



# Recycling Behaviours Report 2023

Australians and recycling:  
attitudes, behaviours and outlook

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## INTRODUCTION

### The Recycling Behaviours Report

For the third consecutive year in a row, Cleanaway and the Clean Energy Finance Corporation (CEFC) have conducted research into Australians' recycling behaviours. With insight to the everyday recycling challenges faced by Australians, Cleanaway and the CEFC can achieve their goal of delivering empowering and targeted waste education. Such education and awareness will assist Australians in making correct recycling decisions and shift all toward contributing in an on-shore circular economy.

This report summarises research conducted in February 2023 with a representative sample of 1,000 adults across all states of Australia (in both metro and regional locations). This year's survey sought to understand Australians' attitude and behaviour regarding recycling and sustainability. Focus was placed on trust in the system, knowledge of specific recycling information such as labelling and source separation, and whether the rising cost of living had influenced sustainable waste behavior changes.

Survey results reveal an overwhelmingly positive sentiment towards recycling remains. Most Australians believe recycling is important, however, trust in the system is weak. Accessing material-specific recycling infrastructure presents logistical barriers for Australians to recycle correctly, as does incorrect interpretation of product labelling/messages, knowing what can and can't be recycled in the kerbside recycling bin, and how long it takes for waste items to break down.

To see a tangible difference with waste sustainability, more needs to be done by all. Cleanaway, the largest waste management company in Australia, is proud to be a key player in building a sustainable future for all Australians. With a national team dedicated to waste education, positive behaviour change can be driven across the nation. Publicly available resources such as Cleanaway's free and engaging e-learning platform, Greenius, supports education and understanding of the recycling system; therefore improving trust. This resource, accompanied by Cleanaway's online Recycling Hub, build confidence in consumers' knowledge around recycling. Confidence and accurate knowledge means Australians can continue making a sustainable future possible together.



### About Cleanaway

Cleanaway is Australia's leading Waste Management company, offering waste disposal and resource recovery solutions for a wide range of stakeholders and industries.

Having supported Australian businesses for more than 50 years, a 7,000+ strong workforce and 130 prized assets across the nation, allows Cleanaway to confidently deliver waste management solutions. These solutions not only offer extraordinary benefits to customers, but the wider community.

Cleanaway views waste with a different mindset to others, asking the question 'what can it be next?'. With this mindset, industry experience, and expertise, Cleanaway is always finding better, smarter and cleaner ways to make a sustainable future possible together.

### About the Clean Energy Finance Corporation

The CEFC is a specialist investor with a deep sense of purpose: investing as Australia's 'green bank' to help achieve our national goal of net zero emissions by 2050. With a strong investment track record, the CEFC invests across the economy to capture the benefits of the net zero transition, working to deliver a positive return across its portfolio on behalf of the Australian Government.

Since 2017, the CEFC has been working with Cleanaway to support waste education efforts, such as the Recycling Behaviours Report. Through this investment, Cleanaway and the CEFC aim to reduce waste going to landfill and create a sustainable future for Australians.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This year's Recycling Behaviours Report reveals Australians remain convinced recycling is important, however they are struggling in practice.

### Sustainable opportunity in the cost-of-living crisis

Australians who engage in sustainable and circular economy oriented behaviour such as repairing before replacing, buying less or second-hand, and taking items to the end of their life before disposing of them, are more motivated by the cost savings rather than because it is good for the environment. With rising interest rates and cost-of-living placing increased pressure on household finances, these circumstances are an opportunity for Australians to engage with positive sustainable behaviours which contribute to a circular economy.

### Recycling standards and infrastructure

Australians are concerned with the country's current recycling infrastructure. 50% of Australians believe a lack of infrastructure inhibits getting recycling right as a society. While motivations to recycle tend to be moral (e.g. it's the right thing to do and help the environment), identified barriers are logistical, such as access to specialised recycling services.

Although most people say they know how to appropriately dispose of complicated items such as chemicals, paint cans, batteries, and e-waste, around half find it difficult to do so. Australians suggested if home recycling services were improved, this would help them recycle more.

### Recycling information and knowledge

Confusion and misunderstandings around recycling rules and information was identified as a major issue impacting recycling behaviours. A test in the survey assessed recycling label understanding and provided a sobering example of knowledge issues. A staggeringly high proportion of Australians mistook the displayed Plastics International Code #3 symbol (represents PVC - a type of plastic) for a recycling symbol. As a result, these items were and without education, incorrectly placed in the recycling bin, causing contamination.

