



## MEDIA RELEASE

### **RECYCLING AND COVID19 – SOME ASPECTS TO CONSIDER**

Australian Council of Recycling (ACOR), the peak national body for the recycling sector which employs some 50,000 Australians, today issued these explanatory points in relation to COVID19 and recycling:

- Community- and business-based recycling are Australian success stories, despite many challenges, with more than 30 million tonnes or some 60% of our consumed materials made into new products every year. It's outstanding environmental and economic benefits means it should be continued during the very challenging COVID19 period.
- Recycling has been deemed an essential service - prior to COVID19 - in some jurisdictions such as Victoria. In NSW, the Essential Services Act 1988 and Public Health Act 2010 form the legal basis of the Government's response to COVID19. Under the relevant laws, waste is deemed to be an essential service, and "waste" is defined to include "any otherwise discarded, rejected, unwanted, surplus or abandoned substance intended for sale or for recycling, processing, recovery or purification by a separate operation".
- The demand for packaging and packaged goods by consumers and the essential food and beverage sector has increased since COVID19 due to changed consumption patterns. Recyclate, including paper/cardboard, metals, plastics and glass, is an important part of meeting that increased demand for safe packaging.
- Recycling jobs are known to be low-risk in terms of infectious diseases. Physical distancing is already an inherent part of recyclate collection, sorting and remanufacturing activity. Companies are taking further precautions with increased disinfection of surface/contact zones.
- While the broader economy is shrinking and unemployment is increasing, recycling is a steady job provider. It is established that each 10,000 tonnes recycled produces nine jobs – while disposing of that same amount produces only three.
- As a result of changed consumption patterns, the material flows in recycling are currently different (with supermarkets generating unprecedented material, as one example, and the continuation of important construction activity, as another). The needless disposal of such material - be it cardboard, glass, plastic, metals, or construction and demolition materials - to landfill is an unnecessary waste of resources, a job reducer, and has virtually no health benefit. Circular supply chains are a constant and their interruption at any point is a major problem.
- At the consumer level, recycling is an activity that provides social cohesion when it's now needed. Here's a humorous but valid example where Aussies are dressing up to take out their bins: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/306002627033697/>

- With people spending more time at home and more material being generated from households, it's a good time to focus on 'recycling right' and putting only permissible products and materials into kerbside recycling bins. This means following your local Councils' website instructions and, in NSW, trying the Recycle Mate app that visually tells people if an article is acceptable in their local system.
- Participating in recycling through the container deposit/refund systems in NSW, Queensland, Northern Territory, Australian Capital Territory and South Australia remains an acceptable and worthwhile activity. CDRS provides: jobs across the country in several supply chains; many Australians with additional income in a difficult time, and; takes pressure off the household waste management system. Community members should, of course, follow physical distancing guidelines and the special procedures that CDRS drop-off operators have put in place to foster health safety.

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