

Media Release

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SMALL BUSINESS TO TREBLE ITS SOFT PLASTICS RECYCLING WITH COLES GRANT

Sustainability organisation RED Group will be able to treble the amount of soft plastic it collects for recycling thanks to a \$430,000 grant from the Coles Nurture Fund.

RED Group will use the grant to purchase new processing technology and three new vehicles to increase collection and recycling of soft plastic across Australia.

The grant comes nine years after the launch of the REDcycle program at Coles, where customers can drop off their soft plastics to be recycled into a wide range of products such as outdoor furniture, road base and garden edging.

Coles CEO Steven Cain said the need to support recycling solutions was now more important than ever.

“We want to be the most sustainable supermarket in Australia and drive generational sustainability in Australia. With the volume of soft plastics collected by Coles rising by as much as 32 per cent last financial year, we want to help find more Australian solutions for recovered material,” he said.

Liz Kasell, Melbourne-based founder of Red Group and the REDcycle program, was first prompted to find a solution for soft plastic in 2009 when she was making school lunches for her son at primary school.

“I was concerned that rigid plastic bottles could be kerbside recycled but soft plastics couldn't so I started doing some research into what we could do. I came across Replas, a Melbourne manufacturer who had the potential to recycle soft plastic so I hired a trailer and started collecting soft plastics from primary schools to drop off to Replas,” she said.

“Then in 2011, I approached Coles and we began a trial in 110 supermarkets by placing collection bins at the front of the store. Then by March 2018, we had installed a collection bin in every Coles supermarket across Australia.”

“This grant from the Coles Nurture Fund now takes REDcycle to a whole new level at a time when investment in Australian recovery and recycling is desperately needed.”

Since the REDcycle program began in 2011, Coles has diverted more than 878 million pieces (3.5 million kilograms) of flexible plastic from landfill across Australia.

In addition to the Coles Nurture Fund grant, Coles is also supporting the recycling of soft plastic by allocating \$20,000 to test and trial innovative infrastructure products made from recycled soft plastics.

These products will provide a sustainable and environmentally friendly material alternative to conventional options such as timber and are manufactured by RED Group's manufacturing partner, Plastic Forests, which is based in Albury.

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Further background on REDcycle program

The soft plastic collected from Coles as part of the REDcycle program is recycled by three Australian manufacturers:

- Replas, based in Ballarat, Victoria, which manufactures a range of recycled products including indoor and outdoor furniture, bollards, and signage;
- Close the Loop, based in Somerton, Victoria which utilises REDcycle material as a component of recycled asphalt additive for road infrastructure known as Tonerplas; and
- Plastic Forests, based in Albury, New South Wales, which manufactures mini wheel stops, air conditioner mounting blocks and garden edging.

Soft plastics which can be recycled at Coles supermarkets include biscuit packets, bread bags, bubble wrap, cereal box liners, chocolate wrappers, fresh produce bags and icecream wrappers.

For further information, please contact

Coles Media Line (03) 9829 5250 or media.relations@coles.com.au