

ADVERTISING FEATURE

CUSTOMISED RECYCLING SOLUTIONS

Sorted! Innovative approach boosts reuse

A Melbourne business is finding ways to divert more paper, plastic and glass from landfill.

Glass is one of the oldest recyclable products, with a history dating back thousands of years. However today, when it is commingled with other recyclable materials, it becomes a contaminant. On the surface, this might seem confusing – isn't everything in the recycling bin recyclable?

However, when glass breaks – as it inevitably will in either the bin or the compacter – shards of it can get into the paper and plastics and ultimately damage new, recycled products being created.

"You can get some of it out but you can't get all of it out," explains Darren Thorpe of Australian Paper Recovery (APR). "It's an issue because when the end users, like paper manufacturers, can't utilise the material, it becomes rubbish."

Thorpe has spent almost four decades in the recycling business. From starting out with Smorgon and then moving to Visy, he went on to establish his own company, APR, in 2002. A family-owned business, it is one of the largest operating in this space, recycling more than 120,000 tonnes a year of paper and cardboard across five sites around Melbourne.

Australian Paper Recovery offers a range of customised, large-scale recycling services for businesses, from document destruction ("and then we recycle that paper back to office paper") through to recycling balers, compacting and hooklift bins.

Three years ago, the company took its



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Darren Thorpe

Managing director Darren Thorpe at one of APR's recycling facilities.

commitment to sustainability up another level by opening its first sorting facility, also known as a material recovery facility. Taking an innovative approach to the ways our waste can be reused, APR has worked closely with local councils.

"The biggest change that we've been involved in is taking the recycled glass containers out of the yellow-top bin and putting them in their own dedicated bin with a purple lid, which takes the biggest contamination away," Thorpe says.

Thanks to increased awareness of the environmental issues around landfill, and residents being educated about the need to separate their recyclables at the source, glass contamination levels have plummeted.

"It's really working," Thorpe says. "When we started, 38 per cent of a yellow-top bin by volume was glass. It's now less than 1 per cent."

"On its own, glass is amazing. Glass bottles to glass bottles, fantastic; glass being turned back into road base, fantastic. But it's got to be kept on its own, and that's what we've done."

APR also separates the various grades of plastic. Previously, the industry standard was to bale them all together. "That's where problems lie. You used to see a lot of stories with all this plastic being caught up in Malaysia, Indonesia or China. They pulled out what they wanted and would throw the rest away."

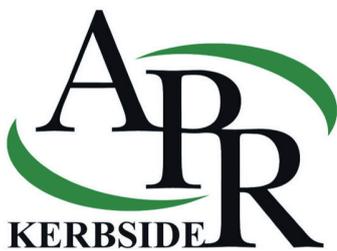
To combat such waste, APR instead sorts

by hand. "We sort into four streams: milk, detergent, soft drink and water bottles, and polypropylene, which is ice cream containers, pot plants, yoghurt containers," says Thorpe.

This considerably extends the second-life potential of each type of plastic, especially given "at the moment, milk bottles are made out of 100 per cent virgin material".

"This industry is 100 years old and over the past three years we have made some massive, positive changes," he says.

In November, it will be making another one. APR will be launching technology that will allow these milk bottles, and other soft and food-grade plastics, to be recycled. "It's a real game changer for the recycling industry in Australia."



APR Kerbside, Recycling innovation with 'Going Glass Out' of bin, Quality material processing and end product, Circular Economy

Household Recoverables & Processing Solutions

The APR Kerbside Material Recovery Facility (MRF) in Truganina is the only one in Victoria that doesn't accept glass. Improving the separation of household recyclables and having no glass in the kerbside commingled recyclable stream has led to a significant improvement in the quality of all recyclables.

Municipal councils who have partnered with APR over the last two years have seen first hand, the substantial benefits of having no glass in the commingled stream.

Such benefits include:

- ✓ Eliminate the issue of glass shards that get into all the other recyclables and resources such as paper, cardboard, plastic and aluminum
- ✓ Significantly recover more recyclable materials
- ✓ Reduce contamination levels and further divert waste from landfill
- ✓ Address and combat the limitations presented to approachable end market outlets for recyclable products due to glass shards
- ✓ Increase the value of recyclables and quality of end product which can be utilised in a circular economy

The value-added sorting facility site has capability to process:

- ✓ Recyclables from Metropolitan Melbourne and Regional councils that have removed glass out of their yellow-lidded recycling bins
- ✓ Paper and Cardboard
- ✓ Plastics such as HDPE, PET, PP and Soft Plastics



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