



MEDIA STATEMENT

COMMUNITY ENCOURAGED TO RECYCLE OLD BATTERIES

Monday August 24, 2009

Fremantle residents Shani Graham and Tim Darby are leading the way in encouraging their local community not to throw out 'everyday' style dry cell batteries, but to recycle them instead.

From September, old household batteries (dry-cell) can be dropped off at any one of more than 150 new battery recycling bins around Perth.

Shani and Tim welcomed the dry-cell battery recycling initiative, the first of its kind in Australia, to give everyone in Perth the ability to recycle common household batteries at a range of convenient locations.

"We are already talking to our neighbours about handing over their dry-cell batteries, including lithium (used in cameras, computers, calculators) and carbon-zinc batteries used in most households," Shani said.

"Concerns with dry-cell batteries are corrosivity, reactivity, and heavy metals, including mercury, silver, cadmium, and zinc – all of which is harmful to our environment."

The Waste Authority has estimated that more than 18 million household batteries are thrown away in Western Australia each year.

By separating your batteries from ordinary household rubbish, these valuable resources can be recycled into a range of new products, such as street lights and car parts, rather than go to waste.

Dry-cell batteries don't contain spillable liquids but most have other hazardous properties.

The Waste Authority has been very successful in funding a metropolitan wide project with emphasis on the diversion of household hazardous waste away from landfill.

Many people probably don't know what to do with their dead dry-cell batteries and don't realise they are harmful to the environment if they end up in landfill.

The new battery recycling bins are designed with a slot in the top to allow batteries to be easily and safely deposited. The types of batteries accepted include:

- AA and AAA cells (single use & rechargeable batteries)
- C and D sized batteries
- Button batteries (e.g. from watches)
- 9V batteries
- 6V batteries (e.g. lantern/torch batteries)

The Waste Authority administers a fund created by a levy on all waste that goes to metropolitan landfill sites.

The Waste Authority has allocated more than \$80,000 from the fund to the Southern Metropolitan Regional Council in conjunction with the Eastern Metropolitan Regional Council for a scheme designed to implement a metropolitan-wide dry-cell battery collection and recycling program.

The initiative is being rolled out by all five metropolitan regional councils - Southern, Eastern, Western, Mindarie and Rivers Regional Councils across the metropolitan area.

Media Contact: Donna Cole 0419 901229.



FACT SHEET

Battery Facts

- Batteries are the most common form of household hazardous waste disposed of by Australian households, with 97% ending up among usual rubbish collection in landfill
- When batteries are landfilled, their casings disintegrate, and metals and chemicals used within the battery can leach into the surrounding environment. Preventing the batteries from going directly into landfill by participating in the battery recycling program, will remove this risk.

Battery Recycling

- Australia only has one battery recycling facility - Auszinc in Wollongong, New South Wales. This facility will recycle all metals and components of alkaline batteries.
- The batteries collected in this program will first be sorted then components and metals are separated, melted and recycled into new products such as street lights, new batteries, car parts and steel frames for houses.
- Batteries which cannot be recycled in Australia will be exported to existing European battery recycling facilities.

What batteries are not accepted?

- Automotive & sealed lead-based – These can be taken to your next Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) drop off day. Visit www.wastenet.net.au/events for more information.
- Mobile Phones & Accessories – These can be taken back to mobile phone retail outlets. Visit www.mobilemuster.com.au for your nearest drop off point.

What else can you do to help - Reduce - Reuse - Recycle

- Check to see if you already have batteries on hand before purchasing more.
- When appropriate, buy hand-operated items that function without batteries.
- Look for batteries that have less mercury and other heavy metals.
- Consider using rechargeable batteries (also known as secondary batteries) and battery chargers (only for rechargeable batteries).