

Media Release

8 February 2024

Soft Plastics Recycling Trial (select Melbourne stores)

Q&A

Soft plastic recycling collections are currently being trialled in 12 Melbourne supermarkets. The supermarket members of the Soft Plastics Taskforce have been working with industry and government to explore how household soft plastics might be recycled in future. We are running a trial to collect information to help us understand the volumes and types of materials being dropped off by customers. We will assess the trial after six weeks.

Given industry-wide solutions for soft plastics recycling continue to be explored, this will be a limited trial. The aim of the trial is to inform how we approach a longer-term recycling scheme with the support of the broader industry in future.

What is the Soft Plastics Recycling Trial?

- The Soft Plastics Recycling Trial has been developed by the Soft Plastics Taskforce members (Coles, ALDI and Woolworths) as a way to test the collection and processing of household soft plastics to help inform a broader, long-term industry-wide recycling scheme.
- The trial will run in 12 participating Victorian stores (five of which are Coles stores) and will begin on 7 February 2024.
- For the duration of the trial, customers will be able to deposit their household soft plastics in the collection bins located at the front of the 12 participating stores.

Why is there a trial?

- The trial will help the Soft Plastics Taskforce and industry to understand whether a new soft plastics collection system could be successful and the ability of soft plastic recyclers to cope with demand levels.
- There are currently only a limited number of soft plastic recyclers in Australia, some of whom are still in the process of scaling up their operations and are testing their capacity. Accordingly, it is only possible to offer the trial across 12 stores at this time.

Where is the trial taking place?

There are five Victorian Coles stores participating in the trial. They are:

- **Coles Northcote:** Northcote Plaza, Separation St, Northcote 3070
- **Coles Ivanhoe:** Ivanhoe Plaza Shopping Centre, 4 Livingstone St, Ivanhoe 3079
- **Coles Brunswick:** Barkly Square Shopping Centre, Barkly St, Brunswick 3056

- **Coles Moonee Ponds:** Corner of Homer & Eddy Streets, Moonee Ponds 3039
- **Coles Flemington:** Shop 1A – 320-386 Epsom Rd, Flemington 3032

The trial will also take place across five Woolworths and two ALDI stores in Victoria, including:

- **Woolworths:** Balwyn, Box Hill, Burwood Brickworks, Carnegie North, Hawthorn East
- **ALDI:** Prahran, St Kilda

Who can drop off soft plastics?

- Customers who shop at the participating 12 stores in Victoria are welcome to drop off their household soft plastics for the duration of the trial.
- It's important to note the trial cannot accept commercial waste from businesses, bulk soft plastics, or paper bags.
- Stores not participating in the trial cannot accept soft plastics.

How do I know what I can drop off for the Soft Plastics Recycling Trial?

- Customers can drop off any soft plastic packaging with the 'Check locally', 'Return to store' or 'Store drop off' Australasian Recycling Label to the collection bins.
- For safety reasons, customers are asked to only drop off what can fit in the bin.
- Please only place clean, soft plastics into the bin. Other materials (e.g., paper shopping bags, hard plastic, nappies) may contaminate the collection and make it difficult for the soft plastics recyclers /processor to process the material.
- Contamination with other materials may also result in some other material surrounding these items being sent to landfill.

What will happen to my soft plastics when they are collected during the trial?

- Soft plastics will be collected from each participating store during the trial by a third party, who will then bale and transport the materials to one of our recycling partners in the local area.
- Soft plastics delivered to our recycling partners will then be sorted, weighed and processed into a variety of products, including an additive for making asphalt roads, a replacement for aggregate in concrete and a material for making shopping trolleys and baskets.

How do I know the soft plastics I drop off will be recycled?

- There is no doubt the collapse of REDcycle let people down, and understandably there will be hesitation by some members of the community.
- The Soft Plastics Taskforce is committed to ensuring this trial is transparent and reliable.
- The contents of the collection bins at the participating supermarkets will be collected from the store by our transport partner and transported to one of our recycling partners. Our processing partners will then sort and weigh the soft plastics they receive.
- To ensure transparency, each recycling partner will be required to provide data on the material they receive and the recycled material they create with it.

Will any of the soft plastics collected be stockpiled?

- No, we are working with our logistics and recycling partners to implement appropriate timeframes to ensure collected soft plastics are recycled in a timely manner.

When will soft plastic collection be available in more stores?

- The trial is intended to inform plans around a longer-term industry solution for soft plastics collection and recycling in Australia.
- At this stage, it is not possible to set a date when collections will be available in more stores or locations. At present, there are not enough soft plastic recyclers to handle collections from a high number of locations.

Can I drop off soft plastics I've been storing up at home?

- Please do not drop off large quantities of soft plastics initially, or more than what can fit in the collection bin. It is essential that only normal household volumes are dropped off as part of the trial. Dropping off too many soft plastics could risk overwhelming our recycling partners at this time.

Who is operating the trial?

- The trial is being led by the Soft Plastics Taskforce, which is chaired by the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water and provides regular reports on its activity to the ACCC. The Soft Plastics Taskforce participants are currently Coles, Woolworths and ALDI.

What happens when the trial concludes?

- The trial is intended to run for a limited time. At the end of the trial the results will be assessed.
- At this stage, it is not possible to set a date when collections will be available in more stores or locations. At present, there are not enough soft plastic recyclers to handle collections from a high number of locations.

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