



SUMMARY

Recyclables in the garbage bin 2013

At a glance

The weight of material in the average weekly Victorian household garbage bin that could have been recycled was just over 1 kg – a tenth of the bin by weight. Most of the material was paper and cardboard, plastics and glass.

Background

Sustainability Victoria is managing an education program and campaign to divert more recyclable material from household garbage bins to recycling bins and reduce the level of contamination in the recycling bin. Called Get it Right on Bin Night (GIROBN), the program was launched in 2012 initially in Melbourne and expanded statewide in 2013.

Audits were conducted in 2012 in six metropolitan councils and in 2013 in four non-metropolitan councils before and after the campaign to help evaluate performance. These results of the garbage bin audits were combined to provide a statewide picture.

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.

Categories

There were four main categories used – Recyclables, Potentially recyclable, Organics and Other. There were 14 sub categories and these are shown at the end.

Key facts

- Across Victoria, the weight of recyclables in the weekly household garbage bin was 1.05 kg
- Of the material that could have been recycled, the top items were paper and cardboard (40%), plastics (23%) and glass (20%)
- There was 4% more recyclable material in the non-metropolitan garbage bins than in the metropolitan bins.

How much is being wasted

Results showed that across Victoria the material thrown out that could have been recycled was 10.8% – that is 1.05 kg of the total weekly average garbage bin weight which is 9.7 kg.

A further 2% or 0.2 kg was “potentially recyclable” (definition is provided in sorting categories at the end).

In the audits of food, the category of unopened containers and packets showed that when packaging and contents were separated, food was 80% by weight per household per week (0.13 kg) and containers were 20% (0.03 kg). Compliant plastics and glass each made up about 40% of the containers “lost” to recycling.

What is being wasted

Of the material that could have been recycled, four categories accounted for 0.88 kg per household per week. The following table presents the categories by percentage of the total garbage bin.

Recyclable material in the garbage bin	Kg per household per week	Percentage of total garbage
Compliant paper and cardboard	0.43	4.4%
Compliant plastics	0.24	2.5%
Compliant glass	0.21	2.2%
Compliant steel	0.10	1.0%
Compliant and other aluminium	0.04	0.4%
Compliant liquid paperboard containers	0.05	0.3%
Total recyclable material	1.05	10.8%
Potentially recyclable – other steel	0.10	
Potentially recyclable – other rigid plastic mouldings	0.09	
Total potentially recyclable	0.21	2.0%
Total waste in the garbage bin	9.7	100%

Note: Rounding of figures may cause some variance with totals

Sorting categories – recyclables

Category	Components
Recyclable	
Compliant paper and cardboard	Newspaper, magazines / brochures, miscellaneous (paper) packaging, corrugated cardboard, cardboard / package board, disposable paper product, print / writing / office paper
Compliant LPB containers	Liquid paperboard containers
Compliant glass	Glass beverage containers, glass non beverage containers / other packaging glass
Compliant plastics	PET (1), HDPE (2) and PVC (3) beverage and non-beverage containers, LDPE (4) packaging, PP (5) packaging including plant pots, PS (6) packaging, other plastics (7), PP plant pots
Compliant steel	Steel beverage containers, steel packaging (excluding beverage containers)
Compliant aluminium	Aluminium beverage containers, aluminium packaging (excluding beverage containers), aluminium non-packaging (foils)
Potentially recyclable	
Other steel	Steel other non-packaging (100% ferrous items that are not cans / tins / or packaging materials, any other steel).
Other aluminium [^]	Aluminium non-packaging (100% aluminium items that are not cans / tins / packaging materials, any other aluminium).
Plastic - other rigid mouldings ^{^^}	PP (5) non-packaging (appliance parts, crates and boxes, toys, housewares / kitchenware, furniture, mouldings, irrigation fittings).
Organics	
Food / kitchen (loose)	Non-containerised kitchen food products.
Containerised food [#]	Containerised kitchen food products (food in unopened packets).
Garden / vegetation	Loose garden vegetation with dimensions no longer than 0.3m long, 0.3m wide and 0.3m depth.
Other paper	Compostable paper not suitable for recycling based on typical MRF standards (before being put in the bin), soiled paper and used tissues.
Other putrescible	Animal excrement mixed compostable items, kitty litter.
Other material	
Other material	Everything else including absorbent hygiene waste.

[^] Other aluminium was split between foils (kerbside recyclable) and other materials (not kerbside recyclable). The foils are applied to compliant aluminium in the results.

^{^^} Plastic rigid mouldings (i.e. all rigid plastic that was not a recyclable container) was split between plant pots (kerbside recyclable) and other rigid plastic materials that are not recyclable containers (not kerbside recyclable). The plant pots are applied to compliant plastics.

[#] This category is predominantly organic material.