



Benefits of an ‘all battery’ recycling scheme

ABRI advocates a national stewardship scheme for all handheld batteries including both rechargeable and single-use batteries.

Rechargeable batteries, particularly nickel cadmium (NiCd) and small sealed lead acid (SSLA) batteries, and batteries containing mercury (button cells), are more hazardous in landfill than other batteries. This is due to potential impacts on eco-toxicity and human health if metals leach into ground or surface water. However, there are a number of practical reasons why a national recycling program should collect all batteries:

1. Most consumers will not be able or willing to sort their used batteries by chemistry or type. A lesson from other recycling programs in Australia is that we need to make recycling as simple and convenient as possible for consumers to encourage a high participation rate.
2. Overseas experience indicates that if consumers are asked to drop-off all of their used handheld batteries for recycling, we will achieve a much higher recovery rate for rechargeable (hazardous) batteries than would be achieved through a more complex, ‘rechargeable batteries-only’, scheme.
3. A scheme that targeted a limited range of batteries (e.g. rechargeable batteries or batteries with a certain chemistry) would require a more extensive education and communication campaign to ensure that people recycle correctly. This would be expensive and difficult to implement.
4. Many consumers will drop-off batteries that are not covered by the scheme, either because they are confused about which batteries can or can’t be recycled, or because they think that all batteries *should* be recycled. The scheme would need to cover the cost of recycling these batteries.

Recycling all batteries will have other environmental and social benefits:

- Some batteries are less toxic but hazardous for other reasons. Lithium batteries can explode or catch fire in landfill, while button cells are dangerous if swallowed by children. Recycling offers a safe and environmentally responsible solution for end of life batteries.
- Battery recycling recovers non-renewable materials such as lead, cadmium, steel, zinc, manganese, cobalt, silver, plastics and rare earth elements.
- Removal of batteries and other hazardous household products from household waste facilitates the recovery of organic materials through alternative waste technologies such as composting. Batteries and heavy metals are known contaminants in compost.
- The community supports recycling because it reduces waste to landfill and achieves environmental benefits.