

SHAPING THE FUTURE OF THE ARL



Supporting members as the ARL evolves for consumers and Australia's packaging system.

The ARL Uplift Program

STRENGTHENING THE RULES & EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT A LEADING, TRANSPARENT, EVIDENCE-BASED RECYCLING LABEL.

As part of our ongoing governance role over the Australasian Recycling Label (ARL), the Australian Packaging Covenant Organisation (APCO) is currently reviewing elements of the label to improve alignment across packaging design, labelling, reporting and compliance.

This work includes reviewing the evidence base that informs the ARL packaging rules. It also considers how the label can best support consumers, and clarifying how the ARL should operate within the broader packaging system as it undergoes reforms.

APCO recognises that members currently manage multiple reporting and compliance requirements across APCO programs, including annual packaging reporting and separate ARL-related processes. Through this work, APCO is considering how these requirements can be better aligned to reduce duplication, improve usability and support a simpler member experience.

The ARL will continue to play a critical role as our packaging system evolves, including within a future Extended Producer Responsibility framework. The work underway is intended to ensure the label remains fit for purpose, supports continuity for members, and protects the investment members have already made in implementing the ARL.

No immediate action is required from members. Any changes to the ARL will be carefully planned and communicated well in advance.

ARL UPLIFT PROGRAM: AT A GLANCE

Evidence-led review

We are reviewing the evidence base that informs the rules behind the ARL shown on your packaging, with a primary focus on the kerbside recycling system, as part of ongoing label governance and continuous improvement.

APCO is working closely with downstream operators and across the packaging system, drawing on technical expertise and insights from international labelling programs. This includes considering how future ARL settings might respond to alternative destination or away-from-home pathways where evidence supports it, to help ensure ARL settings remain credible, practical and fit for purpose as packaging and recycling reforms progress.

Consumer clarity

APCO is considering what the label needs to do for consumers by drawing on a growing body of evidence, including consumer feedback, behavioural insights, campaign findings and other relevant data sets. This work is intended to ensure the ARL remains clear, accessible and meaningful at the point of decision.

Broader system alignment

We are reviewing how the ARL fits within the broader packaging system as reforms to the packaging system in Australia evolve. This review extends to its future role in a system shaped by Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) and eco-modulated fees.

Better member experience

We are looking to better align reporting and compliance requirements across APCO programs, including annual packaging reporting and ARL-related processes, to reduce duplication and streamline our interaction with members.

Carefully managed change

No immediate action is required from members. Any changes to the ARL will be carefully planned and communicated well in advance.

APCO will provide a substantial transition period and, where possible, seek to align timing with normal packaging review cycles for brands. We will also take into account other required packaging updates, such as labelling or regulatory changes already affecting packaging artwork.

STRENGTHENING THE ARL

The Australasian Recycling Label (ARL) is a key on-pack tool that helps consumers understand how to dispose of packaging correctly. The uplift is intended to strengthen the ARL as a trusted consumer awareness tool by supporting consumer confidence, cleaner feedstock and stronger system credibility. It will also help ensure the label remains fit for purpose, evidence-led and drawing, where relevant, on international best practice as Australia's and New Zealand's packaging systems evolve.

Stronger consumer confidence

Clearer on-pack guidance people can trust.

Evidence-led

Grounded in evidence and real-world outcomes.

Future fit

Designed to remain fit for purpose as the system evolves and aligned with the emerging national packaging design framework, complementing the broader national packaging policy settings led by DCCEEW.

Cleaner feedstock, better recycling outcomes

Better disposal decisions, less contamination, stronger recovery potential.

Internationally informed

Informed by global learnings while remaining focused on the Australian and New Zealand context.

Better system alignment

Stronger connection across labelling, reporting and compliance.

