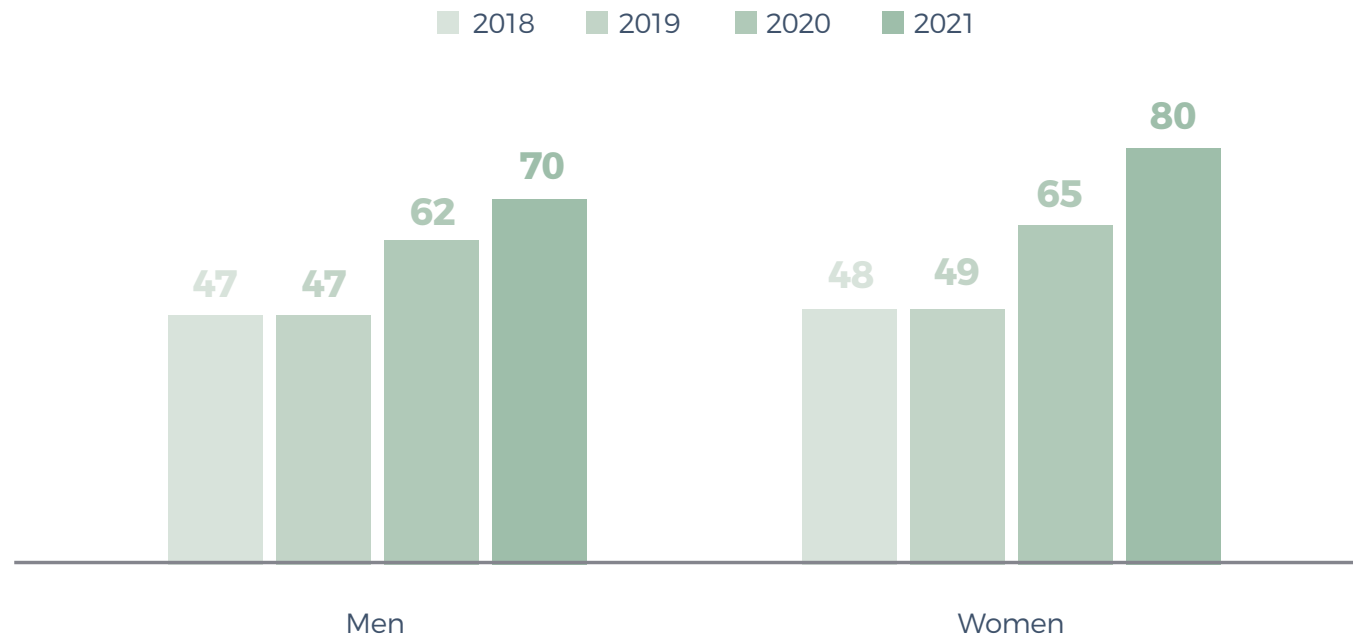


## Insight 3. Awareness of the ARL Program continues to grow.

Awareness is growing fastest among female audiences, with 4 in 5 women now recognising the ARL.



Awareness of ARL logo by gender (%)