Batteries are another area where reported behaviours suggest a concerning gap in knowledge: around a quarter of Australians say

they dispose of batteries in their kerbside bins. Are they aware of the fire risk this poses to waste infrastructure/collection vehicles, and the community?

### Enthusiasm for a circular economy

While Australians are still not particularly familiar with the concept, when provided with the definition, majority believed a circular economy is something important to implement in Australia. When asked how to best establish a circular economy, the greatest priorities were: establishing the necessary infrastructure, educating the public, and greater focus on recyclability and sustainability in product manufacturing.

### Trust in the recycling system

Trust appears to have deteriorated in Australia's recycling system, providing yet another barrier to Australians doing the right thing. The collapse of soft plastics recycling and other negatively broadcast industry news has left many with a deep distrust in Australia's recycling capabilities. To rebuild trust, more transparency is required around the recycling process. Australians still believe in the importance of recycling but would appreciate reassurance their personal efforts are not in vain.

#### REPORT HIGHLIGHTS



**43%**

don't trust their recycling will be properly recycled (20% believe it all goes to landfill)



**36%**

say they would recycle more if they had proof their items were actually being recycled



**38%**

say they find recycling confusing



**44%**

believe it is difficult to find clear recycling instructions



**24%**

dispose of batteries in their kerbside waste or recycling bins



**78%**

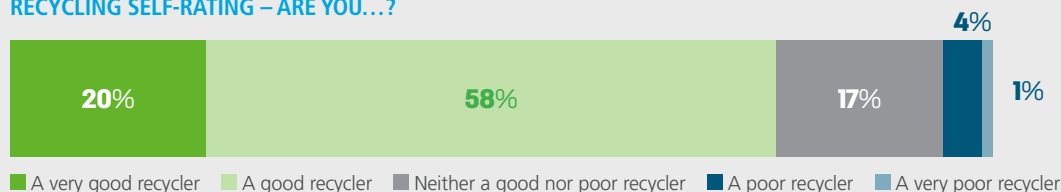
don't know what the phrase circular economy means

## RECYCLING AND WASTE DISPOSAL BEHAVIOURS

### When it comes to recycling, we aren't as good as we think

Most Australians believe they are good recyclers, but the 2023 survey has uncovered our actual behaviours and identified room for improvement.

#### RECYCLING SELF-RATING – ARE YOU...?



While 78% of Australians rate themselves as good or very good recyclers, answers to other survey questions revealed fewer consistently sort their waste correctly. More than a third of Australians are not taking regular, essential steps to ensure their items are recyclable.



**34%**

of Australians **don't empty or rinse recyclable containers** before putting them in the recycling bin most or every time



**37%**

of Australians **don't check for the recycling symbols** to see where an item should be recycled before disposing of it most or every time



**43%**

of Australians **don't separate soft plastic and film from hard plastic** before recycling most or every time



**38%**

of Australians **don't separate the components of a single product** to recycle or dispose of in the appropriate bin most or every time



**43%**

of Australians **don't take the lids off glass and plastic bottles before putting them in the recycling** most or every time

Notably, when compared with Cleanaway's 2022 Recycling Behaviours Report, not as many of us are regularly checking for recycling symbols (63% most or every time in 2023 compared to 72% in 2022 – a 9% decline).

### Sorting task

The sorting task (where participants are asked where they would dispose of various household waste items) highlighted that despite our good intentions, Australians are still struggling with the correct disposal and recycling of common items. There is a noticeable decline from 2022 in those taking soft plastics to specialised recycling facilities or drop offs (29% down to 16%). This may be related to the collapse of the REDcycle program between the 2022 and 2023 surveys.

Australians continue to struggle with the correct disposal of common everyday items such as takeaway coffee cups. Over half of survey respondents were incorrectly placing these into the mixed recycling bin. Additionally, almost a quarter of respondents were wrongly placing bread bags into the mixed recycling bin.



