



Waste reduction targets set by *South Australia's Strategic Plan* and by *South Australia's Waste Strategy* are already prompting solutions to waste problems. Innovative South Australian companies are seizing 'wasteful' opportunities and turning them to their advantage.

The Strategic Plan target of reducing waste to landfill by 25% within 10 years is supported by Waste Strategy 10-year targets of:

- 75% of all waste in kerbside collections from households to be recycled
- recycling of construction and demolition waste to double
- recycling of commercial and industrial waste to increase by 30%
- all waste collected in Adelaide to be processed through a transfer station or resource recovery facility to remove recyclable materials.

## Environmental benefits

These targets have a firm basis in environmental protection. Recycling conserves raw materials that would otherwise be used. Making products from recycled materials generally produces less pollution and greenhouse gas, and consumes less energy than manufacture from virgin materials. Ecosystems and biodiversity are conserved, as is their embedded energy.

The environmental benefits continue after the product's useful life. Recycling reduces the need for new waste disposal facilities and the danger of their environmental impacts from leaching and methane production. It reduces the need for more suitable land to house the facilities and reclamation of that land after the facility's useful life. Landfill costs a lot — economically, socially and environmentally.

The high costs of landfill become 'benefits' for recycling and waste reduction.

## Economic benefits

Recycling creates jobs in collection, sorting and reprocessing. It saves money for companies that combine it with a reuse and reduction approach to waste generation.

In South Australia new and expanding enterprises are riding on the coat-tails of the waste revolution. A quick visit to the Zero Waste recycling database ([www.zerowaste.sa.gov.au/rid.php](http://www.zerowaste.sa.gov.au/rid.php)) shows South Australian organisations that collect and reprocess glass, oil, plastics, batteries, wire, hazardous waste, drums, printing cartridges, rags, old clothing, scrap metal, green organics, computers, electronic equipment, old x-rays, corks, and car bumper bars, grilles, panels, headlights and batteries. And they all do it to make a 'buck'.

There's more at [www.recycling.sa.gov.au](http://www.recycling.sa.gov.au). South Australian companies clean air filters, compost, manage landfill gas, specialise in waste technology management, design recycling systems, granulate waste rubber and plastic, blend plastics to make longlife products, make multipurpose panels, manufacture drainage pipe and plastic pots from waste plastic, refill print cartridges, and make rubber safety surfacing products.

### **These businesses all employ people.**

- In the year to 31 March 2005, of the many recycle depots in Adelaide, the 6 Scout Recycling Centres received, sorted and redistributed 13,000 tonnes of recyclable materials in a total of 130,000 hours by 170 personnel. The Scouts



take CDL cans and bottles, as well as scrap metal, paper and cardboard, and the volumes of each continue to rise each year, at last count by an average 22%.

- Jeffries and Peats Soils & Garden Supplies are two Adelaide companies which together employ approximately 100 people. They both process green organics to make compost and mulch. Their combined tonnage of valuable soil conditioners produced each year exceeds 125,000 tonnes.
- Plastics Granulating Services (PGS) located in Kilburn, converts recycled and waste plastic into pellets that are sent on to manufacturers to be made into new products. 12,000 tonnes of plastic pass through the PGS process each year and the company employs 60 people.

Extrapolate these figures across the many recyclers in the State – not to mention related industries like transport, manufacturing, and goods and services – and it's clear that recycling is a large employer and a booming business.

And the recyclers are not on their own. The South Australian Government is providing \$4.5 million to metropolitan councils over 2 years and over \$420,000 to 5 regional councils in 2005 to help them recycle more of their waste.

Current Zero Waste SA grants are encouraging innovation in finding ways of sorting recycled materials more efficiently, turning food waste into better compost and processing mixed plastic waste into recycled products.

## Social benefits

Recycling education is taken to community groups, service clubs and schools. Children are taught to be skilled recyclers and waste minimisers, while they learn to work in groups and negotiate to find solutions.

The same benefits apply to 'green' groups in workplaces, which can also help develop the management and organisational skills of participants – to their own benefit and the advantage of their employers. Green workplaces have been shown to have higher productivity.

A landfill site is not a preferred neighbour nor is it a preferred housing base. As the demand for land to accommodate housing continues to grow, landfill sites are moving further away. The further landfill is from the residents who produce the waste, the higher the cost of transport.

## Reality check

What is the real cost of our wasteful lives?

*The Wuppertal Institute has calculated the 'ecological rucksack' (the amount of waste generated in producing everyday products) is 1.5kg for a toothbrush, 75kg for a mobile phone and 1500 g for a personal computer.*

Commission of the European Communities 2003

The earth cannot continue to support such waste. We owe it to ourselves and our children to change our wasteful habits now.

## References

[http://www.zerowaste.sa.gov.au/waste\\_strategy.php](http://www.zerowaste.sa.gov.au/waste_strategy.php)  
<http://www.stateplan.sa.gov.au/>

Further information contact the Council or Zero Waste SA at [www.zerowaste.sa.gov.au](http://www.zerowaste.sa.gov.au) or on 8204 2051.



Government  
of South Australia

# Recycling - Good for Business

Zero Waste SA