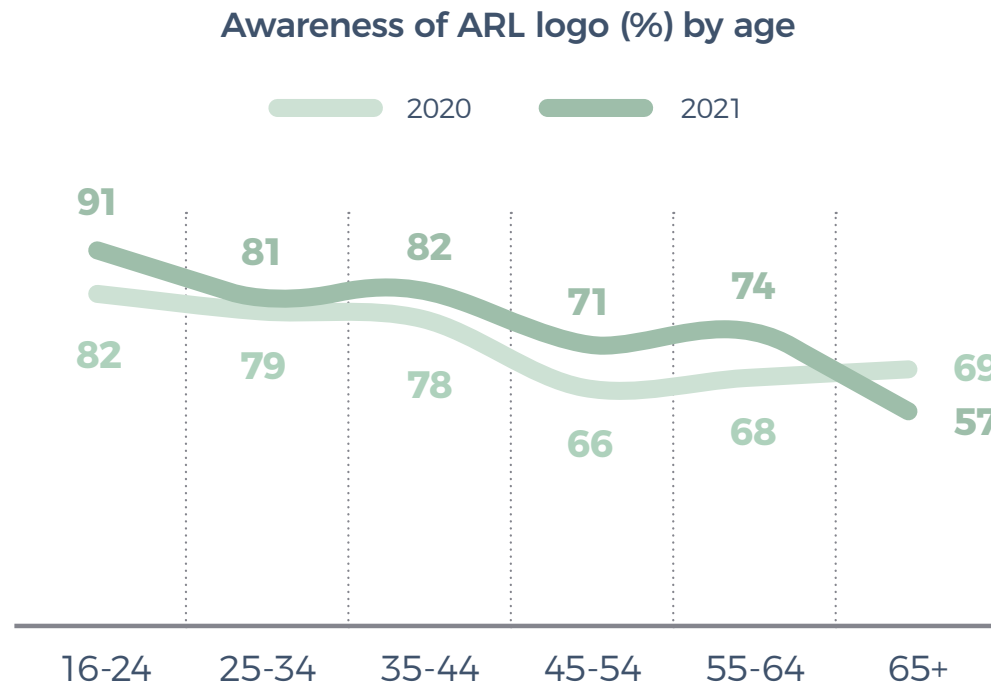




## Insight 3. Awareness of the ARL Program continues to grow.

Youth audiences demonstrated the strongest awareness and recognition of the ARL.

In contrast, audiences over 45 are lagging and present the most opportunity for future communications campaigns.



**Key finding:** Awareness of the ARL has increased from last year amongst all age groups, except 65+

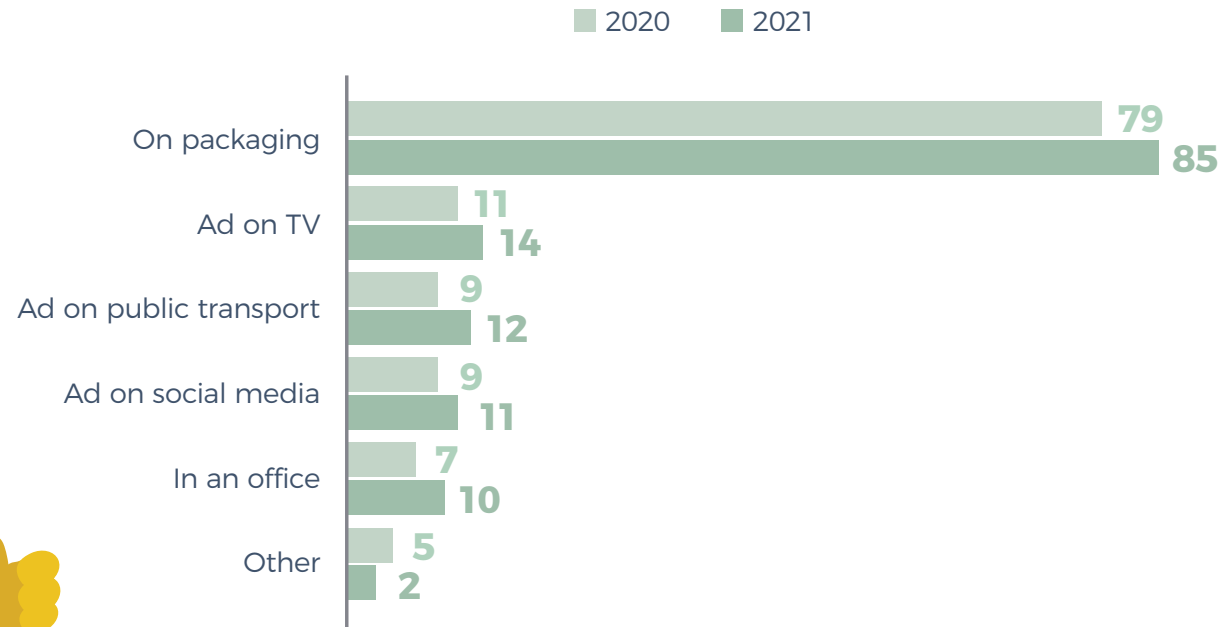


## Insight 3. Awareness of the ARL Program continues to grow.

Product packaging remains the most prominent place people recall seeing the ARL symbols



