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PLANET ARK UPS THE ANTE ON AEROSOL RECYCLING

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PLANET ARK UPS THE ANTE ON AEROSOL RECYCLING

Environmental organisation Planet Ark will embark on a campaign during this year's National Recycling Week to inform the public about aerosol recycling following the publication of research showing that many Australians are ill-informed about the issue.

Planet Ark conducted a survey of 1,003 Australian residents this year on their recycling habits and found that 54 per cent believed wrongly that aerosol cans could not be recycled.

Twelve per cent said they didn't know, while just 33 per cent said it was possible.

"This campaign is an important one because those who fall into the 'no' or 'don't know' categories might throw their aerosols in the normal rubbish bin, which means



NATIONAL
RECYCLING WEEK

PLANET ARK

they end up in landfill and are a wasted resource," said Brad Gray, head of campaigns for Planet Ark.

"The reality is that all empty aerosol cans, both steel and aluminium, can be recycled safely by simply putting them in their household, co-mingled recycling bin."

Planet Ark has teamed up with Unilever, the company behind popular deodorant brands such as Rexona, Dove and Lynx, to help raise awareness about safe recycling of aerosol products during National Recycling

Week on November 10-16.

"This year, we really want to put the myths about aerosol containers to rest. We are running a national media campaign and spreading the word via our social media channels to help increase recycling rates of aerosols," Mr Gray said.

"There are reasons why certain people don't recycle aerosols. The first is they've been told they couldn't by others, which was probably correct a long time ago. Back in the early days of kerbside recycling it wasn't possible to recycle them.

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Over time the ability to recycle has changed but people's knowledge hasn't.

"Secondly, 44 per cent of people surveyed say they are concerned aerosols will explode if they put them in the recycling bin. However, if the container is empty there's no risk because there's no pressure in the can.

"Incidents where explosions have occurred in the past have been caused by a fire nearby.

"Thirdly, there's a perception the material is not recyclable, which is wrong because aerosols are either steel or aluminium and they're both fully recyclable."

Mr Gray said Planet Ark's efforts would also extend

to helping councils better inform the public about aerosol recycling.

"63 per cent of the people we surveyed about recycling said they looked on the pack, or the can in this case, to see if it was recyclable," Mr Gray said. "29 per cent of people checked with their council. Some councils haven't been that clear in the past.

"We're currently developing resources for councils which describe very clearly how people can recycle their aerosols.

"Planet Ark called pretty much all the councils in Australia to check if they collect aerosols for recycling, and we found that about 90 per cent do," Mr Gray said.



"Those that don't collect cans at all tend to be smaller, rural-based councils with a small number of people and no kerbside recycling provision."

Mr Gray said companies were also taking a more proactive approach to providing better packaging solutions with the support of established industry initiatives.

"The National Packaging Covenant encourages organisations to indicate on their aerosols whether the product is recyclable," he said.

Unilever is a signatory to the National Packaging Covenant and has in place an ambitious sustainability agenda to double the size of its business while reducing its environmental impact. Among the company's key focus areas is a target to halve the waste associated with the disposal of its products and make it easier for consumers to recycle.

"We know that providing recycling information on product packaging is a key part of educating people and ensuring that re-useable materials such

as aluminium don't end up in landfill. In line with our commitment to help make sustainable living commonplace, our Rexona, Dove and Lynx aerosol deodorants now carry both the recycling logo and directions to recycle the can once it is empty on-pack," said Jon McCarthy, marketing director Deodorants Australia and New Zealand.

"Partnering with organisations such as Planet Ark enables us to build our knowledge of

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CONT.



recycling behaviours and work together to address some of the barriers that up until now have resulted in fairly low recycling rates for aerosol products,” Mr McCarthy said.

Phillip Fleming, executive director of the Aerosol Association of Australia, said his organisation was behind Planet Ark’s efforts to raise awareness of aerosol recycling.

“There are gaps in household awareness about what can be recycled and we welcome the work of Planet Ark in improving that,” Mr Fleming said.

“Consumer aerosols have been safely and effectively recycled for several decades but people have been unaware or unsure, so the more information out there the better.”

John Bigley, president of the Aerosol Association of Australia and managing director of Ardagh Australasia, said: “Of course we in the metal packaging world have been well aware for many years about the recyclability credentials of tinsplate and aluminium as used in the production of aerosol cans.

“However, it is extremely encouraging to see that in NRW aerosols are being exposed in such a positive way and the key is to improve peoples’ understanding about recycling.”

Mr Gray said the campaign’s success could only be measured in people’s knowledge based on a follow-up survey rather than the improvement in the actual number of aerosols recycled.

“Gauging an improvement in the number of aerosols recycled is difficult because the materials are rolled together – steel aerosol cans are lumped in with steel food cans,” Mr Gray said.

“We have an aim to improve people’s knowledge of aerosol can recycling. 66 per cent either don’t know or get it wrong and we want to see that go down by next year.

“We’ll follow up with this survey again late in the year after NRW to see whether opinions have changed.

“We’re working hard through NRW and with our partners to make that happen.”

For more information about aerosol recycling, visit <http://aerosol.com.au/about-aerosols/aerosol-recycling>.