

Aluminium

You can save enough energy to run your television for 3 hours by just recycling one aluminium can!

Recycling process

Aluminium recycling makes sense – both economically and environmentally. It is far less energy intensive to use existing aluminium products in the recycling process than to use virgin resources in aluminium production.

Aluminium cans and aerosols are collected from your kerbside recycling bins, as well as through various other recycling programs. They are sent to your local Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) to be sorted by hand or separated using a special current called an 'eddy current'. An eddy current acts like a giant magnet but instead of attracting cans, it repels them, sending them tumbling into a cage, before being crushed and baled.

The baled cans and aerosols are sent from the MRF to a processing plant where they are melted at 700°C in a rotary furnace. The liquid metal is then cast into ingots and sent to rolling mills to become new cans again – or furniture, bicycles, BBQs, aircraft and even space shuttles!



Did you know...

Producing 20 cans from recycled materials uses the same power as making just one can from raw materials.

So much electricity is needed for aluminium production that the smelting plants (factories that process aluminium) need their own power plants.

Since 1980 the weight of an aluminium can has been reduced by over 30%, reducing the amount of resources needed.

The recycling rate for aluminium cans in Australia in 1980 was only 46% - in 1990 it was 63%, and in 2005 it was over 71%!

Making an aluminium can from raw materials releases half a kilogram of greenhouse gas. Using recycled aluminium releases only 75g of these gases.

Making one tonne of aluminium cans from recycled cans saves five tonnes of bauxite (Comalco, 1992).

When discarded to landfill aluminium takes between 200 and 500 years to decompose.

Aluminium Recycling tips

- Rinse and squash the drink cans
- Remove lids and plastic nozzles from aerosols
- DO NOT SQUASH AEROSOLS!

What can be recycled in your kerbside recycling bin

- ✓ All aluminium drink cans and aerosol cans

What cannot be recycled in your kerbside recycling bin

- ✗ Aluminium foil and confectionery wrappers

Note: Check the recycling potential of aluminium pie dishes and baking trays with your local council