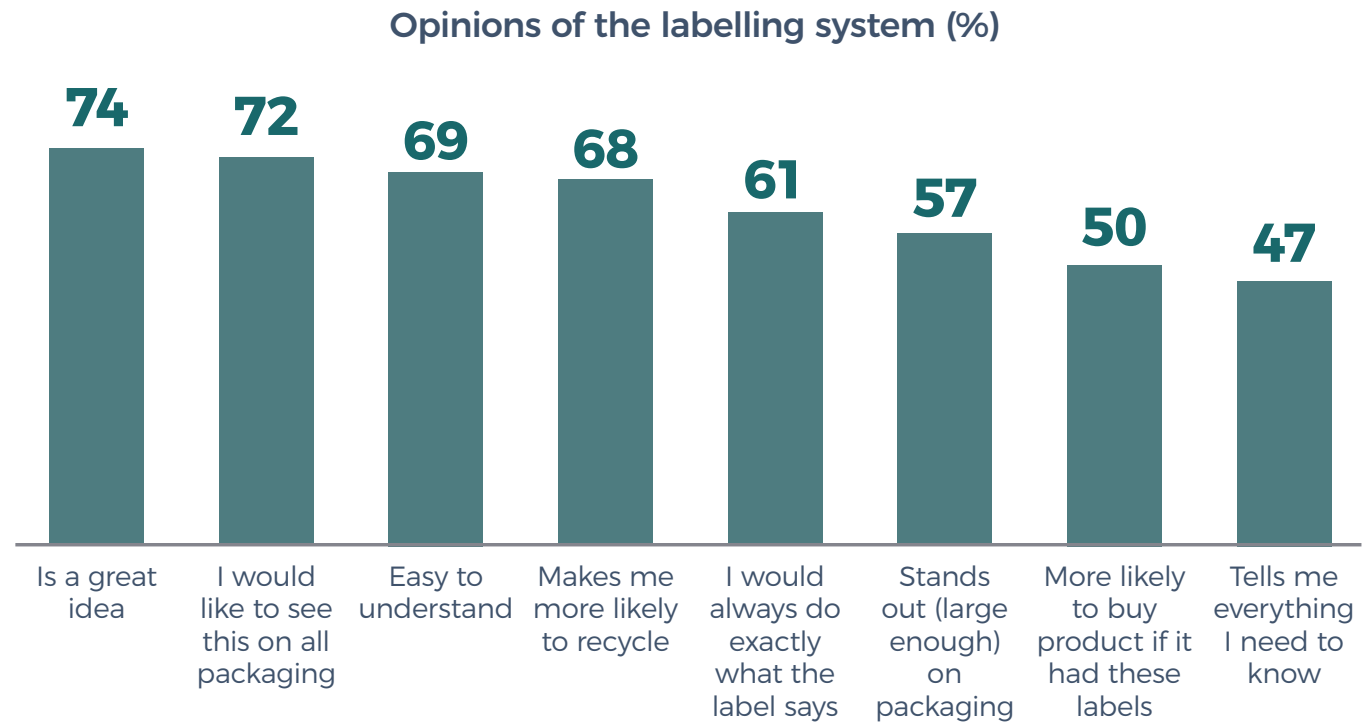
Sources of awareness (%)





## Insight 4. Consumers value the ARL.

Three quarters of Australians agree the ARL is a great idea and want to see it on all packaging, while half say the ARL would positively influence their purchasing behaviours. However, many Australians would still like to receive more information and almost half of Australians want the ARL to appear bigger on packaging.



