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DREAMING OF A GREEN CHRISTMAS

Minister for Environment and Conservation John Hill has thrown down the gauntlet to shoppers this festive season, calling for them to avoid buying gifts with excessive amounts of wasteful packaging, recycle all wrapping paper and cards - and celebrate a greener Christmas.

Minister Hill said overpackaging of consumer goods was a significant factor in contributing to landfill.

“So many things these days have large amounts of packaging and while some of it gets recycled, much of it also ends up in landfill,” he said.

“Much of the packaging is useless and unnecessary.

“Consumers have a lot of power - they can encourage manufacturers not to use so much packaging.

“I would encourage shoppers to really think about what they’re buying, and to try to opt for things which are not overpackaged.

“This Christmas I also want South Australians to remember to focus on recycling.”

In South Australia up to 328,000 tonnes of domestic waste goes to landfill annually, while just 30 per cent of waste put out for kerbside collection by householders is recycled.

Figures from the North Adelaide Waste Management Centre show that across December and January the amount of materials its receives for recycling jumps by 25 per cent – or about 600 tonnes.

“This shows South Australians are heeding the message about recycling, but we can all do better,” Minister Hill said.

“We want to really lift the year-round figure for recycling until we get the stage where Adelaide no longer needs landfills.”

The State Government in 1999 joined with other governments and local councils and industry to develop a covenant aimed at reducing the environmental damage of excessive amounts of packaging.

Minister Hill said South Australia was leading the way in moves to strengthen the covenant.

“We have been concerned that the covenant has not reduced the amount of packaging going to landfill,” he said.

“What we want is higher goals for reducing packaging going to landfill and increasing the amount that is recycled. We are also calling on industry to use more recyclable material in packaging.”

Minister Hill said the State Government was also working towards reducing single use plastic bags in this state, through Zero Waste SA and local councils.

“We are doing our bit, and it’s also up to South Australians to join the campaign to reduce plastic bags and unnecessary packaging,” he said.

Tips for a greener Christmas

- Avoid plastic bags - take a recyclable bag from home for your Christmas shopping.
- Use reusable crockery and cutlery, rather than paper plates and plastic cups for Christmas parties.
- Send electronic Christmas cards by e-mail.
- Give a gift such as a concert ticket or massage voucher, instead of a packaged present.
- Reuse old Christmas wrapping paper.
- Buy presents with minimal packaging, and try to keep gifts which require batteries or electricity to a minimum.
- Leftovers you can’t eat between Christmas and the New Year can go in the compost bin.
- Save your corks for recycling.
- Recycle Christmas cards.
- Give a gift made from recycled materials and wrap it in recycled paper.
- Make a donation to a charity or community organisation on behalf of others instead of a gift.
- Consider how a gift is packaged: Is the packaging recyclable? Is it biodegradable? Is it excessive?

Adapted from: Least Waste