



Setting Up An Aluminium Can Collection At Your School

Introduction

This is a step-by-step guide on how to set up an aluminium can collection system at your school. A 'Cash for Cans' system involves collecting aluminium cans at school and taking them to (or getting them collected by) a metal recycler who is willing to pay for aluminium cans.

Why set up an aluminium can collection?

While aluminium cans are almost always accepted by any recycling service that takes food and beverage packaging, a separate Cash for Cans collection could enable your school to raise funds.

Recycling an aluminium can saves 95% of the energy needed to produce one from raw materials, so it's definitely worth the effort – especially when the school gets cash in return!

Is it feasible for my school?

There are some important considerations to take into account when evaluating the feasibility of a Cash for Cans system in your school.

Why not involve your students in the process by asking them to analyse the costs and benefits of such a system as part of a recycling lesson plan or in combination with other curriculum studies?

1. How many cans are likely to be collected?

A Cash for Cans collection system will only be financially worthwhile if your school is likely to collect a reasonable number of them. If your school has previously done a waste audit, you'll be able to predict the number of expected cans with good accuracy. If it hasn't done a waste audit before, consider whether aluminium cans are sold on the school grounds, and the likelihood of staff and students bringing empty cans from home to add to the collection.



2. Finding a recycler

To find a recycling business in your area that is willing to pay for aluminium cans, visit BusinessRecycling.com.au.

To search:

- go to the 'Search for service' tool



Search for service

Category
Food & Beverage Packaging

Material
Aluminium - Cans

Suburb

State
ACT

Postcode

Go

- select 'Food & Beverage Packaging' as the 'Category'
- select 'Aluminium - Cans' as the 'Material'
- then enter your suburb, state and postcode

The results of your search will feature a map and a list of recycling services, separated into 'Drop Off Locations' and 'Pick Up Locations'.

When contacting the recycling services, you may want to ask the following questions:

- How much your school will be paid for the cans. The price is usually given per kilogram of aluminium cans, and the price can fluctuate

South Australia and the Northern Territory

Under South Australia's container deposit scheme, aluminium cans and other eligible beverage containers can be returned to designated collection depots to earn a 10 cent refund per container. For a complete list of collection depots in South Australia, visit www.epa.sa.gov.au/environmental_info/waste/container_deposit_legislation

A container deposit scheme will also commence in the Northern Territory from 3 January 2012. Details of collection depots have not yet been finalised, but will be available on the Territory government's website (www.cashforcontainers.nt.gov.au/index.html) by the time of the scheme's commencement. There are opportunities for schools and community groups in certain areas to apply to be Collection Points (areas where containers are aggregated and periodically transported to regional Collection Depots), providing a fundraising revenue for the school or community group.

- from week to week depending on the market price for aluminium. It's worthwhile ringing a few different companies to compare prices.
- Whether the recycler will collect the cans from your school.
- Whether the recycler will provide large bags (e.g. bulka bags) if the cans must be delivered to the recycler.



It's more likely that you'll find a drop-off location rather than a pick-up service. Most recyclers don't offer a collection service, will only collect if you have very large amounts of aluminium cans or will charge a fee for collection. For example, when Planet Ark called 8 recycling companies in Sydney and Melbourne, 6 offered drop-off services only, one offered a pick-up service but required a minimum weight of 500 kg of aluminium cans, and one offered a pick-up service for a fee.

3. Transporting the cans

It's likely that you'll need to organise for the cans to be delivered from your school to the recycler's facilities. Can you rely on a roster of volunteers? If so, you'll need to consider how often deliveries will have to be made, who will coordinate the volunteers, what you'll put the cans inside during transport (e.g. bulka bags) and whether there are any insurance or health and safety considerations. Transporting crushed cans will take up less room than transporting cans that aren't crushed.

4. Calculating the expected financial return

Once you have an idea of the number of cans your school will collect in a given period, the approximate price per kilogram that the recycler will pay, and any costs relating to transport or storage, you can calculate the expected financial return for your school.

If your school is in South Australia, or the Northern Territory (from 3 January 2012 onwards), it's easy to work out the school's expected return – ten cents per can. A school that collects 2000 cans per month will be able to claim \$200 at a collection depot.

If your school is in another state or territory, you'll be paid for your aluminium cans by weight. The average aluminium can weighs 14 grams; in other words, there are about 71.4 aluminium cans in a kilogram. For example, if your school collects 4,000 aluminium cans per month, that equates to approximately 56 kg. If the recycler is willing to pay \$1.00 per kilogram of aluminium cans, the expected return is \$56 per month.



5. Collecting and storing the cans

The best way to collect and store aluminium cans will differ from school to school. Things to consider include:

- Location of collection receptacle - examples include the school canteen or a well-frequented, covered area in the playground.
- Type of collection receptacle – will it be outdoors or indoors, big or small, secured or unsecured? Whichever type of container you choose, you'll need to be able to easily remove the cans when emptying them for transport to the recycler. The receptacle could be as simple as a box or dedicated recycling bin in the canteen that is emptied into a larger container (e.g. a bulka bag) and stored out of the way.
- Who will be responsible for monitoring and emptying the collection receptacle? Can students take responsibility as part of the school's sustainability program or the Student Representative Council?
- Will the cans have to be crushed before being placed in the receptacle? If so, you'll need effective signage at the collection point.