**Key finding:** Three quarters of Australians agree the ARL is a great idea and want to see it on all packaging



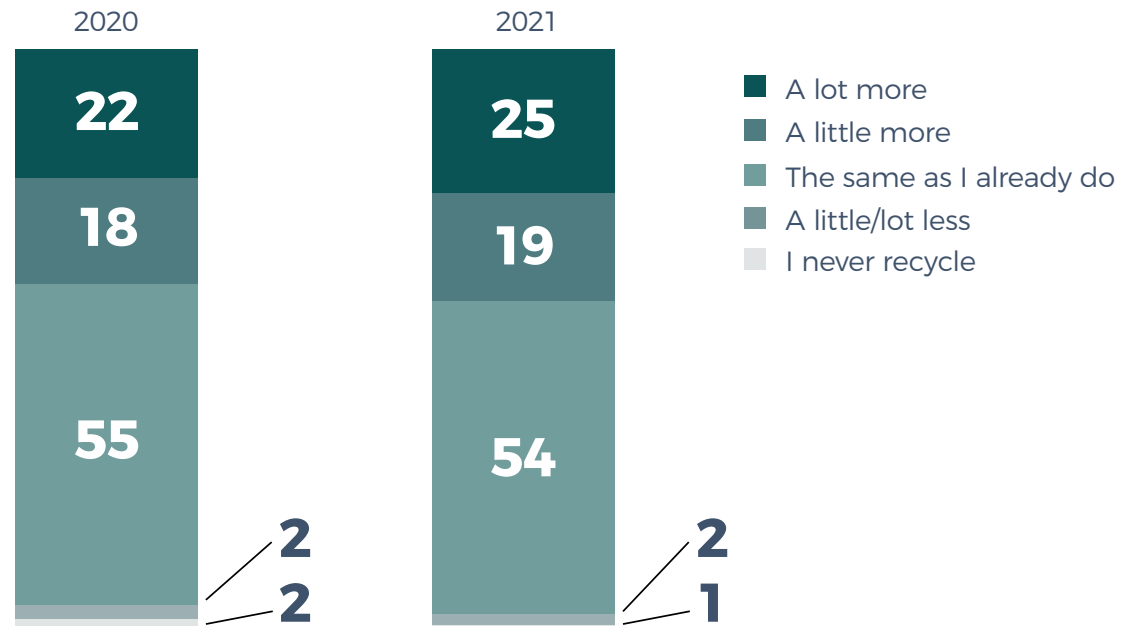
## Insight 4. Consumers value the ARL.

### Consumers say the ARL helps them to recycle more,

with more than two fifths reporting the label would encourage them to recycle a little or a lot more.



If this symbol was on your packaging, would you recycle... ?



