

MEDIA RELEASE

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The Hidden Cost of Discarded Whitegoods and Who Pays?

Producer responsibility for large household appliances is well overdue in Australia. In 2019, an estimated 360,000 tonnes of large household appliances and temperature exchange equipment entered the Australian market.

At the end-of-life stage, this translates into nearly 200,000 tonnes of e-waste generated, comprising around 68% metals, 13% plastics, 4% glass, and 15% other materials – some precious, hazardous or non-renewable. While around 90% of used products are being collected, only 57% of the material (predominately metals) is being recycled with the rest of the material ending up in landfill.

Other materials like plastics and ozone-depleting gases in refrigerators and heat pump dryers can be difficult to recover, with only a handful of brands providing a take-back service for old appliances when a new product is being sold and delivered to a consumer.

This means that many end-of-life whitegoods end up being placed in council clean up collections, placing the financial and environmental burden on local councils.

With immediate action on product stewardship for large household appliances needed, the Southern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (SSROC) and the Product Stewardship Centre of Excellence spearheaded a product stewardship project for large household appliances.

Funded by the NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) Sustainability Partnerships Program, the project focused on how to improve the low material and gas recovery rates and better understand the appetite and opportunities for stewardship initiatives.

Economic modelling undertaken as part of the project showed that transferring financial responsibility to industry for the current collection and recycling costs for large house appliances would require an estimated levy on average of \$37 per appliance (or around 2.58% of current retail price).

However, to increase repair and significantly increase material and gas recovery rates, the levy would need to be increased by \$11 to \$49 per appliance. This investment could create an estimated 496 jobs in the repair sector if progressed.

Interviews with the appliance industry were conducted as part of the project and found strong support for a stewardship scheme if it was codigned with industry.

The project recommends that the Federal Government works with manufacturers and brands to design and implement a producer responsibility regulation for large household appliances.

Opportunities also exist for the NSW Government to create a state-based producer responsibility regulation for large household appliances under the Product Lifecycle Responsibility Act 2025.

With NSW facing a looming landfill crisis and Greater Sydney projected to run out of space by 2030, now is the time for producers to step up and own their role and reduce their cost to the environment.



Cr John Faker, Burwood Mayor and President, [Southern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils](#) (SSROC) said: *“All appliance manufacturers and brands that place whitegoods on the Australian market need to take responsibility for their end-of-life recovery, rather than leaving that burden to councils and the community.”*

John Gertsakis, Director – [Product Stewardship Centre of Excellence](#) said: *“The need for a regulated product stewardship program that enables more whitegoods to be repaired and recycled is well overdue in Australia, compared to Europe where the European Commission laws require manufacturers to fund and participate in repair and recycling schemes.”*

Kurt Hegvold, Chairperson - [Coalition for Sustainable Solutions](#) (Set up by manufacturers and retailers to reduce the environmental impact of appliance goods in Australia) said: *“We favour a co-regulatory approach where there is significant stakeholder engagement and industry involvement. We see this as a hallmark of a successful product stewardship scheme for large household appliances.”*

Alice Kuepper, Head of Sustainability and Industry Impact – [Winning Group](#) said: *“Through our free take-back and recycling program, we provide a convenient solution addressing a critical market gap: the collection and responsible end-of-life management of old appliances and packaging at scale. To further help reduce climate risk and unlock economic value through improved circular economy practices, a national product stewardship scheme for large household appliances is needed.”*

Alexandra Geddes, Executive Director of Programs and Innovation at [NSW EPA](#) said: *“An important part of NSW’s transition to a circular economy is to ensure that products can be designed to reduce waste and pollution as well as repaired and recovered easily, we want to work with all sectors to keep materials circulating in the economy for longer.”*

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About Southern Sydney Regional Organisations of Councils

The Southern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (SSROC) is an association of 12 councils spanning Sydney’s southern suburbs covering a third of Greater Sydney’s population, over 1.8m people. Its councils manage around 655,000 tonnes of household waste each year, which is about 20 per cent of all NSW household waste. SSROC provides a forum through which member councils can work collaboratively to solve regional issues and contribute to the future sustainability of the region. More information: <https://ssroc.nsw.gov.au>

About the Product Stewardship Centre of Excellence

The Product Stewardship Centre of Excellence is an independent not-for-profit registered charity. It exists to facilitate the avoidance and reduction of waste and create positive environmental and social outcomes through sustainable design, resource conservation reuse, repair, and recycling. The Centre helps businesses, industries, associations and product stewardship organisations to adopt a strong lifecycle approach to deliver their ESG and circular economy objectives.

More information: <https://stewardshipexcellence.com.au>

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