



# 4 Frequently asked questions

## 4.1 What is 'green purchasing'?

A green purchasing program has broader aims than just recycled products. It aims to choose green or environmentally preferred products over their more damaging or inefficient counterparts. Green or environmentally preferred products are defined as products or services that have a less detrimental effect on human health and the environment than competing products and services that serve the same purpose.

Buying green can have significant economic advantages, including:

- Lowering costs for some products
- Saving money through re-using materials and products
- Helping to 'close the loop' to make recycling viable
- Expanding the market for green and recycled products, as well as for products with reduced packaging, and decreasing pressure to create new landfills.

**Additional Resources**  
See Section 9 Resources under

## 4.2 What is 'recyclable packaging'?

This is packaging that is currently commercially recycled. This varies across the Australian states and territories, however a few simple principles apply:

Plastics – its as simple as



Code 1: PET, (e.g. Soft drink bottles and fruit juice bottles, cups + carry trays).

Code 2: HDPE (e.g. Milk, cream and juice bottles).

Code 3: V (e.g. Juice and cordial bottles).

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It is currently only economically viable to recycle three types of plastic from domestic sources, but watch for updates, as this may change.

### Other alternatives to disposables

- Paper plates and bowls – food waste (organics)
- Steel and aluminium – recycle
- Corn starch cutlery – food waste (organics)
- PET cups and carry trays – recycle

Note: Ask your waste contractor/s to keep you informed of any changes.

### 4.3 What is not (generally) recyclable packaging?

Check with your local government or waste contractor if there might be local opportunities to recycle the following:

- Plastics with 4, 5, 6, 7
- Waxed cardboard
- Polystyrene boxes
- Polystyrene cups
- Plastic straws
- Plastic bags
- Plastic cups with no plastics numbering or 4, 5, 6, 7

### 4.4 What does 'waste contamination' mean?

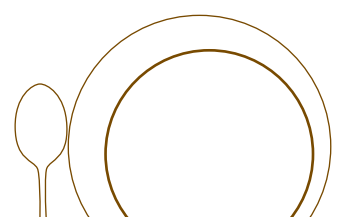
'Contamination' means that the wrong materials are going into the recycling containers. High levels of contamination mean lost resources and wasted effort. (Note: a high level is more than 5-10%)

Types of contamination that frequently occur:

- Plastic straws in glass or commingled (ie. paper, glass, steel) recycling
- Glass in food waste/organics recycling (very dangerous)
- Plastic film wrap in food waste/organics recycling
- Cutlery in food waste/organics recycling
- Plastic single portions in food waste/organics and commingled bins
- Plastic film in cardboard recycling

### What happens when a recycling container is contaminated?

The sad situation is that after going to all the effort of separating waste, the recycler that brings the load to a recycling station may have the load rejected if there are high amounts (rates) of contamination. The load then needs to be taken to landfill. This takes extra time, fuel and costs – not to mention that precious resources are lost.



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### 4.5 Can we recycle?

Yes you can! A number of waste contractors take food organics. Just remember that if a worm can eat it, you can recycle it in the food organics bin.

Food items that can be recycled include the following, but also check with your waste contractor:

- Fruit and vegetables
- Rice and pasta
- Bread and cake
- Egg shells
- Paper towels
- Coffee grounds
- Tea bags
- Serviettes
- Plate scrapings

Generally the food you cannot recycle is bones and meat offcuts/leftovers.

### 4.6 Can we give left over food to charity?

If you have food that is left over and safe to consume, you can organise to give it to a charity.

#### **Some key steps to giving left over food to charity:**

- Contact the charity before the event to let them know there will be left over food to be collected.
- Prearrange delivery advising that you are unsure of the quantity.
- Ask what type of containers they have to pick up the food.

One Umbrella collects food that cannot be used in serving and turns it into nutritious meals for the homeless and hungry of Melbourne. **In 2004, One Umbrella provided 183,000 meals at no cost to agencies working with people in disadvantaged circumstances.**

**In 2004/5 they reduced the amount of food going to landfill by approximately 42 tonnes of food.**

See Section 9 Resources for contact details.



### 4.7 What is the Good Samaritan Act

Donors are protected from legal action under Victoria's 'Good Samaritan Act', which gives donors immunity from common law liability for food donated in good condition and good faith. The Act is detailed below.

WRONGS AND OTHER ACTS (PUBLIC LIABILITY INSURANCE REFORM) ACT 2002  
'PART VIB--FOOD DONOR PROTECTION

31F. Protection of food donors

(1) A person who donates food (the food donor) in the circumstances listed in sub-section (2) is not liable in any civil proceeding for any death or injury that results from the consumption of the food.

(2) The circumstances are—

(a) that the food donor donated the food—

(i) in good faith for a charitable or benevolent purpose; and (ii) with the intention that the consumer of the food would not have to pay for the food; and

(b) that the food was safe to consume at the time it left the possession or control of the food donor; and

(c) if the food was of a nature that required it to be handled in a particular way to ensure that it remained safe to consume after it left the possession or control of the food donor, that the food donor informed the person to whom the food donor gave the food of those handling requirements; and

(d) if the food only remained safe to consume for a particular period of time after it left the possession or control of the food donor, that the food donor informed the person to whom the food donor gave the food of that time limit.

(3) For the purposes of this section, food is safe to consume if it is not unsafe food.



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### 4.8 What happens to the products we recycle?

#### Aluminium cans and bottles tops

Recycling aluminium saves heaps of energy because making aluminium cans from recycled material requires less than 5% of the energy used to make aluminium cans from raw materials.

Once an aluminium can is recycled it's back on the grocery shelf as another aluminium can in 60 days.

#### Bottle twist tops

Bottle tops are separated and processed into a variety of products: plastics are recycled into bollards and signs, aluminium and steel are used in many applications.

#### Cardboard and paper

Most paper and cardboard collected in recycling is used in packaging materials, with smaller amounts of paper used in newspapers, magazines and writing paper. Recycled paper is also used for making toilet paper.

#### Cooking oil

Once the truck has collected the oil, it is taken to a special refinery, processed and then either sold to the stockfeed industry for chicken and pig feed or converted to biodiesel – a low-emission fuel used to run the delivery/pick up trucks.

#### Corks

The cork is processed into products such as gaskets, cricket ball inner, self expanding cork jointing in concrete, noise control boards and cork flooring.

#### Food Organics

50% of the recycled organics that were processed into mulch during 2003-04 ended up on vineyards, commercial landscapes and home gardens.

#### Glass

Over 40% of recycled glass is used in the manufacture of new glass containers.

Recycled glass is not only being reused to form glass containers. Crushed glass is increasingly being used for functional and decorative features in building gardens and landscaping.

#### Printer cartridges/Inkjet cartridges/Toner cartridges

Almost 60% of laser cartridges are sent back to the original equipment manufacturers for their remanufacturing or component recovery programs. All inkjet cartridges, toner bottles and laser drums are processed to recycle their component materials into new products.

The component materials recovered include aluminium, steel, plastic, toner, ink and foam. All are recycled into new products or reused in new applications. Even residue toner is reused as pigment for colouring plastic products.

#### Plastic

Some of the uses of recycled plastics includes clothing, strapping, pallets, fence posts, wheelie bins and outdoor furniture.

#### Steel cans

All steel cans made in Australia contain 25-40% recycled steel.

Recycling steel cans saves 87% of the energy it takes to make the cans from raw materials, i.e. iron ore and coal.