6. Record-keeping and reporting

Decide who will keep track of the number of cans collected and the payments received from the recycler. This is especially important if you are trialling a Cash for Cans system to gauge its long-term viability.

7. Building support, awareness and participation

Once your school has established its Cash for Cans collection system, it's important to build awareness amongst students, staff, parents and perhaps even the local community. School assemblies, day sheets, school newsletters and signage can all help with communicating your message within the school community. If your school wants to encourage local community members to drop in their empty cans, it could try getting coverage in the local media.

When people understand how an aluminium can recycling system can benefit both the school and the environment, they are more likely to support and participate in the scheme, and less likely to contaminate the collection with other recyclable materials or rubbish.

Signage will be an important part of getting staff and students to use the collection system correctly. Your school can make its own signs and posters, or use these ones available for free download:

Collection poster for aluminium cans
SchoolsRecycle.PlanetArk.org/coords/signage.cfm

'Recycle Right' poster on aluminium
SchoolsRecycle.PlanetArk.org/coords/posters.cfm

For handy tips on effective signage and creating behaviour change, see 'Sending the right signs' on page 6 and 'Getting a foot in the door' on page 7.

Student involvement

This is a great opportunity to get your students involved in a practical, 'real life' situation, from conducting a feasibility study of setting up a Cash for Cans program, to contributing with the ongoing management and monitoring of the system, and carrying out an education campaign in the school and/or local community.

Involvement in the school's Cash for Cans scheme can tie in with a number of curriculum areas including maths, science, social science, business studies and commerce.

Useful resources

Factsheet on recycling aluminium cans
SchoolsRecycle.PlanetArk.org/coords/factsheets.cfm

Planet Ark's Aluminium Can Recycling website
Cans.PlanetArk.org

Children's colouring-in sheet featuring an aluminium can
Cans.PlanetArk.org/kids

The Aluminium Can Group website
www.aluminium-cans.com.au/RecycleCentre1.html





Sending the Right Signs

Encouraging people to switch lights off, use the correct recycling bin or save water all have positive environmental outcomes, but finding the best way to do it can be a bit daunting. As a Green Team Member or Sustainability Manager there are lots of tools available to you to encourage positive environmental behaviour, and signs and prompts are some of the most useful ones.

Lots of people want to do the right thing but with everything else that goes on at the workplace it's easy to forget. Even with the best of intentions it's easy to forget to turn off the lights when leaving a meeting room. For example, talking to colleagues, checking mobile phone messages and packing up notes are all common distractions.

By using signs and prompts you can help them remember. You also help create an organisational 'norm' or expectation that supports the positive behaviour you're aiming for - like turning the lights off. There are a few tricks that you can use to make your signs as effective as possible:

Make the sign or prompt noticeable: Make it stand out with bright colours or an eye-catching image. Once a sign has been in the same place for a few weeks people stop noticing it so changing the colour or moving it around a bit will ensure people keep on noticing it.

Make the signs self-explanatory: If you want people to switch off the lights when they leave a room, make sure that's exactly what the sign says. Something like "Please switch off the lights when you leave the room," is more likely to be effective than one like "Save the planet, turn me off."

Put the sign as close to the action as possible: If you want people to use the correct recycling bin, put the sign on the lid of the bin, or just above it. You can create an association between the desirable action and the location where it happens.

Make the sign positive: 'Don't' isn't a nice word and most people get resentful being told not to do something. So when ever possible, make your signs positive. Words like "Thanks for turning your computers off at night," is much more likely to be effective than 'Don't leave your computers on over night.' And because it's a nicer message and makes people feel good about the actions they have undertaken, it increases the likelihood that the actions will be carried out in the future.

These little things can have a big effect in the workplace.

These tips have been adapted from 'Fostering Sustainable Behaviour' by Doug McKenzie-Mohr and William Smith.

Sign Up for GreenWorks e-newsletter at <http://RecyclingWeek.PlanetArk.org/GreenWorks>





Getting a Foot in the Door

Asking staff at your workplace to make small changes to their behaviour is one of the best ways to get them to make bigger changes in the future. It's the old 'foot in the door' trick.

In a classic experiment, a group of researchers in the US asked home owners for permission to install a 6 foot by 3 foot sign saying 'Drive Carefully' in their front yard. Not surprisingly, only 17% of residents said they would allow the sign. But by making one small change to the experiment the researchers were able to get permission from a staggering 76% of residents.

What was the change?

Two weeks before asking the residents for permission to erect the sign they asked them to display a small, relatively inconspicuous sign in their front window with the words 'Drive Carefully'. After displaying this small sign for two week the residents were significantly more likely to agree to hosting the large.

Why?

Well the evidence suggests that by agreeing to the small sign the residents began to see themselves as the 'type of person' to be concerned about worthy causes - like careful driving. And we like to be consistent with these types of values. So when we've made a public statement in support of something we're more like to make another - even bigger statement in the future.

So how can you use that in your workplace to encourage more sustainable behaviour?

Look for ways to encourage people to do small actions, like switching their computer off at night or using a reusable coffee mug. As long as they do it willingly and if you publicly acknowledge the behaviour, then they are more likely to undertake other, more significant activities in the future.

Reference: 'Yes! 50 Secrets From the Science of Persuasion' (Chapter 14). For more information about this book visit www.scienceofyes.com .If you've got any comments, questions or feedback on this article just e-mail greenworks@planetark.org

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