

Cash in your cans

In a single year, Australians consume more than three billion canned drinks and recycle 71 per cent of the aluminium cans¹.

You might think that is an excellent recycling rate, until you realise we could be recycling 100 per cent of the aluminium. So what happened to the other 891 million cans? Unfortunately, they were tossed into the general waste and went to landfill.

Recycling aluminium saves energy and cuts greenhouse gases

Mining bauxite ore, extracting aluminium from it and manufacturing cans and other products is an extremely energy intensive process.

Recycling aluminium products, such as used beverage cans, requires 95 per cent less energy and emits 5 per cent of the greenhouse gas required for primary production of aluminium from ore². So it reduces the need for further mining and the resulting pollution.

If you can clean and sort sufficient aluminium, you may find it is of real value. Your business may be paid for the metal or at least not have to pay for this collection, thus saving money. And it's not only good for your business, but good for the environment.



What are recycled aluminium cans used for?

Aluminium containers are usually recycled to make more beverage cans. The metal can be melted down and converted into new containers an infinite number of times.

So by putting used cans into the recycling system you help conserve the metal and much of the energy that was originally used to extract the aluminium from the ore.

Simple ways to cut aluminium costs

Think in terms of the waste hierarchy. How can you avoid, reduce, reuse or recycle aluminium products?

- Avoid** → **Do we need it?**
- Reduce** → **Do we need so much?**
- Reuse** → **Can we use it again?**
- Recycle** → **Can someone else use it or convert it into something new?**

1 Packaging Stewardship Forum of the Australian Food and Grocery Council (2010), *Australian Beverage Packaging Consumption, Recovery and Recycling Quantification Study* Sept 2008
2 Bureau of International Recycling, *About Recycling*. (2010) Visit: www.bir.org/industry/non-ferrous-metals/



AVOID

Find out where the aluminium that ends up in your bins comes from. Look for ways to co-operate with suppliers and staff to reduce the amount of this metal that comes into your business.



REDUCE

Provide facilities for staff to fill and store re-usable drink bottles or cups. Look for ways to reduce the demand for single use beverage containers where environmentally friendly alternatives are available.



REUSE

During any refurbishment or construction of your premises, ask your builder about reusing existing aluminium and other metal structures on the site.



RECYCLE

Go to **BusinessRecycling.com.au** to find a local recycling service for aluminium. Your recycling service provider can give you more information about what can be recycled. They can also provide education, advice on signs and information on using recycling systems.

All used aluminium beverage cans, pie dishes, baking trays and foil can be recycled. Aluminium is usually accepted in commingled systems, where different recyclable materials are collected in the same bin.

If you have a large volume of aluminium, you can organise a special bin. Insist that your metals bin is full before it's picked up. If you are not filling the bin fast enough, consider moving to a fortnightly pickup instead of weekly.

Here are some more tips:

- If the volume of aluminium does not justify a special bin, recycle the metal anyway. Consider splitting the rebate or fee with a surrounding business and sharing a metals recycling bin.
- You will pay more for collection if there is cross contamination. Remember to remove liquid and drinking straws from cans, as this avoids contamination.
- Crush empty aluminium drink cans so they take up less space in the bins.
- Make sure aerosol cans are empty before recycling. Do not squash or crush aerosol containers as the contents are under pressure.
- Remove oils and food from aluminium foil and trays before putting them in the recycling bin.
- Train and encourage staff, contractors and cleaners to use the system correctly so that you get the best outcome. Everyone needs to be committed to the recycling program to ensure that different types of materials go into the correct bins.

Before you toss out those cans, think about the benefits to your business and the environment of recycling them instead.

For further information

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