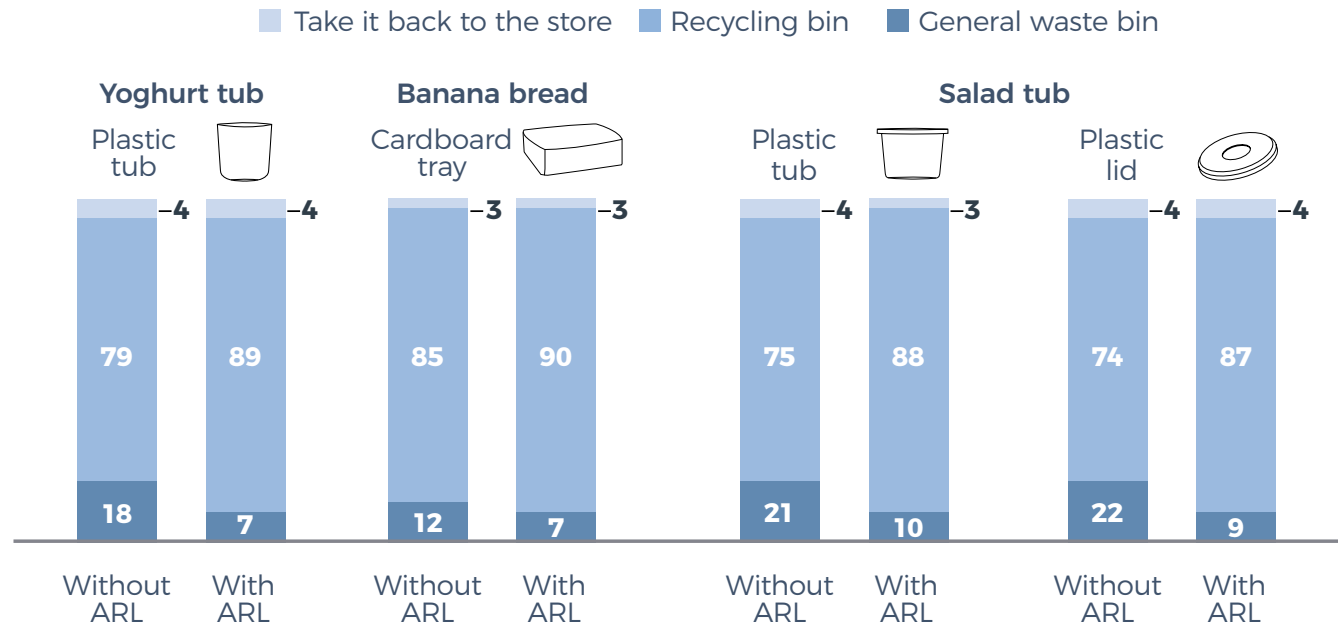


## Insight 5. ARL impact in Australia

Knowledge around cardboard and rigid plastic disposal is high



Disposal behaviours with and without the ARL shown (%)







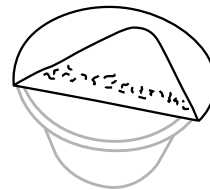
## Insight 5. ARL impact in Australia

However, aluminium foil remains a point of confusion - with less than half of respondents correctly disposing of it without any labelling guidance.

The ARL is helping to cut confusion around problematic materials. When the ARL was present, significantly more respondents correctly recycled the foil by following the label's instruction.

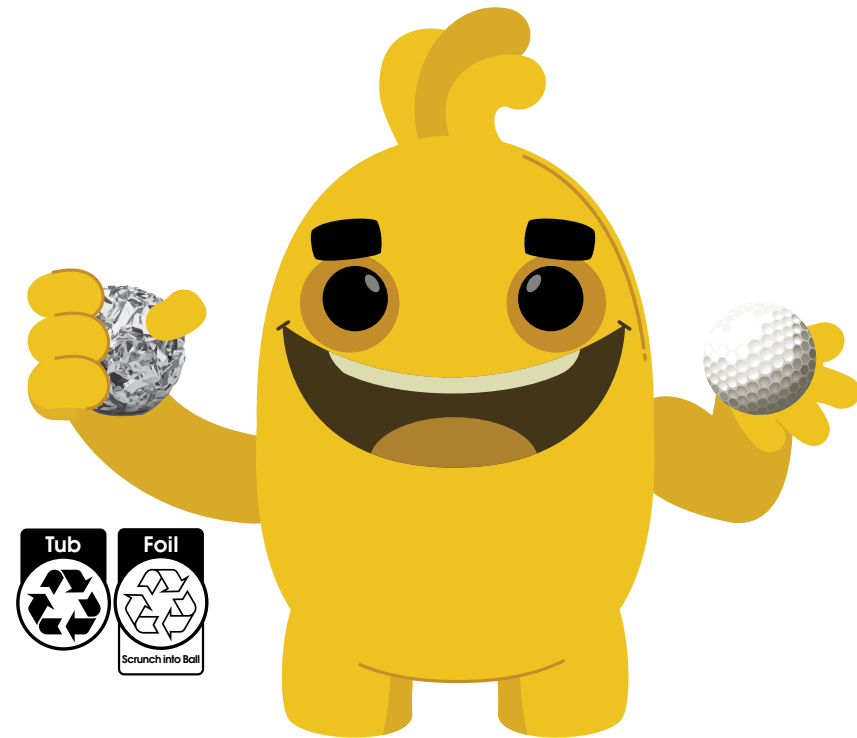
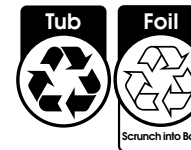
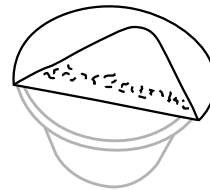
Without ARL  
(aluminium foil %)

