

## Product Stewardship Act 2011

**The *Product Stewardship Act 2011* will help reduce waste and prevent harmful materials from ending up in landfill by increasing recycling and the recovery of valuable materials from products.**

All levels of government, industry and the community have a shared responsibility for the impacts of the products we manufacture, consume and dispose of in the course of going about our daily lives.

Not only is there an ever-increasing array of products for us to choose from, many of these also have a short product life, making them a significant and growing component of the waste stream.

Whether they contain substances that may be harmful to the environment, or valuable materials that can be reclaimed and re-used, there is good reason to ensure that we handle these products in a safe and environmentally responsible way.

### WHAT IS PRODUCT STEWARDSHIP?

When people recycle packaging and products, or when companies design their product to limit the amount of materials and resources required for manufacture, or limit the amount of hazardous materials those products contain, they are being good product stewards.

Good product stewardship means doing the right thing for the benefit of the environment – and ultimately ourselves.

Product stewardship activities such as recycling help to reduce the amount of waste going to landfill, increase

recycling rates, recover valuable resources that can be used to make new products and prevent harmful substances found in certain products from getting into the environment.

This Product Stewardship Act will encourage more of us to become good product stewards and to support product stewardship activities.

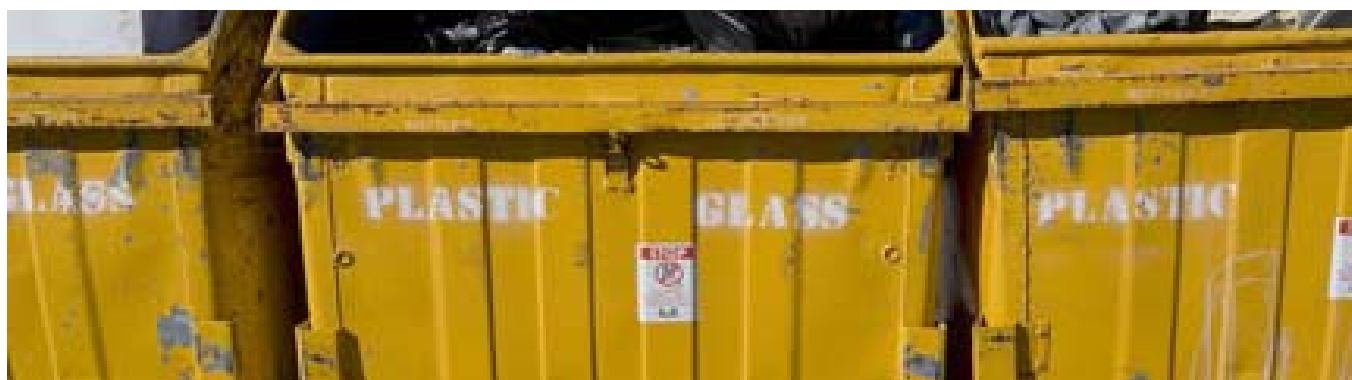
### WHY DO WE NEED LEGISLATION?

Waste in Australia is growing. Between 2003 and 2007 the amount of waste in Australia increased by nearly one third to around 44 million tonnes—the equivalent of over 2000 kilograms for every Australian every year.

The Product Stewardship Act acknowledges our shared responsibility for the impact of all of the products we use and consume.

The Product Stewardship Act paves the way for any number of product stewardship activities and schemes to be set up, as well as for existing schemes and projects to be accredited. The many activities likely to be carried out under this legislation will help reduce waste and recover valuable resources in a safe and environmentally responsible way.

Providing a legislative basis for these activities also means that consumers can have confidence in claims made by companies that they are being good product



stewards.

## HOW WILL IT WORK?

The Product Stewardship Act provides for a flexible and practical approach to product stewardship by recognising that each product, material and industry is unique.

It allows for products and materials to be covered as the need arises, for example to keep step with Australia's international obligations on managing certain types of waste.

A list will be published each year of products being considered for coverage by the legislation.

Products currently on the National Waste Policy implementation plan for product stewardship action include televisions and computers, packaging, tyres and mercury containing lights.

Proposals for future schemes under the product stewardship framework will need to be evidence based, taking into account both the costs and benefits.

The Product Stewardship Act allows for industries and products to be regulated in several ways, while also making provision for voluntary activities.

**Voluntary** accreditation of schemes encourages product stewardship without the need for regulation and provides the community with certainty that accredited schemes are actually achieving what they claim. Product stewardship organisations that are accredited under the legislation must meet specific requirements that ensure they carry out their activities in a transparent and accountable manner.

The majority of schemes to be covered under the Product Stewardship Legislation are likely to be voluntary, with an opportunity for both new and existing schemes to seek accreditation. .

**Co-regulatory** product stewardship schemes are delivered by industry and regulated by the Australian Government. The exact requirements (for example, where there is a requirement to meet a certain recycling target) and details of the activities to be carried out by a scheme operator will be detailed separately in regulations for each scheme.

The actions required in the regulations may include the need to avoid, reduce or eliminate waste from products.

Price impacts will be considered before any product is regulated.

**Mandatory** product stewardship would place a legal obligation on parties to take certain actions in relation to a product. Requirements that can be placed on parties using the legislation include the labelling of products, making arrangements for recycling products at end of life, or requiring a deposit and refund to be applied to a product.

The Product Stewardship Act also sets out the governance arrangements (the 'who does what'), the powers of the Regulator (the Australian Government), and the reporting and audit requirements for organisations delivering product stewardship schemes.

This includes details about how the Government will ensure compliance under the law, how it will be enforced, what constitutes an offence under the law and what penalties may apply if the law is breached.

## NATIONAL SCHEME FOR TELEVISIONS AND COMPUTERS

Following a decision by all Australian environment ministers in 2009, televisions and computers will be the first products to be regulated under the legislation.

Please refer to the department's fact sheet *National Television and Computer Product Stewardship Scheme* for details. This can be found on the department's website at:

[www.environment.gov.au/settlements/waste/ewaste/publications/index.html](http://www.environment.gov.au/settlements/waste/ewaste/publications/index.html)

## FURTHER INFORMATION

Product stewardship is a key commitment under the Australian Government's long-term National Waste Policy to avoid and reduce the amount of waste generated and increase the amount of resources recovered from end-of-life products.

More information on the *Product Stewardship Act 2011* and the National Television and Computer Product Stewardship Scheme can be found on the department's website at:

[www.environment.gov.au/wastepolicy](http://www.environment.gov.au/wastepolicy)

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