

Packaging recycling in Australia – what big picture changes mean for SMEs



ARL Marketplace

From waste bans to new legislation – Australia's packaging and recycling industries have undergone significant changes in the past five years. But what do these changes mean for small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)?

This fact sheet provides a snapshot of the major changes to packaging recycling and what they mean for your business.

China Waste Ban

For years China was the world's largest waste importer. But in 2017, the country announced strict new rules for the type and quality of waste it would accept. The decision left many western countries – including Australia – without a market for their waste. In response to the ban, Australia's businesses and governments have worked together to grow Australia's domestic recycling industry and manage this waste at home.

What does this mean for you?

International waste exports might seem unrelated to your day-to-day operations. But the China Waste Ban has impacted the way Australia manages its packaging. There are a number of practical changes business owners need to start making, such as redesigning packaging to remove non-recyclable components and ensuring packaging is labelled to inform the customer of the correct bin to put it in.

2025 National Packaging Targets

In response to the China Waste Ban, in 2018 Australia announced the 2025 National Packaging Targets, to deliver a new and sustainable approach to packaging. The 2025 Targets, which relate to all packaging that is made and sold in Australia, are:

100%

reusable, recyclable or compostable packaging.

70%

of plastic packaging being recycled or composted.

50%

of average recycled content included in packaging (revised from 30% in 2020).

The phase out of problematic and unnecessary single-use plastics packaging.

What does this mean for you?

The 2025 Targets apply to the whole of Australia and all businesses – including SMEs - need to make practical changes to their packaging to meet them. For SMEs this means:

- Switching to reusable, recyclable or compostable packaging.
- Not using any problematic and unnecessary single-use plastic packaging.
- Using packaging made from previously recycled materials.

State governments tackling single-use plastics

Across Australia, several states and territories have introduced specific legislation to phase out the sale or manufacture of problematic and unnecessary single-use plastic packaging.

What does this mean for you?

Depending on where you operate, some changes may apply in your state or territory. We recommend investigating further by visiting the National Retail Association's website:

www.nra.net.au/policy-advocacy/action-on-single-use-plastics

Take action:

Want to learn more about sustainable packaging?
Start your business' ARL journey today at www.arlmarketplace.org.au.



Working together to get the ARL on-pack.

This project received grant funding from the Australian Government.