43%



With ARL  
(aluminium foil %)

63%





## Insight 5. ARL impact in Australia

The ARL also helps to clear up some confusion around soft plastics, however there is still work to be done.

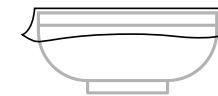
When a label was present, twice as many respondents correctly identified soft plastics should be returned to store, however a quarter of respondents still believed the item belonged in the household recycling bin.

- Take it back to the store
- Recycling bin
- General waste bin

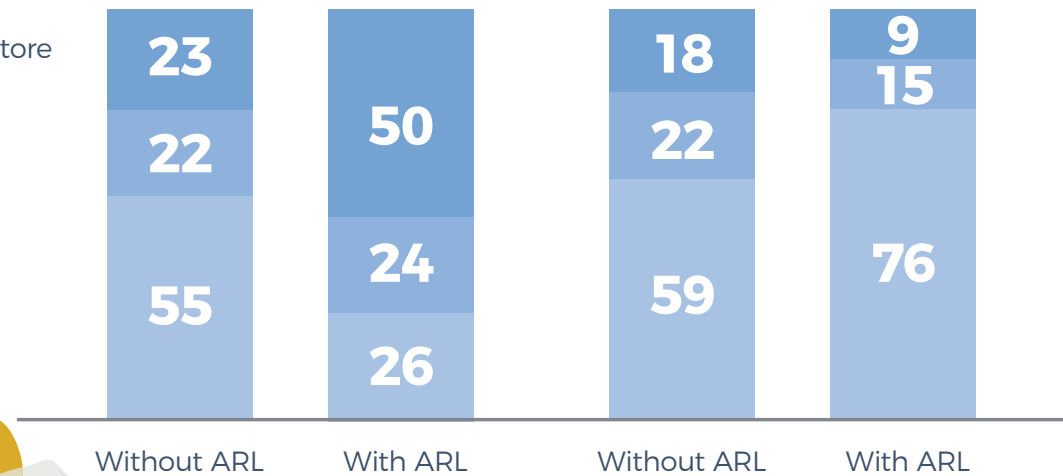
### Soft plastic wrap/film (%)



