



For immediate release

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The circle of life: How recycling printer cartridges plays a part in the green economy

With the decline of manufacturing in Australia, product stewardship programs like 'Cartridges 4 Planet Ark', through which the manufacturers pay to recycle the materials, can play an increasingly valuable role in the emerging circular economy.

In nature, materials cycle endlessly and nothing is wasted, but humans have developed a linear approach of producing, consuming and disposing of items. The idea of a circular economy, a closed loop process in which we reuse, recover and recycle these valuable materials and keep them in the productive economy for as long as possible, is gaining traction in many business processes.

"We all know the planet has a finite supply of resources to tap into, so creating waste is a liability for both businesses and the environment," said Ryan Collins, Recycling Programs Manager at Planet Ark. "Reducing waste generation and keeping valuable materials circulating within the economy will be a priority for everyone in years to come and is a significant area of jobs creation."

Extended producer responsibility programs, which involve manufacturers taking responsibility for the items they produce, help develop a circular economy. The 'Cartridges 4 Planet Ark' program is one of the longest-running examples of an extended producer program in Australia.

Printer cartridges collected through the program are sorted and, depending on their condition, returned to the manufacturer for reuse or dismantled, with plastics, metals, toner and ink collected and refined for recycling. They are turned into a wide range of items including commodities like aluminium, ferrous metal, stainless steel and over six different plastic types, as well as new products like cartridges, pens, rulers, asphalt additives, and eWood™ which is used to make park benches, fencing and garden beds.

All of this is paid for by the participating manufacturers Brother, Canon, Epson, HP, Konica Minolta, Oce and Kyocera. Through their participation, consumers and workplaces can access a free network of 30,000 recycling points around the country.

Close the Loop®, the program's recycling partner, invests in research and development to find the most efficient uses of the collected material. One of the more recent innovations is TonerPave™ asphalt, co-created by Downer EDI, which uses residual toner powder to make an additive to improve the longevity, strength and carbon emissions of the roads it is used to build.

Steve Morriss, Founder and Executive Director of Close the Loop® Limited, believes the circular economy is developing strongly due to consumers becoming more aware that our current rates of consumption are not sustainable, and that virgin resources are increasing in price, building a stronger economic case for good design, resource conservation, and closed material loops.

"There are many factors combining to facilitate the growth of the circular economy right now," he says. "Programs like 'Cartridges 4 Planet Ark' are an essential part of an early stage circular economy because they prove that take back programs can efficiently collect and transform consumer items at

Participating Manufacturers – Taking responsibility for the cartridges we produce





end of life from what may be considered waste, into new economically and environmentally positive materials and products.”

If they are sent to landfill printer cartridges can take between 450 to 1000 years to break down, which is why Planet Ark and campaign ambassador and seven-times World Champion surfer Layne Beachley are calling on everyone to recycle their printer cartridges responsibly. Over 27 million cartridges, equivalent to 12,000 tonnes of plastics, metals, inks and toners, have been recycled since the program began in 2003.

“This year Planet Ark is holding a schools competition, with support from Officeworks, to help teach students the benefits of recycling,” said Ryan. “Teachers and other school staff are encouraged to enter the competition by telling us why it’s important to recycle. The first 200 schools to enter will receive 50 rulers made from recycled cartridges, with one school winning an eWood garden bed worth \$1,000.”

Printer cartridges can easily be dropped off for recycling in ‘Cartridges 4 Planet Ark’ collection boxes, located at all Officeworks and JB Hi-Fi stores and participating Australia Post, Harvey Norman, Dick Smith, The Good Guys and Office National outlets. Workplaces may also be eligible for a free collection box.

To find your nearest retail drop-off location, to enter the schools competition or for information about workplace collection options visit <http://cartridges.planetark.org> or call 1300 733 712.

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About Planet Ark

Planet Ark Environmental Foundation is an Australian not-for-profit organisation with a vision of a world where people live in balance with nature. Established in 1992, we are one of Australia’s leading environmental behaviour change organisations with a focus on working collaboratively and positively. We promote and create simple, positive environmental actions – for everyone.

About Close the Loop®

Close the Loop® (CtL) is a high tech resource recovery company with Australian and US operations focussed on the imaging supplies industry. Established in Australia in 2001, CtL turns ‘waste’ from one industry into valuable resources in others all with zero waste to landfill.

About the Participating Manufacturers

By participating in C4PA Brother, Canon, Epson, HP, Konica Minolta, Océ and Kyocera are taking responsibility for the cartridges they produce and are helping to make this voluntary extended producer responsibility program is one of the most successful of its kind in Australia.

For more information, to schedule an interview or to arrange a photo opportunity at your nearest participating ‘Cartridges 4 Planet Ark’ outlet, please contact pr@planetark.org, or:

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