OUR PACKAGING FUTURE

HOW APCO IS SUPPORTING MEMBERS IN THEIR ACTIONS TOWARDS THE 2025 NATIONAL PACKAGING TARGETS

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Introduction

This document highlights the key resources and programs APCO provides its Members to support their actions towards the strategies listed in Our Packaging Future. The vision of Our Packaging Future can only be achieved through collaboration, and APCO wishes to supports its Members in meeting the 2025 National Packaging Targets.

If you have not yet done so, we highly recommend reading Our Packaging Future. for further detail

Please click here to read: Our Packaging Future.

In 2020, APCO released the **FY21 Priority Projects**. These projects aim to support the progress towards 2025, and result in the development of a number of resources to support APCO Members.

APCO welcomes suggestions of resources to support each of these strategies, if they are not currently provided. Suggestions can be emailed to APCO at *apco@apco.org.au*

Resources and programs

Sustainable Packaging Guidelines

The *Sustainable Packaging Guidelines* (SPGs) are a central part of the co-regulatory framework established by the *National Environment Protection (Used Packaging Materials) Measure 2011* (the NEPM) and the *Australian Packaging Covenant* (the Covenant). The NEPM and the Covenant state that the SPGs are to assist the design and manufacture of packaging that meets the sometimes conflicting demands of the market, consumer protection and the environment.

For those Australian businesses who join APCO to meet regulatory obligations under the NEPM (APCO Brand Owner Members), they are required to review their packaging against the SPGs, as part of their

Signatory obligations as set out within Part C Section 10 of the Covenant. It is also important to note that some state and territory frameworks under the NEPM also reference the SPGs (as shown in the table on page 33 of the SPGs document).

The SPGs present 10 Sustainable Packaging Principles. The SPGs also provide guidance on how to implement the Principles within a business, outlining which departments of an organisation should be involved and why.

The table below shows how certain Principles of the SPGs align with the strategies of Our Packaging Future.

PRINCIPLE	STRATEGIES THE PRINCIPLE MAY SUPPORT
Principle 1 Design for Recovery – provides guidance on achieving the highest potential environmental value by following the waste hierarchy and designing packaging to be compatible with recycling and sortation infrastructure. *Figure 1: Waste Hierarchy*	1.3 Increase the proportion of reusable packaging. 1.4 Design for material recycling. 1.5 Design for compostability where appropriate. 2.2 Expand drop-off and take-back systems for packaging. 2.3 Improve the infrastructure for sortation and recycling.

Reuse can extend the life of packaging, but it also needs to have a recovery solution (e.g. recycling or composting) at end-of-life. Reuse can occur through drop-off and take-back schemes and closed-loop collaborations.

Material recycling can be achieved by using recyclable materials, by avoiding materials or components that may contaminate the recycling process, and by informing consumers about appropriate options for recovery prior to responsible disposal. To contribute to a circular economy, packaging is to be recycled into applications having the same level of quality when possible.

For compostable packaging to be recycled through composting or another organics recycling process, compostable material must be used, as well as avoiding materials or components that may contaminate the composting process. It is important to also inform consumers about appropriate recovery and disposal.

PRINCIPLE	STRATEGIES THE PRINCIPLE MAY SUPPORT
Principle 2 Optimise Material Efficiency – provides guidance on reducing material consumption and associated environmental impacts in the packaging lifecycle by optimising the volume and weight of packaging.	1.1 Reduce packaging through design and innovation. 1.2 Phase out problematic and unnecessary single-use plastic packaging.
Principle 5 Use Recycled Materials – provides guidance on optimising the amount of recycled content in packaging, considering technical feasibility, consumer acceptability, regulatory requirements (e.g. food contact/safety) etc. Using recycled materials in packaging helps to create sustainable markets for packaging recovered from households and other sources. Recycled materials generally use less energy and water to manufacture, and generates lower greenhouse-gas emissions than virgin materials of the same type. Some recycled materials also offer cost savings.	3.1 Increase recycled content in packaging.
Principle 7 Design to Minimise Litter – provides guidance on the importance of reducing litter. Many problematic, unnecessary and single-use plastic packaging items have the propensity to become litter. By considering the questions outlined in this Principle, this can help reduce this impact.	1.2 Phase out problematic and unnecessary single-use plastic packaging.
Principle 10 Provide Consumer Information on Sustainability – explores the importance of providing clear information or advice about any claims made about appropriate disposal or environmental attributes of the packaging. Consumer understanding, awareness and behaviour have a large impact on resource recovery and recycling of used packaging materials.	2.1 Standardise kerbside collection systems. 2.4 Educate households and businesses to source separate effectively.

Quickstart Guides

APCO's Quickstart Guides also provide guidance on designing for material recycling and optimising material usage and phasing out components that may be problematic for the recyclability of certain materials.
- *Quickstart Guide to design for recovery: reuse, recycling or composting*
- *Quickstart Guide to Designing for Recyclability: Glass Packaging*
- *Quickstart Guide to Designing for Recyclability: PET Packaging*

Additional material specific Quickstart Guides are also being developed as part of APCO's *FY21 Priority Projects*.