What it could mean in practice

This work may inform future updates to aspects of the ARL, including:

- The rules that decide the ARL shown on pack. The design or presentation of icons.
- How disposal pathways could evolve over time and are communicated in future.
- How ARL-related evidence, data and governance settings align with APCO members' experience.
- Updated governance materials, including a revised ARL methodology manual, to provide greater clarity on how ARL settings are managed, maintained and reviewed.

Where evidence supports change, some businesses may need to update on-pack ARL outcomes for specific packaging components over time. Any future changes would be introduced with clear guidance, appropriate lead times and transition arrangements to support implementation and minimise supply chain disruption.

Key principles unchanged

- The ARL will continue to be the primary tool for helping consumers dispose of packaging correctly in Australia and New Zealand.
- APCO remains committed to evidence-led label governance.
- The ARL will remain fit for purpose as the broader packaging system evolves.
- APCO is committed to continuity for members and to protecting the investment members have made to date in implementing the label.
- Future updates will be communicated clearly, phased appropriately and supported with practical lead times to minimise disruption for members.

Transition and implementation

No immediate action is required from members as part of this review.

APCO recognises that packaging changes require planning, investment and coordination.

APCO will provide clear guidance and a substantial transition window to support implementation of any changes to the ARL arising from the review. APCO will also seek to align transition timing with normal packaging review cycles for brands and consider other packaging updates required, such as labelling or regulatory changes that already affect packaging artwork.

This is intended to support practical implementation, reduce unnecessary disruption and protect the investment members have already made in adopting the ARL.

The ARL uplift will also sit alongside the broader data management uplift, which responds to member feedback and is intended to improve member experience, support more robust reporting for future Extended Producer Responsibility, and streamline reporting and compliance processes over time.

[See updates and further information on the ARL Uplift Program here](#)

What's next

APCO will continue this evidence review and engagement with members and system stakeholders throughout the uplift program. Further updates will be provided as key milestones are reached, including any proposed changes to ARL settings, guidance or systems. Members will continue to be given clear guidance and appropriate notice before any confirmed changes are introduced.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is the ARL uplift program?

The ARL uplift program is APCO's program of work to review and strengthen the rules, evidence and supporting systems behind the Australasian Recycling Label (ARL). It is part of routine label governance and continuous improvement, helping ensure the label remains credible, practical and fit for purpose as Australia's and New Zealand's packaging system evolves.

Why is APCO doing this work now?

Packaging and recycling systems change over time and so do the government policies and regulations that shape them. The ARL needs to keep pace with these changes. This work is intended to ensure the label continues to reflect current evidence, real-world recovery outcomes and national recycling infrastructure capabilities.

It supports APCO's broader work to improve alignment across packaging design, labelling, reporting and compliance, and responds to member feedback about reducing duplication and improving usability.

What is APCO reviewing?

APCO is reviewing several connected areas of the ARL, including:

- The evidence base and assumptions that inform the rules that determine the ARL shown on your packaging.
- Whether the label continues to support clear and accessible consumer action.
- How the ARL should operate within the broader packaging system as national and state packaging reform progresses.
- Where reporting, data and ARL-related processes can be better aligned over time to support a more streamlined member experience.
- How the label may later be updated to cover alternate destination or away-from-home pathways where these are evidence-based, practical and meaningful.

Does this mean all ARL labels are changing?

No. Reviewing all packaging formats does not mean all formats will be affected. Most existing settings are expected to remain unchanged. Any future updates would depend on the evidence for the specific format or packaging component being assessed.

Do members need to do anything now?

No immediate action is required from members as part of this review. Members should continue using the ARL in line with current guidance and continue with their usual assessment and reporting processes unless advised otherwise by APCO.

When will APCO share more information?

APCO will share further information as this work progresses. Members will be given clear guidance and appropriate notice before any confirmed changes are introduced.

Will ARL outcomes on pack change in future?

Potentially, for some packaging components where evidence supports a different disposal instruction. Many current ARL settings may remain unchanged, and this work does not mean there will be changes across all formats or components. If changes are introduced in future, APCO will communicate them clearly well in advance and provide guidance, appropriate lead times and transition arrangements to support implementation and minimise disruption.

