

# Steel Can Recycling Council

## STEEL RECYCLING – SUSTAINABILITY FOR THE FUTURE 2003-04 Steel Packaging Recycling Rate

The Steel Can Recycling Council (SCRC) is pleased to release the results of intensive analysis into consumer steel packaging waste. This brings the review and research of steel recycling into line with other recycling industry reporting methodologies. The SCRC engaged Nolan-ITU to undertake the research program for the 2003/04 financial year. The reporting period has been structured around a financial year basis (i.e. July 2003 to June 2004).

The importance of this research program cannot be underestimated. The establishment of a thorough reporting mechanism is seen as vital to maintaining a true understanding of the recycling rate of steel, benchmarking for the future and crucial in advocating steel as a sustainable packaging material.

The SCRC now has an accurate and up-to-date dataset on steel can recycling activity. This will place the SCRC in a strategic position to provide state government agencies, environmental organisations and others with essential information on long term trends, as well as monitoring the performance of recycling programs. We also hope that the provision of this information to our stakeholders in the private sector will assist them in reporting on their National Packaging Covenant obligations laid out in their own action plans.

### Objectives of the Study

The objective of the national steel can research program is to:

- quantify annual steel can consumption;
- quantify the overall and post-consumer steel can recycling rates; and
- provide year on year comparisons of steel can consumption and recycling.

The research program focuses on household steel can packaging applications, and steel cans from the food services industry (i.e. restaurants, caterers and hotels). Industrial steel can packaging applications are currently excluded from the research program.

### The Steel Can Recycling Rate

**Overall recovery of steel can packaging material increased by 3,207 tonnes from 2002 to 2003/04.  
The steel can recycling rate increased from 52.4% to 56.1% in 2003/04.**

#### Steel Can Recycling Quantities and Rates for 2002 and 2003/04

	2002 Material Available for Recycling (tonnes)	2002 Recycling (tonnes)	2002 Recycling Rate	2003/04 Material Available for Recycling (tonnes)	2003/04 Recycling (tonnes)	2003/04 Recycling Rate
<b>Pre-consumer scrap</b>	27,755	27,755	100.0%	26,350	26,350	100.0%
<b>Post-consumer</b>	82,181	29,871	36.3%	82,065	34,483	42.0%
<b>Total</b>	109,936	57,626	52.4%	108,415	60,833	56.1%

Source

The recycling rate includes pre-consumer scrap tonnages which brings the Australian steel can recycling rate methodology into line with that used internationally, and by other Australian packaging sectors.

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## Key Findings

Steel can recycling increased across Australia in the 2003/04 financial year. The recycling rate for steel cans rose from 52.4% (57,626 tonnes) in 2002 to 56.1% (60,833 tonnes) in 2003/04.

The quantity of consumer steel can packaging recycled increased by 3,207 tonnes despite a minor decrease of 1.4% in steel available for recycling.

## Material Available for Recycling

During the 2003/04 financial year, 108,415 tonnes of steel can packaging was available for recycling within the Australian domestic consumer market. This figure fell 1.4% from 109,936 tonnes in 2002.

The total steel can packaging available for recycling is comprised of 82,065 tonnes of steel cans entering the domestic market and 26,350 tonnes of can-makers and can-fillers scrap tinplate.

## Methodology

The research program requires the collection and analysis of data from the following sources to permit the SCRC to have a comprehensive snapshot view of the use of steel in Australia today.

### Tinplate and can manufacturers:

- determining the quantity of pre-consumer scrap and the steel cans consumed at the post-consumer level.

### MRF operators:

- determining the quantity of steel cans sorted for reprocessing;
- determining the councils from which the MRF is receiving steel cans; and
- determining the destination of steel cans for reprocessing.

### Local councils:

- determining the quantity of steel cans collected for recycling from councils with populations more than 8000 households or greater.

### Reprocessing and shredding facility operators:

- confirming that the quantity of steel cans from each state going to reprocessing, as reported by the MRF operators, is reasonable.

## Ten things you didn't know about steel cans

1. Steel packaging is 100% recyclable
2. Australians throw away enough steel cans each year to rebuild the Sydney Harbour Bridge.
3. 82% of consumers know steel is recyclable.
4. Packaging is an important place consumers receive information about the recyclability of their steel cans, second only to receiving information from councils.
5. Canned foods offer a more energy efficient delivery system than either refrigerated or frozen foods.
6. In a typical dishwasher there are 10.5 kilograms of steel which equates to 158 recycled steel cans.
7. Steel cans have an endless lifecycle and can be recycled innumerable times
8. A five percent increase in the number of people recycling steel cans (based on 3.5kg per person) would equate to 53m cans which is equivalent to the amount of steel needed to produce 2700 family sedans.
9. Making steel from recycled cans uses 75% less energy than when producing steel from raw materials.
10. The canned food industry in Australia is a major consumer of steel packaging and each year every person in Australia generates around 6.4 kilograms of post consumer scrap that can be recycled.