**Summary**

**Household chemicals in the garbage bin 2013**

**At a glance**

Chemicals that can be collected in Sustainability Victoria’s household chemicals collection program made up about 0.06% of total household garbage bin by weight. The five main items were household (handheld) alkaline batteries, car batteries, paint, pharmaceuticals and aerosol cans.

**Background**

Sustainability Victoria (SV) administers a household chemicals collection service known as “Detox your Home” which is supported by drop-off sites for lower risk products. This is a free service for householders to dispose of potentially dangerous household chemical products safely and easily without harm to human health or the environment.

Victorian householders can dispose of hazardous household chemical products through annual mobile collections or use a permanent drop-off site to dispose of paint, household batteries and compact florescent lamps (CFLs) all year round. The program is delivered in collaboration with local government and is funded by the Victorian landfill levy.

No detailed audits of the composition of household chemicals in the waste stream have been conducted in Victoria until now. The audits reported on here will be used to benchmark the generation of household chemicals by Victorian households.

The audits were conducted in accordance with SV’s *Guidelines for auditing kerbside waste in Victoria* which provide a methodology for weight-based physical audits according to categories of materials types. A sample of 200 garbage bins was audited from four metropolitan and four non-metropolitan councils, i.e. 1600 bins in all.

The results represent the most comprehensive analysis of household chemicals conducted in Victoria to date.

**Categories**

“Household chemicals” in this study refers to all materials collected by Sustainability Victoria through the household chemical collection program in 32 categories including paint, batteries and CFLs.

In addition the study includes a category for “other” waste disposed of through the domestic garbage stream such as e-waste and medical items.

**Key facts**

* Across Victoria, total household chemicals weighed 0.19 kg per household per week – or 2% of the garbage bin.
* This consisted of 30% chemicals collected by SV and 70% other material, notably e-waste.
* Chemicals collected in SV’s household chemicals collection program made up about 0.06% of total household garbage bin by weight.
* The four main chemicals were batteries (handheld household alkaline) at 22.5%, car batteries 19.6%, paint 14.2% and pharmaceuticals 10.7%.
* In the metropolitan area aerosol cans (10.1%) were higher than car batteries.

**Items by number**

Because amounts were so small by weight, a count was made of each item and the counts were extrapolated to provide an annual figure rather than a weekly figure.

Overall, of the 1,820 household chemical items recorded:

• 854 items were audited in the metropolitan area which equates to 55 items per household per year.

• 966 items were audited in the non-metropolitan area which equates to 63 items per household per year.

Statewide the results extrapolated to an average of 59 items per household per year.

The most numerous single item was batteries (household):

• 291 batteries were audited in the metropolitan area which equates to 19 batteries per household per year.

• 353 batteries were audited in the non-metropolitan area which equates to 23 batteries per household per year.

Statewide the results extrapolated to an average of 21 batteries per household per year.

**E-waste**

There was also a substantial amount of e-waste items.

• 273 e-waste items were audited in the metropolitan area which equates to nearly 18 items per household per year.

• 254 e-waste items were audited in the non-metropolitan area which equates to nearly 17 items per household per year.

Statewide the results extrapolated to an average of 17 e-waste items per household per year.

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