These include Quickstart Guides to:
- Designing for Recyclability: Consumer Facing Soft Plastics
- Designing for Recyclability: Rigid HDPE Packaging
- Designing for Recyclability: Rigid PP Packaging
- Designing for Recyclability: Fibre-based Packaging
- Problematic small packaging items – what's not recyclable

These support *Strategy 1.1 Reduce packaging through design and innovation* and *Strategy 1.4 Design for material recycling* of Our Packaging Future.

APCO Annual Reporting Tool

APCO Brand Owners and Sustainability Professional Members have exclusive access to the *APCO Annual Reporting Tool* (Reporting Tool). The Reporting Tool is the platform upon which Members complete their APCO Annual Report and APCO Action Plan each year. The platform was developed in partnership with the Institute for Sustainable Futures at the University of Technology Sydney.

The Reporting Tool allows Members to track packaging sustainability performance year on year, and provides recommendations for next steps using the Packaging Sustainability Framework (the Framework). To support work towards and tracking of progress towards the strategies of Our Packaging Future, consider the following Framework criteria.

FRAMEWORK CRITERIA	RELATED OUR PACKAGING FUTURE STRATEGY
Criteria 1.2 Closed-loop Collaboration	1.1 Reduce packaging through design and innovation.
Criteria 2.2 Packaging Materials Efficiency	1.3 Increase the proportion of reusable packaging.
	2.2 Expand drop-off and take-back systems for packaging.
Criteria 2.4 Post Consumer Recovery	1.3 Increase the proportion of reusable packaging.
	2.2 Expand drop-off and take-back systems for packaging.
Criteria 2.5 Consumer Labelling	2.4 Educate households and businesses to source separate effectively.
Criteria 3.1 Business-to-Business Packaging	1.3 Increase the proportion of reusable packaging.
	2.2 Expand drop-off and take-back systems for packaging.
Criteria 3.2 On-site Waste Diversion	2.2 Expand drop-off and take-back systems for packaging.

Australasian Recycling Label Program

The *Australasian Recycling Label (ARL) Program* is available exclusively to APCO Members, and provides access to the *Packaging Recyclability Evaluation Portal* (PREP) and the ARL.

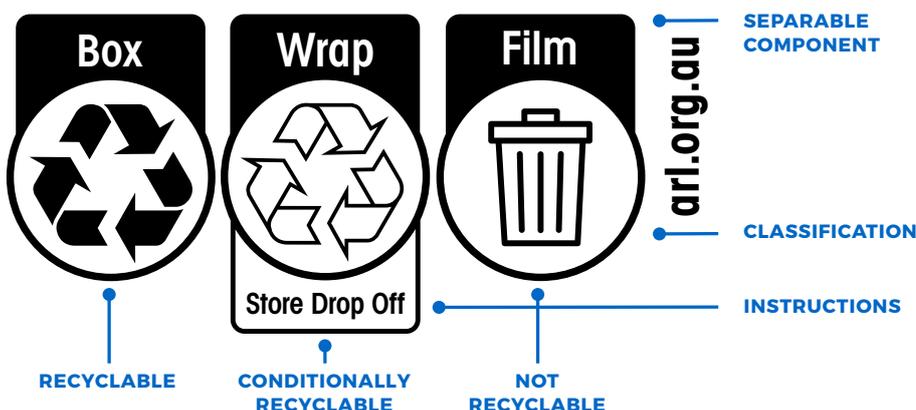Participation in this program can help support the following strategies of Our Packaging Future:
- *1.1 Reduce packaging through design and innovation.*
- *1.4 Design for material recycling.*
- *2.1 Standardise kerbside collection systems.*
- *2.3 Improve the infrastructure for sortation and recycling.*
- *2.4 Educate households and businesses to source separate effectively.*

PREP is an online tool that assesses how a piece of packaging will perform in the Australian and New Zealand resource recovery systems. 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, PREP considers all of these factors, as well as the availability of collection services, how the packaging will behave in a Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) and in subsequent processing facilities, such as paper mills and aluminium smelters. By aggregating all of this information into a simple online platform, PREP enables businesses to understand whether their packaging is recyclable, non-recyclable, or conditionally recyclable – provided consumers follow a set of instructions during disposal.

The PREP process provides a verified and transparent education loop between the design and the end-of-life of packaging in the Australian and New Zealand kerbside recycling systems. *Click here to watch a 12 minute demonstration of PREP.*

The ARL in turn, when used on-pack, removes confusion and reduces waste by educating consumers on how to correctly dispose of every separable component of packaging. *Click here to find out more about the ARL Program.*

APCO Members can join the ARL Program via the *APCO Member Centre*. There is no additional fee to Members for the use of PREP or the ARL.

Figure 2: Diagram of the ARL artwork composition

Framework for assessing if plastic packaging is considered problematic, unnecessary and single-use.

This *framework* aims to support industry and government to take a collective and considered approach to the phase-out of problematic and unnecessary single-use plastic packaging items, in turn supporting packaging reduction through design and innovation.

