



National Television and Computer Recycling Scheme – the role of recyclers

This fact sheet provides recycling organisations with information about the National Television and Computer Recycling Scheme.

WHAT IS THE SCHEME?

The National Television and Computer Recycling Scheme was established in 2011 to provide Australian householders and small businesses with access to industry-funded collection and recycling services for televisions and computers.

The objectives of the scheme are to:

- Reduce waste to landfill, especially the hazardous materials found in e-waste
- Increase recovery of reusable materials in a safe, scientific and environmentally sound manner
- Provide access to recycling service for households and small businesses Australia wide.

The scheme has responded to high demand from the community for e-waste recycling services. To date, more than 130,000 tonnes of television and computer e-waste has been collected and recycled under the scheme. This has diverted hazardous materials away from landfill and enabled the reuse of valuable resources contained in e-waste.

The scheme has also created employment opportunities within the recycling sector, and assisted state, territory and local governments manage e-waste by providing alternative collection services.

HOW DOES THE SCHEME WORK?

Scheme recycling is paid for by companies who import television and computer products or manufacture them in Australia. This is a form of product stewardship where producers take responsibility for the whole lifecycle of their products.

Television and computer companies are responsible for funding a proportion of television and computer collection and recycling each year. E-waste management beyond scheme targets remains the responsibility of state, territory and local governments.

Each co-regulatory arrangement organises collection and recycling of e-waste through one or more recycling organisations on behalf of their liable party members. Each co-regulatory arrangement requires an administrator. The administrator is the body corporate responsible for administering the arrangement on behalf of members, and must ensure all reasonable steps are taken to meet outcomes specified in the Product Stewardship (Televisions and Computers) Regulations 2011.

The Department of the Environment sets outcomes and monitors liable party and co-regulatory arrangement compliance with the Regulations. Day-to-day operation of the scheme, including contracting service providers, is the responsibility of the co-regulatory arrangements. The Department does not have a role in managing contractual disputes.

The scheme supplements state, territory and local government e-waste management. State, territory and local governments maintain a role in managing e-waste outside of the scheme, as needed.

THE ROLE OF THE RECYCLER

Recycling organisations play a vital role in helping to manage and reduce e-waste.

As a recycler, there may be business opportunities to provide services to approved co-regulatory arrangements.

Arrangement administrators are required to assess the adequacy of environmental, health and safety policies and practices, and collection and recycling processes undertaken by their contracted recyclers. If you contract with an arrangement administrator, you will need to be able to demonstrate that you can meet all relevant requirements. You will also need to be able to provide them with information required for annual reporting under the Regulations.

From 1 July 2014 the Regulations include a material recovery target of 90 per cent. This target requires each co-regulatory arrangement to ensure that at least 90 per cent of the weight of the material processed by their contracted recyclers in the financial year is sent for further processing into useable materials. This is consistent with the estimated average material recovery rate currently being reported by Australian recyclers of televisions and computers.

Businesses operating in the e-waste recycling industry are responsible for their ongoing viability, and must be prepared for the competitive and often unpredictable natures of domestic feedstock supplies, international commodity markets and changing market conditions. Businesses should consider their operational requirements when negotiating agreed volumes of e-waste with a co-regulatory arrangement. It is also apparent that scheme recyclers who have diversified their operations with customers and business lines outside the scheme are better able to manage fluctuations in demand for their services.

CHANGES TO THE SCHEME

An operational review of the scheme was announced in 2014 to consider what further adjustments could keep the scheme operating efficiently. Following extensive consultation with scheme stakeholders on proposed changes, the Australian Government is going ahead with

the proposals which received strong public support and provide benefit to the community, while reducing costs to television and computer companies. These changes improve the operation of the scheme and ensure its ongoing success.

From time to time, the Department will make available relevant information about the market to ewaste recyclers to assist in business planning. The Department is also committed to working with co-regulatory arrangements on ongoing communications activities.

As an outcome of the review, the Department commissioned a report on e-waste recycling market trends and capacity to be made available to the recycling industry. A key finding of the report is that capacity in Australia's e-waste recycling industry is sufficient to support increased targets, with annual capacity estimated to be 148,000 tonnes, and expansion beyond this figure possible within reasonable space, cost and equipment constraints and the ongoing management of health and safety in the workplace.

The Department is also implementing non-regulatory changes to enhance the scheme including improved stakeholder communication and an expectation that co-regulatory arrangements effectively communicate their contracting processes, particularly any changes in terms, to their service providers.

E-WASTE RECYCLING AND WORK, HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT STANDARDS

The aim of the scheme is to reduce the impact of television and computer e-waste products on the environment and to reduce the impact that substances contained in these products have on people's health and safety. As the rate of e-waste recycling increases nationally, it is essential that all stakeholders commit to best-practice health and safety and environmental processes.

From 1 July 2016, co-regulatory arrangements must ensure that scheme recycling is only done by recycling service providers that are certified to AS 5377: the Australian Standard for the collection, storage, transport and treatment of end-of-life electrical and electronic equipment. This will ensure a consistent industry standard for scheme recycling providers and ensure positive work health and safety outcomes. This start date reflects requests from industry to allow adequate transition time.

RECYCLING TARGETS

The Regulations set annual targets for recycling which are set as a percentage of the estimated amount of television and computer waste generated in a financial year (waste arising). Recycling is defined in the Regulations as the initial processing of the product for the purpose of recovering useable materials, and includes disassembly or shredding of the product.

From 1 July 2015, scheme recycling targets are increasing to better meet public demand and ensure stability and ongoing capacity in the e-waste recycling industry.

For the 2015-16 financial year, the target will be set at 50 per cent and will rise to 80 per cent in 2026-27. This target will enable the scheme to deal with legacy waste sooner. As the report on e-waste recycling market trends and capacity commissioned by the Department found, even at the highest point of the scheme's planned reach, industry has indicated that it has surplus capacity to allow it to manage the additional volume. Recyclers should undertake their own business planning and negotiations with their relevant co-regulatory arrangements to estimate potential changes to the volume of e-waste feedstock available.

The cost of managing the 50 per cent of e-waste beyond scheme targets remains the responsibility of state, territory and local governments.

MORE INFORMATION

For more information on the National Television and Computer Recycling Scheme visit the Department of the Environment website at: www.environment.gov.au/ewaste or contact ewaste@environment.gov.au or call the Product Stewardship Line on 1800 332 783.

Factsheet last updated on 01/07/15

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