



## Australasian Recycling Label (ARL)

**Sector:** Retail

**Region:** Australia and New Zealand

**Best Practice:** The ARL provides relevant disposal information for each material, as most packaging has more than one element of composition with different implications for its recyclability.



Figure 1 Example of ARL

[The Australasian Recycling Label \(ARL\) Program](#) is an initiative of the Australian Packaging Covenant Organisation (APCO), alongside Planet Ark and the Packaging Recyclability Evaluation Portal (PREP) Design. The ARL Program is an evidence-based national labelling program for Australia and New Zealand that provides consumers with accurate recycling information and helps brands to design and label packaging for recyclability. The ARL features on products in supermarkets and other participating stores and contains three main classifications (see Figure 1):

- Recyclable: Can be placed in consumer's kerbside recycling (see left-hand image of Figure 1).
- Conditionally recyclable: Can be recycled if the instructions below the symbol are followed (see middle image of Figure 1).
- Not recyclable: Cannot be placed in kerbside recycling (see right-hand side image of Figure 1).

Launched in 2018, more than 460 businesses have signed up to the ARL Program by 2020.

### Principle 1: Reliability



The ARL is the only evidence-based labelling system on the Australian and New Zealand market and is supported by PREP, which is an online tool that assesses packaging recyclability in Australia and New Zealand. PREP assesses each piece of packaging against the number of people that can recycle it via their council collection, the ability for the packaging to be accurately sorted and the end markets available for the material. Kerbside access levels are determined using the data from [RecyclingNearYou.com.au](http://RecyclingNearYou.com.au), which is updated annually.

#### Build your claims on a reliable basis

- Accurate and scientifically true
- Robust and consistent
- Substantiated data and assumptions

The ARL can only be used by businesses once they have completed a PREP assessment. The evidence supplied by PREP leads to the classification of plastic packaging into the three categories and it can then be labelled accordingly.

### Principle 2: Relevance



The ARL is currently a voluntary program. The PREP tool simulates the recycling system and can evaluate the technical recyclability of a package considering its weight, shape, size, inks and glues. Adopting the ARL addresses a significant aspect of environmental sustainability in maximising efforts to cleaner recycling streams.

#### Talk about major improvements, in areas that matter

- Significant aspects ('hotspots') covered
- Not masking poor product performance, no burden shifting
- Genuine benefit which goes beyond legal compliance

The program assists brand owners to design packaging that is recyclable at the end-of-life thereby contributing towards a more circular economy.

## Principle 3: Clarity



The ARL provides clear, specific, and relevant information to the consumer by identifying the specific packaging component the label is referring to: for example, 'Bag'. For 'conditionally recyclable' items, simple instructions are provided on the label informing consumers on whether any additional steps are required before recycling an item: for example, 'Store Drop Off'. Awareness and understanding of the label is tested annually to track understanding of the program.

### Make the information useful for the consumer

- Exclusive and direct link between claim and product
- Explicit and easy to understand
- Limits of claim clearly stated

The ARL is easily seen on-pack and separated visually across three classifications: the 'recyclable' label has a coloured/ opaque recycling symbol, the 'conditionally recyclable' label has a transparent recycling symbol and contains further instructions, and the 'not recyclable' label includes the bin symbol. This consistency helps consumers to recognise and easily understand the labels and recycling instructions.

## Principle 4: Transparency



The process of creating the labels, how the availability of collection services is accounted for and what each symbol stands for is made available on the ARL [website](#). The website contains an information page where details are given about how the label is created through the PREP tool and where data is sourced.

### Satisfy the consumer's appetite for information, and do not hide

- Developer of the claim and provider of evidence published
- Traceability and generation of claim (methods, sources, etc.) published
- Confidential information open to competent bodies

Information is made available on the website about what consumers should do when they find instructions beneath 'conditionally recyclable' items, for example, 'return to store: return this item to the soft plastics collection bins at any Coles or Woolworths store in Australia only'.

## Principle 5: Accessibility



The label is clearly visible on the packaging, easy to find at the moment of purchase and the URL is always included in the label. Information about how the label works is made available via the ARL website, which is displayed on the product packaging (see Figure 1). Program members also have the opportunity to apply an alternative website to provide further information on recycling and the ARL, for example, [woolworths.com.au/recycling](http://woolworths.com.au/recycling). Consumer messaging and campaign resources are tested regularly using focus group testing.

### Let the information get to the consumer, not the other way around

- Clearly visible: claim easily found
- Readily accessible: claim close to the product, and at required time and location

The ARL gives assurance to consumers by addressing the different materials used and whether they can be readily separated by consumers. The 'conditionally recyclable' label is supported with short phrases to give clearer instructions to consumers.

## Key learnings

- Make further information about the label available on a website and list the URL on-pack.
- For any 'conditionally recyclable' items, provide simple and easy instructions for consumers on-pack and make further details available via a website.
- Consistent use of symbols and specific phrases ensure clarity and help consumers.
- Collaborate with relevant partners involved in the recycling system for reliable, localised data.