#### Batteries

**37%** don't take them to specialised disposal with  
**24%** incorrectly disposing into kerbside bins



#### Takeaway coffee cups

**62%** don't put them in the general rubbish bin with  
**53%** incorrectly putting these in mixed recycling bin



#### Mobile phones

**38%** don't take them to specialised disposal



#### Plastic takeaway containers

**34%** don't put them in the recycling



#### Paint cans

**41%** don't take them to specialised disposal



#### Takeaway paper drink cups (ie from a fast food restaurant)

**61%** don't put them in the general rubbish bin

## MOTIVATIONS FOR RECYCLING

### What makes us want to recycle?

As has consistently been the case, believing it is the right thing to do remains the main motivator behind why Australians recycle. Closely backing this up is the population's desire to minimise waste going to landfill, and help the environment

#### WHAT MOTIVATES AUSTRALIANS TO RECYCLE



**74%**

It's the right thing to do



**72%**

Minimise waste  
going to landfill



**71%**

To help the  
environment

#### Economic climate as a motivator

The rising cost of living and desire to save money appear to be factors behind other sustainable behaviours such as re-using, repairing and seeking out second-hand products. Current economic and financial challenges may have led to some people commencing or increasing these behaviours. 42% of Australians are buying more second hand items, or started to do so in 2022, in line with the timing of interest rate rises and increasing pressure on household budgets. The following table shows that among those who engage in many sustainable behaviours, the financial motive is far more common than the environmental. This has positive ramifications as saving money is motivating more environmental-friendly behaviours.

| Action                                                          | % who do who started or increased behaviour in 2022 | % who do to save money | % who do to lessen environmental impact |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| I try to avoid buying things in general                         | 48%                                                 | 79%                    | 32%                                     |
| I grow my own food                                              | 47%                                                 | 57%                    | 35%                                     |
| I buy things second-hand                                        | 42%                                                 | 75%                    | 41%                                     |
| I try to repair items rather than just replacing them           | 38%                                                 | 73%                    | 36%                                     |
| I wait as long as I can before replacing worn out/broken things | 36%                                                 | 75%                    | 34%                                     |

## MOTIVATIONS FOR RECYCLING cont.

### What would make us do better?

Unfortunately, despite moral, financial and emotional drives to recycle, there are practical and logistical obstacles which make it challenging.

Australians reported the following would encourage them to recycle more.

#### EASIER INFORMATION AND INSTRUCTIONS



**39%**

Clearer product labelling



**29%**

Clearer/more consistent information

#### BETTER VISIBILITY AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE PROCESS



**36%**

Proof items are actually recycled



**27%**

Seeing what happens to items after recycling

#### IMPROVED ACCESS TO RECYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE



**33%**

Access to home recycling bins for specific materials



**31%**

Bigger recycling bins



**31%**

More frequent recycling collection



**25%**

If recyclables could be picked up from home

#### TANGIBLE REWARDS



**36%**

Incentives to do so e.g. vouchers

## BARRIERS TO RECYCLING

### Information and knowledge can be improved

With a 4% increase on 2022's survey results, confusion around recycling remains a prominent issue - affecting over a third of Aussies. The proportion who say it is hard to find clear instructions has increased from 38% to 44%, now accounting for more than two-fifths of Australians.

**83%**

"There should be national consistency in recycling standards"

**44%**

"It is hard to find clear instructions about how to recycle"

**38%**

"Recycling is confusing"

"Recycling bins etc need to be made consistent across all councils. The whole system should be simplified so anyone can do it at any time. The public shouldn't have to decide which bin to use or what is recyclable. If it's not salvageable it goes in the bin and everything else goes to recycling to be manually sorted by people who are trained." -- 65-69 year-old, VIC



THE UNIVERSAL RECYCLING SYMBOL

#### Recycling symbol confusion

The universal recycling symbol, logo, or icon is an internationally recognised symbol used to designate recyclable materials. Plastic items are commonly marked with a Plastics Identification Code (PIC) symbol, which bears a strong resemblance to the universal recycling symbol. This similarity appears to be creating a source of confusion for correct recycling practices as this symbol does not necessarily mean the product can go into kerbside recycling bins.

The majority of Australians who were shown the symbol for PVC (which can be found on items such as toys and shower curtains) and asked if it was a recycling symbol, answered 'yes'. When asked how they would dispose of an item with this symbol on it, half said they would put the item in kerbside recycling. This is one example of how even a seemingly simple source of information about what to do with an item, is not consistently understood by the general public.



