

20 April 2009

MEDIA RELEASE



Attention: Environment, ICT and Consumer Electronics writers/editors

Import Control Best Placed to Enable TV Recycling

A permanent national TV collection, recycling and community education scheme will become a reality if it is supported by efficient and effective regulatory underpinning at the point of import. It is an approach that has been successfully utilised by Refrigerant Reclaim Australia for several years in order to manage Ozone Depleting Substances.

The Federal Government has a key role to play in ensuring that departments work cooperatively to deliver solutions that benefit the environment and the community. In particular, the Australian Customs Service (ACS) and the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (DEWHA), have the ability to enable significant product stewardship outcomes including resource recovery and toxics management.

Product Stewardship Australia (PSA) – the organisation set up by TV suppliers to run a national scheme – has been waiting patiently for the Environment Protection and Heritage Council (EPHC) to enable its proposed scheme with regulatory underpinning that will require potential industry free-riders to accept and share their recycling obligations.

A major barrier to the scheme has been the reluctance of Governments and in particular the Federal Government to provide effective safety net regulation that can maximise the resource recovery benefits of an industry-wide recycling initiative.

Under PSA's proposed TV collection and recycling scheme, there is an unmatched opportunity for the Federal Government to provide a very high level of administrative efficiency by simply conducting a 'paper-based' screening process to check whether TV importers are party to an EPHC-approved TV Product Stewardship scheme.

To ensure that all TV suppliers importing TVs into Australia are well aware of their TV recycling obligations, PSA is proposing a twelve-month introductory phase so that all suppliers can be adequately prepared. This may include participating in PSA's industry scheme, or developing their own permanent national individual take-back, recycling and education service, based on EPHC approved targets and KPIs.

All TVs are imported into Australia so it makes complete sense to ensure that any regulatory intervention is administered in the most efficient way. The import control method is by far the most economically responsible option to help maximise industry-wide involvement in TV Product Stewardship. Other options such as a National Environment Protection Measure (NEPM), which is enforced by seven different States and Territories has no place in a national TV recycling program and clearly demonstrates an irresponsible use of tax payers money to fund a fundamentally flawed and disjointed method of co-regulation.

At a time when economic and environmental responsibilities are paramount, the EPHC, the Australian Government and its Departments need to demonstrate a solution-oriented approach to environmental protection and Product Stewardship more specifically. PSA's proposed import control model can deliver such outcomes as opposed to a piecemeal NEPM approach – an approach which many States have little or no confidence in.

PSA has developed a comprehensive proposal in collaboration with key stakeholders to collect vast quantities of obsolete TVs across the country at no cost to the community. The scheme would commence in Sydney, Melbourne, Canberra and Adelaide, and migrate to all other urban centres, as well as rural and regional areas within a five-year timeframe, after which the scheme becomes an ongoing community service.

Mr Laurie Nolan, Chairman of Product Stewardship Australia – said that *“the import control model will deliver the most efficient and effective method of both ensuring and directly encouraging all TV suppliers to wholeheartedly take on their Product Stewardship obligations. PSA is totally committed to funding and implementing a permanent national TV recycling scheme, however the EPHC and the Australian Government must provide an effective regulatory safety net sooner rather than later. This will provide the policy stability needed by industry to invest millions of dollars in running a permanent TV take-back scheme.”*

PSA Executive Officer - John Gertsakis, noted that the forthcoming Environment Protection and Heritage Council (EPHC) meeting to be held in Hobart in May 2009, is the Ministers' final chance to demonstrate their commitment to managing end-of-life electronic waste in Australia. Anything less than a Ministerial statement on delivering effective safety net regulation may result in the TV industry's immediate withdrawal from current process-entrenched activities. The time has come for the Federal Environment Minister to stop outsourcing the creation of policy and regulatory barriers to consultants and studies, and take action on national ewaste policy and action.

In simple terms, the May 2009 EPHC meeting can either act decisively on regulatory underpinning, or it can turn TV and computer Product Stewardship into another plastic bags debacle. Environment Ministers hold the key to delivering what the community wants and the environment deserves.

ENDS

For more information and media comment:

John Gertsakis – Executive Officer

Product Stewardship Australia Ltd

M 0409 422 089

E johng@productstewardship.asn.au