Soft plastic wrap



Soft plastic film

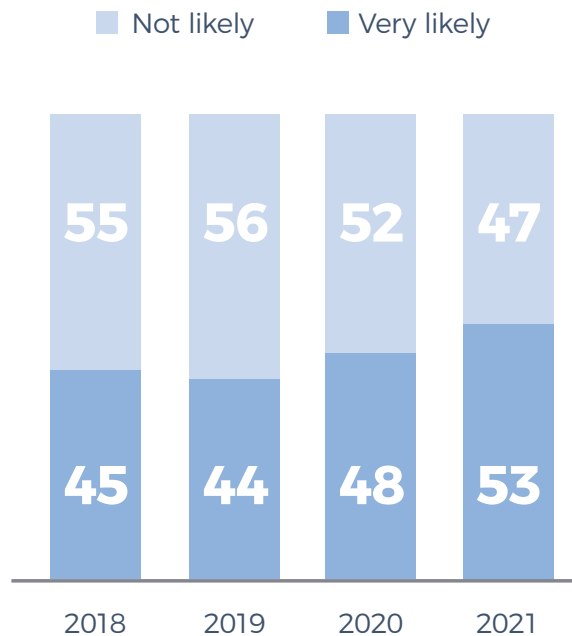




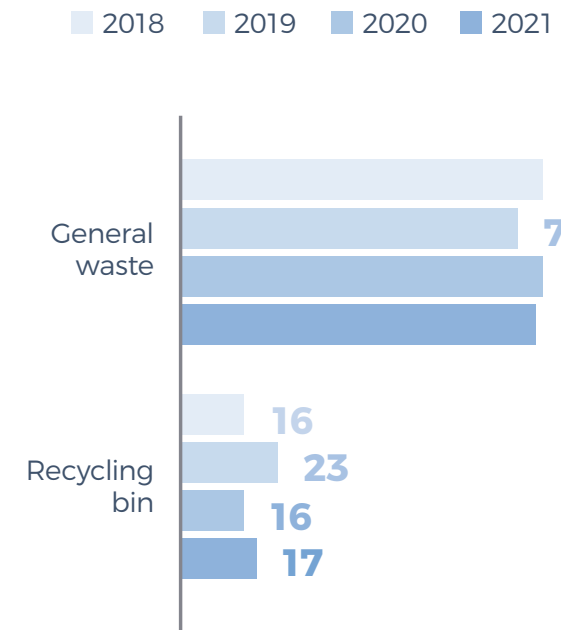
## Insight 5. ARL impact in Australia

**Soft plastics remain a challenge,** but the number of Australians likely to drop them off to store is growing.

Likely to drop off in store (%)



Those not likely to drop off in store would instead put soft plastic in (%)..



**Key finding:** More than half of Australians are likely to return soft plastics to in store REDcycle bins

# WANT TO KNOW MORE?

The APCO and Planet Ark teams have a range of ARL resources available including our resource tool kits specifically designed for key stakeholders:

## Tool Kit for Community Groups

<https://recyclingnearyou.com.au/documents/doc-1987-planetark-toolkitngoscommunitygroups-check-it.pdf>

## Tool Kit for Educators

<https://recyclingnearyou.com.au/documents/doc-1986-planetark-toolkiteducators-check-it.pdf>

## Tool Kit for Government

<http://documents.packagingcovenant.org.au/public-documents/ARL%20Resource%20Tool%20Kit%20for%20Government>

## Tool Kit for Industry

<http://documents.packagingcovenant.org.au/public-documents/ARL%20Resource%20Tool%20Kit%20for%20Industry>

## Tool Kit for Local Governments

<https://recyclingnearyou.com.au/documents/doc-1984-planet-ark-toolkitlocal-government-check-it.pdf>

## Tool Kit for Packaging Manufacturers

<http://documents.packagingcovenant.org.au/publicdocuments/ARL%20Resource%20Tool%20Kit%20for%20Packaging%20>

## Tool Kit for Partners

<http://documents.packagingcovenant.org.au/public-documents/ARL%20Resource%20Tool%20Kit%20for%20Partners>

## Tool Kit for Waste and Recycling Industry

<http://documents.packagingcovenant.org.au/public-documents/ARL%20Resource%20Tool%20Kit%20for%20Waste%20and%20Recycling%20Industry>

## Tool Kit for Waste Groups

<https://recyclingnearyou.com.au/documents/doc-1988-planetark-toolkitwastegroup-check-it.pdf>

To find out more about joining the ARL Program, visit:

[www.apco.org.au](http://www.apco.org.au)



[www.arl.org.au](http://www.arl.org.au)



or contact

[arl@apco.org.au](mailto:arl@apco.org.au)



## FURTHER INFORMATION



[www.arl.org.au](http://www.arl.org.au)

[www.apco.org.au](http://www.apco.org.au)