THE PLASTICS IDENTIFICATION CODE SYMBOL FOR ITEMS MADE OF PVC, OR POLYVINYL CHLORIDE

Is this a recycling symbol? (n=499)

**YES 81%**

**NO 19%**

How would you dispose of an item with only this symbol on it? (n=501)

Put it in the kerbside recycling bin

**50%**

Dispose of it at a specified waste drop off location

**25%**

Put it in the general waste bin

**18%**

Another way

**7%**

■ Correct answer/s  
■ Incorrect answer/s

The confusion in this instance is particularly concerning. Products with this symbol contain harmful chemicals, yet many would still place in the kerbside recycling bin.

**"The recycling symbols and the sort of plastic symbol are very similar. It was a surprise to me to learn that, having never been instructed on the different symbols."** – 70+ year-old, VIC

## TRUST IN RECYCLING

### Declining trust and misconceptions about our waste

Four out of ten Australians (43%) don't trust their recycling will be properly recycled, an increase from 36% in 2022. The proportion of those believing 'it all goes to landfill anyway' is also higher in 2023 than it was in 2022 (20% compared to 15%).

**43%**

Don't trust that their recycling will be properly recycled

**20%**

(Wrongly) believe it all goes to landfill anyway

**50%**

Identify lack of appropriate recycling infrastructure as a barrier to recycling as a society

**48%**

identify a lack of trust in the recycling process as a barrier to recycling as a society

### Perception of widespread contamination issues

A major source of mistrust is due to perceptions of the level of contamination in recycling being so prevalent that materials are then not recoverable, thus rendering their efforts in vain. These perceptions may lead to a decreased motivation to recycle correctly.

**"...the sheer scope of all waste is too large to recycle everything accurately without incurring separation costs, so I believe that many corners are cut by recyclers and waste removal operators to minimise their own costs and workload."**

– 40-44 year-old, NSW

### High profile recycling scandals

The second strong driver of eroded trust is stories of improper recycling – mostly through media reporting, but also including anecdotal accounts from people within the industry. The collapse of REDCycle's soft plastics program was specifically named as a factor in reduced recycling system trust, raising further questions around what else is being stockpiled and not recycled.

These stories and incidents relate to the lack of trust Australians are feeling in the process and may lead to decreased motivation to recycle.

**"The bins in the apartment books are not used properly. Even if I was to do the recycling right, other people don't."**

– 70+ year-old, VIC

### Lack of visibility of recycling processes

Finally, respondents pointed to the unknown – as there is no way for someone to check and verify exactly what is happening to the items they recycle.

**"In the media recently we have heard that soft plastics are just being stock piled and then ending up in landfill anyway. It doesn't make me feel confident the industry is working properly to recycle waste, so I question what others are doing."**

– 35-39 year-old, VIC

## SPECIALISED RECYCLING

### Access to specialised recycling infrastructure

Across Australia, each household has a different set of waste disposal services dependent on factors such as the council and type of building structure they live in (i.e. free-standing homes vs apartments). While a general rubbish bin and mixed recycling bin are now fairly universal, access to recycling bins (from your home) for specialised materials (e.g. FOGO) is highly variable.

#### More bins = higher satisfaction

Within the 2023 survey, only 38% reported having access to a separate bin for food and garden organics (FOGO), 27% reported a separate bin for only paper and cardboard, 13% a separate bin for glass, and 6% a separate bin for e-waste.

Those with access to at least one specialised recycling bin (such as paper and cardboard only, glass or e-waste) reported higher levels of satisfaction regarding their current access to waste management options, compared with those who only have a general waste and mixed recycling bin (66% vs 49%).



**46%**

say they would recycle more items if they had a bigger recycling bin

**33%**

say they would be motivated to recycle more if they had access to home recycling bins for specific materials

**48%**

say it's hard to get everything that should be recycled to the right place for recycling

Queensland residents notably reported reduced access to FOGO kerbside bins (only 14% compared with the national average of 38%), which in turn makes it harder to dispose of garden waste, and makes them less likely to compost food waste.

|                       |                                    | Australia | Queensland |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| ACCESS                | Have a FOGO bin                    | 38%       | 14%        |
| GARDEN WASTE          | Think it's difficult to dispose of | 15%       | 25%        |
| COMPOSTING FOOD WASTE | Yes, in a FOGO bin                 | 23%       | 9%         |
|                       | Yes, own composting bin            | 29%       | 31%        |
|                       | Do not compost                     | 50%       | 60%        |

## Batteries and e-waste

Batteries and e-waste are made of up to 95% recyclable materials and can be used to make new products – if recycled in the right manner. Batteries contain toxic metals that shouldn't come into contact with other products that might be in our household bins.

