

Where does my recycling go?

Once your recycling has been picked up by the recycling truck it is taken to the Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) in Launceston where the real work begins.

At the MRF, recycling is separated through a combined system of high-tech conveyor belts and magnets and low-tech hand sorting. It can take as little as five minutes for recyclables to make it from the beginning to the end of the sorting process.

Unfortunately, not everyone places the correct items in their kerbside recycling bin, so separating the recyclables from contamination is a big part of the sorting process.

In Northern Tasmania, around 85% to 90% of the items collected in kerbside recycling are recycled, with relatively low contamination rates of about 10% to 15%.

This means that about 10% to 15% of the items collected in kerbside recycling consist of non-recyclable items, or contaminated items which can't be recycled, and have to be placed into landfill. The common sorts of contamination are plastic bags containing food, nappies, green waste and other household rubbish.

Materials Recovery Facilities can process 50 tonnes of recyclables in a day - by volume the biggest proportion of these recyclables is paper.

Once sorted the recyclables are baled and shipped to processors all over the world. From Tasmania, recyclables are often sent to Melbourne, Malaysia and China.

Once the product bales arrive at their final destinations, they are processed into many useful new products.

Aluminium

Aircraft and automobile parts. Wires and cookware due to its high thermal and electrical conductivity.

Cardboard

Reprocessed into new cardboard and paper products.

Paper

Reprocessed into new products such as newspapers, office paper, packaging, pencils and egg cartons.

PET plastic

Reprocessed into new plastic products such as soft drink bottles, plant pots and clothing.

High density polyethylene (or HDPE) plastic

Granulated and recycled into milk bottles, plant pots and clothing.

Mixed plastics

Mixed plastics are recycled into low-pressure irrigation pipes.

Steel

Reprocessed into new steel products such as bikes, paper clips or cans.

Glass

In Tasmania we're fortunate to be able to re-use an estimated 85% of the glass that is placed into kerbside recycling. The recycled glass is incorporated into construction drainage, road construction and also pavers, bricks and retaining wall blocks. Unfortunately, similar to the overall recycling contamination figures, about 15% of the glass collected in kerbside recycling is contaminated in some way, most typically with jar and bottle lids. You can help us reduce this percentage by removing non-recyclable lids from jars and bottles and placing them in your kerbside rubbish bin.