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Recycling crisis: It starts with the bins

The Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA) is urging Australia's state and territory governments and councils to work together to resolve the national recycling crisis through a better source separation bin system. Federal Environment Minister Josh Frydenberg is hosting a meeting of state and territory environment ministers on Friday, where China's decision to stop accepting foreign waste will be a key item for discussion.

AFPA Chief Executive Officer, Mr Ross Hampton, said the states and councils hold most of the responsibility in this area, and must work together on resolving the issue before decades of work encouraging Australians to recycle is undermined.

"Common recycling practices for kerbside waste sees all recyclable materials going into one single bin, often leading to contaminated streams that cannot be recycled in a cost-effective manner. We must as a nation embrace the challenge of implementing a better source separation disposal system with separate bins for households and on our streets," Mr Hampton said.

"Governments can also consider offering incentives for consumers to participate in source separation recycling, provide better education and remove unfair penalties imposed on recycling companies which often must dump recycling waste in landfill because of contamination," Mr Hampton said.

*The below examples demonstrate just how far behind Australia is in recycling sophistication. The example on the left is an Australian bin, while the one on the right is a far more advanced example from Canada.



"AFPA represents major paper and cardboard producers. Both are sustainable products that have potential to be recycled properly, but contamination in the system means opportunities are lost," Mr Hampton concluded.

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AFPA represents forest growers, harvesters, and manufacturers of timber and paper products.

Media Contact: Joe Prevedello

AFPA Communications Manager

(m) 0497 497 005 (e) joe.prevedello@ausfpa.com.au