### Batteries

Batteries are classified as explosive waste which can cause fires within collection vehicles or waste sorting and processing facilities. As such, it is imperative for Cleanaway to ensure people understand the importance of recycling batteries, allowing resources to be recovered and keeping the environment and community safe.

As we saw from the sorting task earlier in the report, almost a quarter (24%) of Australians are placing batteries into their kerbside bins, suggesting they may be unaware of the serious and dangerous risks mentioned above.



**37%**

**do not take batteries to specialised recycling**, such as council drop offs when disposing of them.

**37%**

**don't ensure batteries are removed** from battery-operated items before putting them in the rubbish bin most or every time

**23%**

believe that you **can dispose of batteries in the general waste bin**

**13%**

believe that you **can dispose of batteries in the kerbside recycling bin**

Electronic waste, or the more common term e-waste, refers to electrical products being disposed of. The majority of people do not have e-waste bins available at their place of residence which is why many businesses have teamed up with government e-waste stewardship schemes to provide drop off locations. In saying this, 16% of those residing in an apartment, flat or unit reported having a separate bin for e-waste. This suggests communal buildings or blocks are encouragingly moving toward promoting on-site specialised recycling for residents.

**All in all, survey results identified people find it difficult to recycle e-waste, just like other items that generally require a drop off location outside the home.**

Most Australians report no difficulty disposing of paper, cardboard, and hard plastics (the traditional components of the mixed recycling bin), but find it challenging to get rid of chemicals, paint cans, batteries and e-waste – all items which require specialised recycling.

**How easy or difficult is it to recycle the following items, so they wouldn't just end up in landfill?**

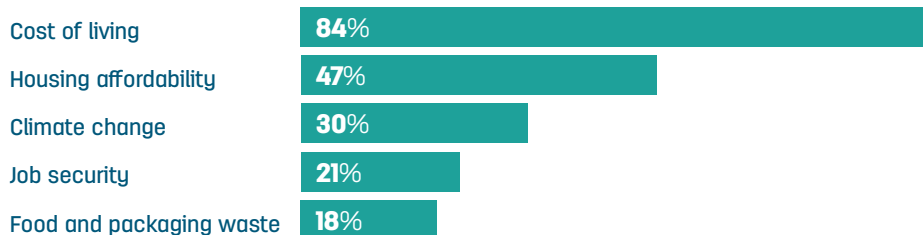
| Item          | Find it difficult | Don't know how |
|---------------|-------------------|----------------|
| Chemicals     | 63%               | 21%            |
| Paint cans    | 54%               | 17%            |
| Batteries     | 53%               | 10%            |
| E-waste       | 48%               | 19%            |
| Soft plastics | 40%               | 5%             |

## COST OF LIVING IMPACTS

### Conscious sustainability takes a back seat to the rising cost of living

When asked to rank current concerns between cost of living, climate change, housing affordability, job security and food and packaging waste, cost of living was the runaway top concern (84% placing it in their top two). Almost all respondents (97%) reported having been at least slightly affected by cost of living increases over the past year.

#### Top 2 concerns for all respondents



#### Sustainable behaviours – driven by financial considerations more than values

A significant number of Australians report they engage in sustainable behaviours such as making items last as long as possible before replacing them (89%), repairing rather than replacing items (81%) and buying things second-hand (62%). While environmental concerns and personal values are influences on these behaviours for at least a third of those who engage, saving money is a far more pervasive motivation.

#### Financial concerns also drive less sustainable behaviours

On the other side of the spectrum, around half of Australians say they buy cheaper items, even though they know they will wear out/break down sooner than something more expensive (47%) and buy cheaper items that are not sustainably produced, instead of sustainable items that cost more (51%). These Australians also most commonly cite saving money as the reason behind doing so – even if they would prefer not to.

#### I wait as long as I can before replacing worn out/ broken things (n=890)



#### I try to repair items rather than just replacing them (n=805)



#### I buy things second-hand (n=624)



#### I buy cheaper items that are not sustainably produced, instead of sustainable items that cost more (n=505)



#### I buy cheaper items even though I know they will wear out/break down sooner than something more expensive (n=471)



#### I grow my own food (n=325)



■ To save money ■ To lessen my impact on the environment ■ It aligns with my values ■ I enjoy it ■ I don't have a choice

## THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY

### A popular concept, but poorly recognised and misunderstood

A circular economy is an economic system with the intention of reducing waste and encouraging the continual circulation of resources - through reuse and recycling.