This document can help support Members as they work towards the following strategies of Our Packaging Future:
- *1.1 Reduce packaging through design and innovation.*
- *1.2 Phase out problematic and unnecessary single-use plastic packaging.*

Plastic Free July Toolkit

To celebrate the 10th anniversary of Plastic Free July, in 2020, APCO developed a *resource toolkit* to showcase positive action being taken on plastic packaging. The kit contains the latest plastic packaging statistics and 15 case studies showcasing organisations that are championing issues like single-use plastic avoidance and phase out, reusable packaging, community education and recycled content.

This document may be helpful for Members working towards the following strategies of Our Packaging Future:
- *1.2 Phase out problematic and unnecessary single-use plastic packaging.*
- *1.3 Increase the proportion of reusable packaging.*

Considerations for Compostable Plastic Packaging

The *Considerations for Compostable Plastic Packaging* resource was developed by APCO in partnership with the Australasian Bioplastics Association (ABA) and the Australian Organics Recycling Association (AORA). Designed to cut through confusion, these guidelines aim to help industry professionals – particularly Brand Owners, packaging technologists and designers, and food service providers – decide when and where to use certified compostable plastic packaging, and associated items like cutlery.

This document defines compostable packaging and provides information on standards and certifications, the market today, and potential applications suited to

current infrastructure. It also clarifies communication and labelling requirements for certified compostable packaging.

This document may be useful for those Members working towards *Strategy 1.5 Design for compostability* of Our Packaging Future.

To find out more about composting certification in Australia, visit the *Australasian Bioplastics Association* website.
- *AS 4736 Industrial Composting Certification.*
- *AS 5810 Home Composting Certification.*

Food Services Packaging Sustainability Guidelines

The *Food Service Packaging Sustainability Guidelines* were designed through the lens of the waste hierarchy and utilising a circular economic approach. The guidelines provide a framework for reviewing and implementing more sustainable food service packaging options, incorporating considerations such as materials and recyclability, waste capture and handling and alternative delivery models.

Members in the food and beverage industry may find this resource useful in supporting actions towards *Strategy 1.4 Design for material recycling* of Our Packaging Future.

Case Studies

APCO Members have access to case studies which support a number of strategies of Our Packaging Future. These are accessible via the *APCO website*, including APCO Member case studies:

- *Campbell Arnott's*
- *Coles*
- *Hanes Australasia*
- *Henschke*
- *THE ICONIC*
- *Kellogg's*
- *Natures Organics*
- *Unilever*
- *Woolworths*

In particular, aligning with *Strategy 3.2 Increase use of recycled packaging materials in other products and civil construction* of Our Packaging Future is APCO Member case study *Simplot and the procurement of recycled materials.*

Understanding Life Cycle Assessment for Packaging in Australia

Understanding Life Cycle Assessment for Packaging in Australia is an introductory level, Member exclusive resource design to help Members make informed decisions about Life Cycle Assessments (LCA) methodologies, and understand the process, benefits and challenges of using a LCA for their organisation. It also contains some practical case studies and a range of follow up resources to get you started on the journey.

For businesses looking to understand and improve their packaging sustainability, LCA provide businesses with reliable data on the whole of life impacts of their packaging, and can be used alongside other APCO resources, including the PREP and the SPGs.

Use of LCA may support the following strategies of Our Packaging Future:
- Outcome One Packaging Designed for Circularity, including the following strategies:
    - *1.1 Reduce packaging through design and innovation.*
    - *1.2 Phase out problematic and unnecessary single-use plastic packaging.*
    - *1.3 Increase the proportion of reusable packaging.*
    - *1.4 Design for material recycling.*
    - *1.5 Design for compostability where appropriate.*

- Outcome Three Expanded Markets for Used Packaging, including the following strategies:
    - *3.1 Increase recycled content in packaging.*
    - *3.2 Increase use of recycled packaging materials in other products and civil construction.*

Partnership Arrangements

APCO has a number of partnership arrangements with an array of local and international organisations. These partnerships support work towards 2025, and help broaden network opportunities for Members.

A list of current organisations and groups that APCO currently works with include:
- Planet Ark Environmental Foundation
- PREP Design
- WRAP UK
- Ellen MacArthur Foundation (EMF)
- Horizon Communication Group
- Australian Council of Recycling (ACOR)
- Institute for Sustainable Futures (ISF) at the University of Technology Sydney.

APCO's National Consumer Education Campaign

APCO's *National Consumer Education Campaign* is a two-year engagement program designed to improve the general public's awareness, understanding of, and behaviour relating to sustainable packaging. It will also seek to build a more consistent approach to consumer education, messaging and resourcing relating to sustainable packaging. The campaign is delivered in partnership with Planet Ark Environmental Foundation.

Launching in October 2020, the campaign features six main themes, underpinned by the waste hierarchy.

These themes are:
- Recycling
- Recycled content
- Reusable packaging
- Packaging reduction and avoidance
- Compostable packaging
- Functional role of packaging (for example the important relationship between packaging and the avoidance of food waste)

The campaign will support each of the strategies of Our Packaging Future, and will support Member's efforts to communicate with their customers and the general public about the importance of packaging recoverability and the role of packaging.

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