

RECYCLING IN GIPPSLAND

GIPPSLAND WASTE AND RESOURCE RECOVERY GROUP

While the nature of contractual arrangements means the issues must be resolved through direct discussions between local government, transporters and processors, GWRRG is playing a facilitative role to support contingency planning to prepare for different possibilities and develop strategies to maintain recycling collection and processing wherever possible throughout the Gippsland region. We are acutely aware of the circumstances our Councils in Gippsland face and that of the contractors collecting and processing the material collected from householders. We acknowledge that, in Gippsland the hard work of Council officers and local contractors to date has ensured services have been maintained across the region.

Across Gippsland, approximately 25,000 tonnes of recyclables is collected from kerbside. This equates to around 200 kg per household. About half is paper and cardboard and less than 10% is plastic in weight.

VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT

The Victorian Government is engaged in ongoing conversations with local government and the recycling industry to address the unfortunate circumstance faced by councils in response to the impacts of China's recyclable material import restrictions. The Government is also working with other states, the federal government and industry to ensure Victoria is as well-positioned as possible to respond to future changes to the market.

SOLUTIONS BEING CONSIDERED

The Victorian Government is taking steps to ensure the recycling industry in Victoria is sustainable in the long term, including through developing the local market for recycled materials, improving education and providing infrastructure support programs.

It is important to note that China has not completely banned the import of all recycled plastic and paper, it just requires a cleaner and more processed version of these materials which are aligned with international standards. Some recycling processors in Victoria have already responded to China's shift in policy by changing the way they sort plastics and paper/cardboard to meet these restrictions. Paper and cardboard is being sorted to a higher level to remove contamination.

Processors are also installing and investigating new technology to further process plastics to ensure it is in an acceptable state for international markets. Storage in accordance with EPA and planning requirements is a possible short-term activity undertaken by some recyclers.

THE MARKET PLACE

It is apparent that this issue is playing out across Australia and also in many countries around the world where collection of recyclable material occurs. While other options are becoming apparent, Councils and contractors are grappling with changed market conditions. The impact cannot be fully ascertained due to the uncertainty of various commodity prices, however an increase of between \$15 to \$30 per household per year would not be unexpected. While councils and the recycling industry are working through these changes to the international market for recycled materials, the Victorian Government is committed to building a strong and sustainable recycling industry in Victoria.

THE HOUSEHOLDER

Gippsland households have a great record when it comes to recycling. Since 2001, the total amount of recyclable household material has increased by 70 per cent. It is crucial that we all maintain our great recycling behaviours, built over the years, while alternative arrangements are identified.

There are four ways residents can help:

- **Prevent waste from the start.** Try to limit how much you consume. Using reusable drink bottles and coffee cups is a great start.
- **Continue to recycle as normal.** Your Council will inform you of any changes in your kerbside collection service.
- **Know what you can and can't recycle.** If in doubt, find out. Contact your Council or visit their website.
- **Buy Australian recycled products.** Recycled office paper and toilet paper are easy ways to start.

GWRRG spokesperson

Matthew Peake

GWRRG Executive Officer