As opposed to a linear economy or “take-make-dispose” model whereby raw materials are used to make products that are then disposed of in landfill after short-term use, a circular economy ensures every product is designed with longevity and quality in mind so it can become an input for other processes at the end of its life.

Achieving a circular economy has a number of benefits:

- Reduces the need for extensive natural resource extraction (such as mining) and allows ecosystems to recover, therefore positively impacting the environment,
- Reduces the amount of litter becoming pollution, and
- Increases local job creation through new recycling and repairing ventures

Consistent with results reported in the 2021 and 2022 Recycling Behaviours Reports, few Australians are familiar with the concept of a “circular economy”.

**42% in total have heard the term, but only 22% say they have any idea what it means.**

However, when provided with a definition of a circular economy, Australians almost unanimously (99%) agree that it is at least slightly important; 80% said it was very or extremely important.

The consistency of these results across Cleanaway’s annual reports suggest the term circular economy is what’s struggling to gain popular traction. While many are not consciously familiar with the concept, Australians are starting to take a broader view of the waste management system, responding with enthusiasm to the ideas covered by the phrase.



**“I would like to see more public education programmes to train people to refrain from buying and consuming “things”, and then throw them away or change for new model.. all these consumption with all their packaging and manufacturing and delivery processes are adding enormously to the burden on the environment and is hastening the already changing climate! We need to learn to consume “things” less, and let the economy grow by consumption of services and experiences instead.”**

– 65-69 year-old, NSW

## Who is responsible for achieving it?

### Infrastructure and education are Australians' top priorities

Based on participants' understanding of the circular economy concept, it appears Australians see two immediate priorities: building the infrastructure required for a circular economy, and delivering education about the new, environmentally-minded system. Additionally, it was noted the spotlight should be turned to the design and manufacturing of products to ensure all producers are building circularity and recyclability into the creation of new items.

### Australians expect the Government to take the lead on implementation

Australians believe responsibility for the implementation of a circular economy falls first onto the shoulders of the Federal Government, followed by companies and manufacturers, with the public a distant third.



**"I don't understand why various types of packaging is allowed legally if it can't be recycled. E.g. Not all clear plastic food trays from supermarkets can be recycled in the general recycle bin."**

– 65-69 year-old, NSW

### Top priority to build a circular economy

Building infrastructure to do the recycling, reprocessing, and manufacture for the circular economy

**24%**

Education about how a circular economy works and how to participate in it

**23%**

Ensuring products are designed with circularity in mind

**19%**

Regulations on the creation of non-recyclable products

**17%**

Improving access to consumer recycling services

**11%**

Creating local markets for reuse of recovered materials/items

**7%**

### Most responsible for implementing a circular economy

Federal government

**42%**

Companies and manufacturers

**24%**

Australian consumers/citizens

**16%**

Local (council) governments

**12%**

State governments

**7%**

## WASTE HIERARCHY

### Reduce, reuse – not just recycle

This years' survey results suggest Australians are becoming more aware that recycling is not the only important behaviour they can partake in to manage waste - there is also importance in reducing and reusing.

Respondents were asked to rank five different solutions for managing waste, from the most sustainable ('avoiding unnecessary or single use items') to the least sustainable ('disposing of waste into landfill').

When making comparisons between the 2023 and 2022 survey results, there has been a positive shift in people's perception of the waste hierarchy order. In 2022, 'avoid buying unnecessary or single-use items' and 'recycle materials in the correct bins to ensure they can be made into something new' were equally ranked as the best option (both 34%). In 2023, 'recycling in the correct bins' lost ground to 'reusing materials' and 'buying recycled products'.

### The Waste Hierarchy



"Firstly there's no proper infrastructure in place e.g. the Red Cycle program for soft plastics- it collapsed as it was not viable. Secondly we've lost the plot. We've become so obsessed with recycle, recycle, recycle that we've forgotten the mantra is REDUCE, REUSE and then Recycle. We don't need bigger recycling bins we need to reduce our usage and reuse items."