Will this affect whether my packaging is able to show the ARL logo?

Potentially, for some formats. The uplift is intended to ensure ARL continues to reflect what consumers can reasonably expect: packaging that can be collected, sorted and reprocessed in practice through Australia's and New Zealand's recycling system. Where evidence supports change, the ARL shown on some packaging components may need to be updated.

Is APCO changing the purpose of the ARL?

No. The ARL remains an important on-pack tool that helps consumers across Australia and New Zealand understand how to dispose of packaging correctly at end of use. This work is about ensuring the label remains clear, credible and fit for purpose, while also considering how it should operate within a changing regulatory framework for packaging in Australia and New Zealand.

Is the ARL still focused on kerbside disposal pathways?

Currently, the ARL is primarily focused on kerbside disposal pathways in Australia and New Zealand.

However, to work as a national label, ARL settings need to be able to be applied consistently at scale, even though local collection services can vary. APCO is exploring how future iterations of the label may need to respond to alternate destination or away-from-home pathways. No decisions have been made on this aspect of the work yet.

Will the icons or visual design of the ARL change?

APCO is considering whether the current icon set and supporting guidance continue to support clear and accessible consumer action. This includes considering accessibility and consumer behaviour evidence to assess whether aspects of the label may need to evolve in future. No decisions have been made at this stage. If any changes are introduced, they will be communicated well in advance, along with clear guidance and appropriate lead times for implementation.

How does this work benefit members?

This work is intended to:

- Protect the investment members have already made in implementing the label.
- Keep the ARL fit for purpose as the system evolves.
- Improve clarity and confidence in the ARL shown on packaging.
- Reduce unnecessary duplication over time.
- Support a more streamlined experience across APCO reporting and ARL-related processes.
- Strengthen data quality, reporting consistency and overall system credibility.

How does this relate to packaging reform and Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)?

The ARL review is being conducted within the context of broader packaging reform in Australia and future system design. The ARL will continue to play an important role in a more connected future packaging framework, including alongside design standards, reporting, assurance and future EPR settings. This work is intended to help ensure the label remains fit for purpose as the system evolves.

How will this interact with the national packaging design and grading framework being developed by DCCEEW?

The ARL uplift is being designed to complement the national packaging design and grading framework led by DCCEEW. The ARL will continue to focus on clear end-of-use disposal instructions for consumers, while the national framework is expected to guide packaging design, performance and grading. APCO will align ARL settings with that framework as it develops, so members experience a more connected and consistent overall system.

How will APCO consult on any changes and what timelines will apply?

APCO is committed to being transparent about any future changes to the ARL. Where material changes are proposed, APCO will consult with members and relevant stakeholders and clearly explain the rationale, evidence and implications. Consistent with current practice, consultation would be followed by a substantial implementation window – typically 18–24 months – to allow for packaging review cycles, artwork updates and other required labelling or regulatory changes.

Does this include changes to APCO's data and reporting systems?

APCO is progressing data uplift work to improve how reporting and information are managed across APCO requirements. The aim is to reduce duplication, improve usability, strengthen data quality and support a simpler member experience, while maintaining appropriate privacy, security and assurance controls.

The current ARL reporting cycle, which commenced in December, remains underway and should be completed as usual. Members who have been contacted by the ARL Compliance Team should continue to respond to those requests, as this reporting remains a requirement for maintaining compliance in the ARL Program.

Once the current ARL reporting cycle is complete, members will not be required to complete further standalone ARL reporting while the ARL Uplift Program is underway.

ARL assessments will continue as usual. APCO will provide clear notice, guidance and transition support before introducing any future changes to reporting processes or system functionality.

Who can members contact with questions?

Members can contact their usual APCO relationship manager or the APCO member services team, and enquiries will be directed to the appropriate team.



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