

Information Sheet: Extended Producer Responsibility and Take Back Programs

Small actions. Shared responsibility. Lasting impact.

Introduction

Caring for the environment is a shared responsibility. In Australia, reducing waste and conserving resources depends not only on individual actions, but also on the way products are designed, produced, and managed at the end of their life.

Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) and take-back programs are important tools that support this shared responsibility. They help ensure that environmental impacts are considered throughout the life cycle of products, and that practical pathways exist for reducing waste and recovering valuable resources.

What is Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)?

[Extended Producer Responsibility](#) (EPR) is an approach that encourages producers to take responsibility for the environmental impacts of their products, from design through to disposal.

This means that manufacturers, importers, and retailers are encouraged, and in some cases required, to reduce waste and environmental harm associated with their products, improve product design to support reuse, repair, and recycling, and contribute to or fund collection, recycling, or recovery systems.

EPR reflects a simple principle: those who create products should also play a role in managing their impacts. By doing so, it helps reduce pressure on landfills, supports more efficient use of resources, and encourages more sustainable production practices.

What are Take-Back Programs?

Take-back programs are practical initiatives that allow consumers and businesses to return used or unwanted products for recycling, reuse, or safe disposal. These programs make it easier for people to act responsibly in their everyday lives by providing accessible options such as drop-off points at retail locations, collection systems for specific products, and partnerships with recycling and waste management providers.

By participating in take-back programs, individuals can contribute directly to reducing waste and supporting resource recovery.

Product Stewardship in Australia

In Australia, product stewardship is supported through national frameworks administered by the [Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water](#) (DCCEEW).

[Product stewardship](#) recognises that responsibility is shared across the supply chain, including producers, importers, retailers, and consumers. It promotes a more coordinated and responsible approach to managing environmental impacts.

Some stewardship schemes include direct take-back or recycling systems, while others focus on improving product design, packaging, and long-term resource recovery outcomes.

Examples of stewardship schemes that include collection or take-back elements include:

- [National Television and Computer Recycling Scheme](#) (NTCRS)
- [B-cycle](#) (Battery Stewardship Scheme)
- [DrumMUSTER](#) (agricultural chemical containers)
- [Paintback](#) (safe disposal of unwanted paint and packaging)
- [TerraCycle](#) (hard-to-recycle products through brand and retail partnerships)

These programs demonstrate how industry and government can work together to reduce waste, recover valuable resources, and support more responsible and sustainable stewardship of the environment.

Examples of Take-Back Programs in Australia

Across Australia, a wide range of take-back programs support responsible disposal and recycling.

For mobile phones, [MobileMuster](#) provides a free and accessible recycling program supported by the telecommunications industry, while [Officeworks](#) recycling services allow households to return electronic waste such as printers, ink cartridges and small devices.

Battery recycling is supported through the B-cycle scheme as well as collection points available at retailers such as [Battery World](#). For household and specialty waste, [Pharmacycle](#) enables the recycling of medicine blister packs through participating pharmacies, while coffee pod recycling programs such as those offered by [Nespresso](#) provide options for recovering materials that would otherwise go to landfill.

Availability and participation may vary depending on location, but together these programs provide practical pathways for individuals and communities to reduce waste and support resource recovery.

Supporting Community Action

While government policy and industry initiatives are important, meaningful change also depends on the choices made by individuals and communities. HOPE encourages people to take practical steps to support environmental stewardship by using available take-back and recycling services, reducing consumption and avoiding unnecessary waste, choosing products that support responsible production and recovery, and sharing knowledge to encourage others to act.

A simple and practical starting point is [Planet Ark – Recycling Near You](#). This service allows households to search by item and postcode to find nearby recycling and take-back options, helping individuals take practical and informed steps toward environmental stewardship.

In everyday life, small actions can make a meaningful difference. For example, households can separate refundable containers, return batteries and electronic waste to designated collection points, and make use of retail and community recycling programs available at shopping centres and local facilities. Donating, repairing, or repurposing items such as clothing, furniture, and household goods can also extend their lifespan and reduce waste.

By making small adjustments to daily habits and using available local services, environmental responsibility can become a natural and ongoing part of everyday life.

Conclusion

Extended Producer Responsibility and take-back programs are important in building a more sustainable future. Their success depends on a shared commitment, where governments provide direction, industries take responsibility, and communities take action together.

By making thoughtful choices in our everyday lives, we can reduce waste, conserve resources, and better care for the environment, both now and for future generations. Together, through small everyday actions, we can create meaningful change and care for the world we share.