

Media Release

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NEW RECYCLING TECHNOLOGY TO DIVERT MILLIONS OF PIECES OF SOFT PLASTIC FROM LANDFILL

Coles is giving a new lease of life to millions of pieces of soft plastic thanks to new recycling technology researched and developed in partnership with RMIT University and recycling organisations RED Group and Replas.

The new Polyrok concrete technology is made from plastic bags and soft plastic packaging recovered from the REDcycle program, available in all Coles supermarkets, and acts as a sustainable alternative to aggregate minerals used in concrete.

More than 6.5 million pieces of soft plastic will be recycled in the largest-ever commercial application of Polyrok as part of a Coles supermarket development at Cobblebank in Melbourne's west starting this week.

The technology has the potential to build a more circular economy and support future infrastructure projects, as only 10 per cent of the 3.5 million tonnes of soft plastic thrown out by Australians each year is recycled, according to Clean Up Australia¹

Coles State Construction Manager Victoria Fiona Lloyd said Coles was looking at opportunities to use the new technology in future developments.

"We collect roughly 30 million pieces of plastic every month through our customer REDcycle program, so there's a huge opportunity to use Polyrok in other Coles developments or other construction projects," she said.

"We're really proud of the work we've put in with REDGroup, Replas and RMIT to invest and develop this important sustainable technology designed to reduce our environmental impact.

"This is just the beginning of what is possible – this project alone will help repurpose more than 6.5 million pieces of soft plastic from landfill."

Replas Joint Managing Director Mark Jacobsen said the partnership had helped to develop a new way to recycle soft plastics.

"Replas has taken one of the most problematic plastics and turned it into a highly valuable, fit for purpose resource," he said.

"We congratulate Coles for taking the steps towards a circular economy and for practicing sustainable procurement with Polyrok."

RMIT University Civil and Infrastructure Engineering Senior Lecturer Dr Jonathan Tran said: "We are proud to bring our expertise in civil and infrastructure engineering into the development of Polyrok.

¹ <https://www.cleanup.org.au/softplastics>

The testing has shown this sustainable aggregate is robust and fit for purpose."

Coles first partnered with REDcycle and Replas in 2011 and was the first major Australian supermarket to have REDcycle bins in every supermarket.

The program now collects an average of 121 tonnes – roughly 30 million pieces of plastic every month – with more than 1.3 billion pieces of soft plastic from landfill diverted from landfill since 2011.

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