

# Rethink packaging design: use less, use longer and use again

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The time has come to rethink the way packaging is designed. This is an exciting time to take bold moves and rethink every aspect of how packaging is designed, used, and ultimately provide long-lasting environmental value.

The change is being driven by consumers who want to see circular packaging that has designed out waste, is reusable, incorporates recycled content, is truly recyclable and all unnecessary packaging and problematic materials are eliminated.

This significant societal behaviour shift is a green light for Packaging Technologists and Designers to become even more innovative and creative by the redesign of packaging to be circular and not follow the linear model of 'take-make-dispose'. Waste can now be designed out at the beginning, to ensure the materials selected can be used repeatedly, are recyclable and regenerate natural systems.

A great place to start is by implementing the Sustainable Packaging Guidelines into design processes. The guidelines are a central part of the co-regulatory framework established by the National Environment Protection (Used Packaging Materials) Measure 2011 and the Australian Packaging Covenant. They were created to assist the design and manufacture of packaging that meets the sometimes-conflicting demands of the market, consumer protection and the environment.

## The 10 principles that make up the Sustainable Packaging Guidelines are:

1. Design for recovery
2. Optimise material efficiency
3. Design to reduce product waste
4. Eliminate hazardous materials
5. Use recycled materials
6. Use renewable materials
7. Design to minimise litter
8. Design for transport efficiency
9. Design for accessibility
10. Provide consumer information on sustainability

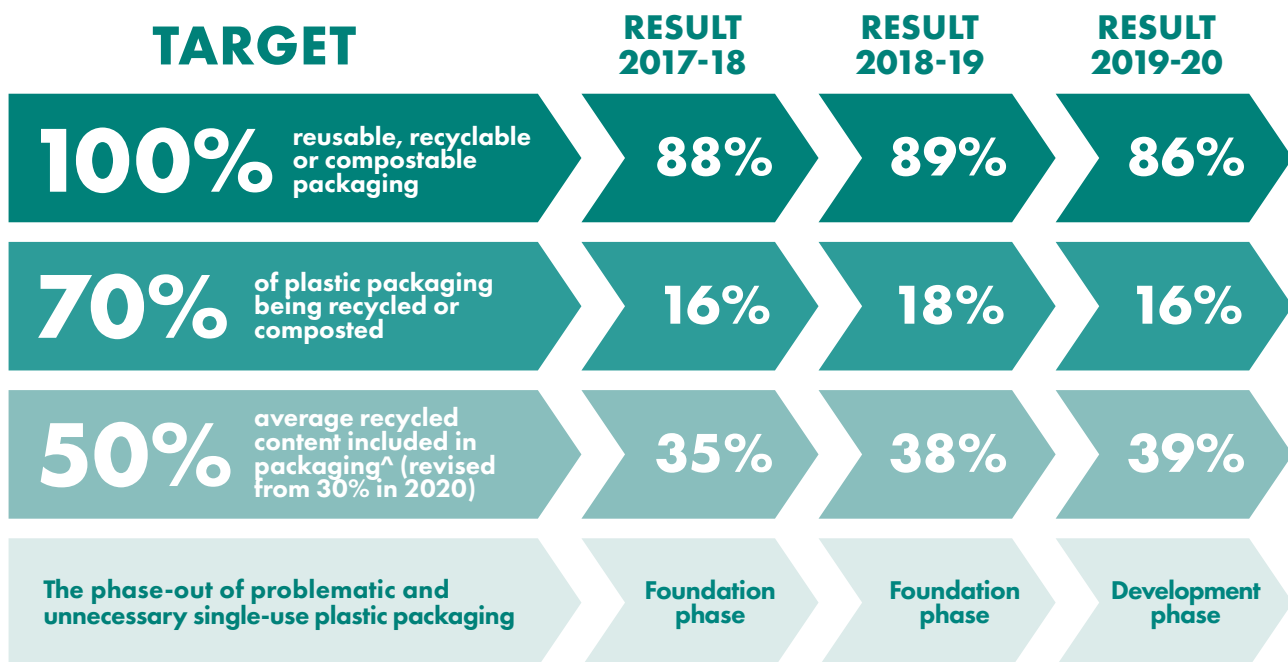
The goal is to integrate these principles into the right business areas, to achieve the optimal outcomes for packaging functionality, and to collectively work to meet the 2025 National Packaging Targets.

The highest priority principles are those that support the achievement of the four National Packaging Targets: design for recovery, design for efficiency, using recycled materials, design for efficiency and design to minimise litter.

## 2025 NATIONAL PACKAGING TARGETS

In 2018, Australia established the ambitious 2025 National Packaging Targets. These four targets apply to all packaging that is made, used and sold in Australia.

1. 100% of all Australia's packaging will be reusable, recyclable or compostable
2. 70% of Australia's plastic packaging will be recycled or composted
3. 50% average recycled content will be included across all packaging
4. Phase out of problematic and unnecessary single-use plastic packaging through redesign, innovation or introduction of alternatives.



<sup>^</sup>Data shown excludes wood packaging due to insufficient data

**Figure 1.** Progress towards the 2025 National Packaging Targets (Australian Packaging Covenant Organisation, November 2021).

In other areas of the value chain, **materials suppliers** are working on innovative new materials and simplifying complex material structure. **Brands** are busy redesigning packaging and highlighting environmental improvements. **Recyclers** are reviewing and expanding capabilities, **governments** are actively funding new initiatives and **consumers** are embracing the changes.

A systemic approach to Circular Packaging Design can deliver significant environmental impact reductions including a lower carbon footprint, reducing the use of feedstock derived from fossil fuels, using fewer virgin materials and minimising packaging waste that heads to landfill.

"It's called the circular economy. It's a new way to design, make, and use things within planetary boundaries. Shifting the system involves everyone and everything: businesses, governments, and individuals;

our cities, our products, and our jobs. By designing out waste and pollution, keeping products and materials in use, and regenerating natural systems we can reinvent everything." Ellen Macarthur Foundation

Consumers look at packaging differently now, so too should Packaging Technologists and Designers. This is an exciting time to be designing packaging and those that design circular packaging will know that they have made a difference for generations to come. Have fun rethinking your packaging designs and remember use less, use longer and use again.



**More information:**

Sustainable Packaging Guidelines: [bit.ly/ABJ-SPG](https://bit.ly/ABJ-SPG)

Australian Packaging Covenant: [bit.ly/ABJ-APC](https://bit.ly/ABJ-APC)

Australia's 2025 National Packaging Targets: [bit.ly/ABJ-APCO](https://bit.ly/ABJ-APCO)