% of respondents selecting option as the best way of managing waste

| CORRECT ORDER OF SUSTAINABILITY                                                        | 2022 | 2023 |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|
| 1. Avoid buying unnecessary or single-use items                                        | 34%  | 35%  |
| 2. Reuse materials by donating them, upcycling or repurposing                          | 14%  | 17%  |
| 3. Buy products that use recycled packaging or materials                               | 15%  | 19%  |
| 4. Recycle materials in the correct bins to ensure they can be made into something new | 34%  | 25%  |
| 5. Dispose of waste into landfills                                                     | 4%   | 5%   |

## SOLUTIONS

This year's Recycling Behaviours Report reveals that despite Australians believing they are doing the right thing and wanting to do the right thing, mistakes are still being made when it comes to recycling. Areas of limited understanding such as labels and knowledge around the circular economy and recycling process, present as barriers to collectively building a sustainable future.

With the dominant motivator behind engaging in sustainable behaviours financial, it suggests the current cost of living crisis could be an opportunity to engage more Australians in the circular economy. This could be achieved through encouraging the re-use of items, repairing and buying second hand. Maintaining these behaviours regardless of financial and economic circumstances would see an improvement in the amount of waste going to landfill.

When understanding what will encourage people to recycle better, over a third of people (35%) said incentives would be a good motivator. This shows there is value in expanding initiatives such as the 10c container deposit scheme, and third parties investigating additional initiatives where money could be received for returning particular items.

The 2023 survey results saw higher waste management satisfaction among those who had access to specialised recycling services from home, compared to those who had access to specialised recycling services from

the home, compared to those who didn't (FOGO, e-waste, paper and cardboard only bins). An increase in the waste streams offered through 'kerbside collections' and frequency of existing recycling collections could be the key to Australian's recycling correctly and at a higher volume.

The decline in trust from 2022's results is a cause of concern and must be addressed holistically by the waste management industry. Survey results show there is public demand for education and demonstration around what happens to our recycling. More importantly, people want to know what happens when they recycle correctly and when they don't.

If unsure of how to dispose of an item, the onus is on consumers to research the correct waste disposal stream before placing into a bin. Reliable sources of information are available through waste management provider and council websites, however these don't seem to be commonly used. The mindset must be to think and research if unsure but remember to not set and forget as evolutions with technology can change what is accepted in your waste streams.

Offering education in a way which resonates with the public, and improving access to waste services is paramount to addressing some of the issues and barriers people face around recycling correctly and reducing waste to landfill.

## CLEANAWAY'S ROLE IN IMPROVING OUR RECYCLING AND WASTE HABITS

### Partnerships and investment to build the circular economy

Cleanaway is continuing to play a role in building the circular economy through meaningful partnerships and investment. Investing in two new plastic processing facilities in Victoria; building out our organic waste processing capability and continuing to play a role in the state specific Container Deposit Schemes are just a few of the initiatives Cleanaway are undertaking to help create circular solutions.

### Working with industry to promote consistent messaging for consumers

Cleanaway is continuously working with industry partners and bodies to help create consistent messaging to consumers around how to correctly dispose of certain waste streams, such as battery disposal messaging.

### Site tours and waste education

Cleanaway is continuing to look to grow trust amongst Australians by driving transparency around what happens to recycling once it leaves the kerbside. Site tours are on offer at many of our facilities, we run an always-on education campaign across social media to help educate on how to best recycle and we have built a range of resources to support schools, communities, businesses and households to recycle correctly. The 'Recycling Hub' is a fast and effective tool for the A-Z of recycling.

## METHODOLOGY

This report has been prepared with the assistance of Empirica Research who conducted an online survey with a sample of 1,000 Australians in February 2023.

Any external sources that have been used are referenced throughout.

| 1,000 AUSTRALIANS   |                                    |     |     |
|---------------------|------------------------------------|-----|-----|
| GENDER              | Male                               | 491 | 49% |
|                     | Female                             | 509 | 51% |
| AGE                 | 18-34                              | 290 | 29% |
|                     | 35-54                              | 338 | 34% |
|                     | 55+                                | 372 | 37% |
| STATE/<br>TERRITORY | NSW                                | 309 | 31% |
|                     | VIC                                | 258 | 26% |
|                     | QLD                                | 205 | 21% |
|                     | WA                                 | 107 | 11% |
|                     | SA                                 | 74  | 7%  |
|                     | ACT                                | 17  | 2%  |
|                     | TAS                                | 24  | 2%  |
|                     | NT                                 | 6   | 1%  |
| REGION              | A capital (metropolitan) city      | 552 | 55% |
|                     | A regional city, but not a capital | 277 | 28% |
|                     | A rural or remote country area     | 171 | 17% |





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