

Fixing The Jam In Paper Recycling

People often think they recycle paper well enough, but patterns in Australian recycling suggest the opposite. Confusing instructions, common recycling myths and a general lack of initiative mean that too much paper product is going to waste and having adverse environmental effects.

Recent Brisbane City Council research reveals that only 77 % of newspapers are recycled and 35,000 tonnes of paper and cardboard is mistakenly put in general waste bins every year. Paper that does end up in landfill breaks down slowly from a lack of oxygen, releasing high levels of methane (which contributes to the greenhouse effect more than carbon dioxide). Alarmingly, the creation of 26 new sheets of paper produces the same emissions as driving a car one kilometre. Therefore failure to recycle existing materials and the production of new raw paper has significant negative impact on our environment.

Change can be created. Victoria's Maryvale Mill employs innovative recycling technology, with the ability to divert up to 80 000 tonnes of waste paper from landfill each year. The production of recycled paper uses 99 % less water and 50 % less energy than if produced raw, saving vital resources.

Responsibility heavily rests on you, the consumer, to aid progress. For every kilogram of paper and cardboard you recycle, you reduce the production of greenhouse gases by an equal amount. You can further REDUCE your initial impact by using recycled paper, printing two-sided or switching to email, and watching out for excessive packaging. REUSE things like gift wrap one-sided leaflets and donate any old books. RECYCLE as much as possible and get up-to-date with recycling opportunities. All paper and cardboard can be recycled (excluding wax-coated, used tissues and padded envelopes), despite some bins stating only newspapers are suitable. This means paper coffee cups, glossy magazines, junk mail, pizza boxes, corrugated cardboard and receipts can all go into your yellow bin. If you're still confused, the acclaimed Brisbane City Council's 'Brisbane Bin and Recycling' app offers comprehensive lists of reusable materials to combat the many myths surrounding recycling and is available free from the App Store. These techniques will help reduce landfill and emissions, reduce your personal impact and waste, and lead to cleaner, greener cities.

References

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