



MEDIA RELEASE

The Hon Peter Garrett MP

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts

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NATIONAL FIRST: NEW WASTE POLICY & NEW RECYCLING SCHEMES FOR TVs, COMPUTERS AND TYRES

At a meeting in Perth today the nation's environment ministers endorsed a new National Waste Policy, the first such national framework charting a ten-year vision for resource recovery and waste management.

The policy includes a landmark scheme for recycling computers and televisions, with householders able to drop off used computers and TVs for recycling free of charge, Federal Environment Minister Peter Garrett announced today.

"Under the new product stewardship scheme, 80 per cent of all TVs and computers are expected to be recycled by 2021," Mr Garrett said.

The Minister said Australia produced 43,777,000 tonnes of waste in 2006-07 – a 31 per cent increase in five years - and with waste levels projected to continue to grow, national leadership in this critical issue was overdue.

"It has been 17 years since these issues were looked at in a national context and we now have a clear path for future action and a huge step up on existing efforts."

The National Waste Policy sets out a comprehensive agenda for national coordinated action on waste across six key areas:

- Taking Responsibility
- Improving the Market
- Pursuing Sustainability
- Reducing Hazard and Risk
- Tailoring Solutions
- Providing the Evidence

"This is a fundamental shift in our approach to waste complementing broader action on climate change and sustainability. It will lead to less waste and better management of waste as a resource, to deliver economic, environmental and social benefits, while ensuring that we continue to manage waste in a safe and environmentally sound manner," Mr Garrett said.

The Minister said the new approach had been developed in consultation and with the support of industry as well as key non-government organisations and he acknowledged their involvement and support in negotiating these crucial breakthroughs.

COMPUTERS & TELEVISIONS

Mr Garrett said the first areas of waste targeted for action will be computers and televisions.

"Ministers today agreed to a groundbreaking product stewardship framework through which computers and televisions will be the first products regulated."

In 2007-08, 16.8 million televisions, computers and computer products reached their end of life, with 84 per cent sent to landfill. Only 10 per cent were recycled.

"If Australia were to continue without any form of product stewardship scheme, projections suggest that approximately 44 million televisions and computers would be discarded in 2028.

“Backed by Commonwealth legislation, a new industry-run national collection and recycling scheme for this growing mountain of electronic waste will be up and running in or before 2011.

“This is a major development in one of our fastest growing areas of waste which sees for the first time computer and television manufacturers taking national responsibility for managing e-waste, and it will be done at minimal cost to consumers,” Mr Garrett said.

“The National Waste policy specifically provides for accreditation of industry led schemes, helping to strengthen the arm of industry leaders who want to drive action that sees manufacturers take responsibility for their products when they reach the end of their life.

“Computer and television importers and manufacturers are working with Government to take responsibility for their goods, from cradle to grave.”

The Government will provide support to the industry-led collection and recycling scheme by ensuring industry non-participants comply with the same standards as industry members voluntarily participating.

This will ensure that free-riders are unable to gain a financial advantage over those companies that willingly contribute to recycling their own products.

Under the new product stewardship framework there is provision for mandatory, voluntary and co-regulatory schemes. Industry and community organisations that run voluntary schemes will be able to gain accreditation so that the community knows that what they recycle through these schemes will be reused or recycled in an ethical and environmentally safe way.

USED TYRES

Ministers also agreed to the development of an industry led scheme for the recycling of used tyres.

In 2007-08, 52.5 million tyres reached their end of life in Australia with 48 per cent being landfilled or illegally dumped. Only 13 per cent were recycled.

“If this trend continues, up to 680 million tyres will be sent to landfill over the next 20 years.

“The Australian Government will lead work with tyre industry stakeholders and state and territory governments to put in place recycling schemes to commence next year to increase recycling rates and prevent tyres going to landfill.”

In order to get the scheme’s design underway Mr Garrett said a ‘Tyres Roundtable’ would be convened in the coming weeks with the Australian Tyre Industry Council (ATIC), Australian Tyre Recyclers Association, Minerals Council of Australia, Cement Industry Federation, Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries, Motor Trades Association of Australia, Victorian Automobile Chamber of Commerce and other key industry bodies.

Ministers also agreed to release a report on the state of Australia’s waste later this year.

The EPHC communiqué will be available at: www.ephc.gov.au.

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