

# Recycling goes outdoors

RYAN YOUNG reports on a campaign to extend home-centric conservation into public places

**M**ost people recycle at home but when we're out and about recycling never really comes to mind.

"If I put it in the bin I'm doing the right thing," many of us say.

This week is Keep Australia Beautiful Week and the organisation behind it, the Keep Australia Beautiful National Association, is trying to turn this view on its head.

It is encouraging us to recycle more whether we are out of the house or behind a desk.

Now in its 42nd year, the campaign is focusing on addressing the gap between recycling rates at home and in public places.

Statistics from an Australian beverage packaging consumption, recovery and recycling study show that while 78 per cent of drink containers used at home are recovered for recycling, only 24 per cent are recycled when people are out and about.

Association spokeswoman Lara Shannon said while some people complained about the relatively low amount of effort needed to recycle, the benefits far outweighed the minor negatives.

"Recycling as much waste as possible in public places helps to not only divert valuable resources from landfill so that they can be recovered and recycled, but can also lead to less litter that comes from overflowing rubbish bins," she said.

"Economically a reduction in litter means a reduction in costs for councils that spend millions of dollars each year cleaning up litter and the streets."

Keep Australia Beautiful advises that just under 44 million tonnes of waste was generated in Australia in 2006-2007. Of that, 52 per cent was recycled.

Ms Shannon said recent Government decisions on waste and recycling were a step forward in improving recycling rates in public places.

"The Federal Government recognised the need to address the issue of waste and recycling with the

release of the national waste policy, which outlines a 10-year plan for

handling waste and landfill issues," she said.

"And they have indeed recognised that resource recovery and recycling does make a real contribution to reducing greenhouse gases.

"So it has been recognised, but may not get the headlines that some of the other issues that evoke more debate do."

She said there was always more the Government could do to further aid

promoting recycling in public places.

"The national waste policy is a start, so now it comes down to assisting local councils with infrastructure and finding ways to provide incentives to business and industry to recycle, so that the economies of scale become greater, which in turn makes recycling more viable."

One local organisation that has found recycling a viable option is Canberra's National Convention Centre.

The centre was the only business in the ACT to be recognised by the Keep Australia Beautiful National Association this year, receiving a \$12,000 community grant for its in-house environmental program, applauded by industry.

Centre manager Cindy Young said it cost less for recyclable materials to be taken away than it did to remove waste for landfill. "When we recycle more it costs us less to take that away, so it's a positive for us financially as well," Ms Young said.

The grant was just one of many awarded by the Keep Australia Beautiful National Association as part of a \$200,000 program funded by the Coca-Cola Foundation, designed to address the low rates of recycling in public places.

While the money came in handy and enabled the convention centre to provide more resources to the public to recycle, Ms Young said the organisation already encouraged public recycling before it received the grant. And any other business could do the same.

"If people realised how easy it is to engage your staff and how much support there is available from the ACT Government, more businesses

would do more recycling programs like this.

"The Government has big stickers you can put on any old bin from the hardware store that identifies them as a recycle-only bin, so it's easy to put something like that in place."

Last month, the centre bought four new recycling bins for the public, right in time for Keep Australia Beautiful Week.

Ms Shannon said the campaign had been warmly received but, unsurprisingly, could do with more funding. "Many councils, schools and business are keen to get involved where they can and greater funding and resources would enable us to do even more.

"So that is something we would like to increase further in the future for the benefit of all."

Keep Australia Beautiful Week ends on Sunday.



**RESOURCES:** National Convention Centre manager Cindy Young and the new recycling bins funded by a Keep Australia Beautiful grant of \$12,000. Photo: KATE LEITH