



## **Statement on End of Life Televisions and Computers**

November 2008

The Environment Protection and Heritage Council (EPHC) recognises that many in the community, including industry, have a strong desire for action to ensure that end of life televisions and computers are appropriately recycled. Recycling these products delivers important environmental benefits, including energy (and greenhouse gas) and water savings, reduced demand for virgin raw materials, and a reduced demand for landfill space.

If 75% of the 1.5 million televisions that are discarded annually were recycled, this would amount to a national saving of approximately 23,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalents, 520 mega litres of water, 400,000 gigajoules of energy and 160,000 cubic metres of landfill space. It is likely that computer recycling would generate similar or even greater benefits.

The Council also acknowledges that the television and computer industries have expended considerable effort and resources to develop and trial product stewardship schemes to collect and recycle their end of life products. Council applauds these efforts and particularly recognises the companies in these industries that have participated in and supported this work.

Council notes, however, that while most of the major players in these markets are willing and ready to act, some are not and the large numbers of small players and low profit margins creates strong incentives and opportunities for some companies to avoid taking responsibility. This makes it very difficult for these sectors to run self-regulated schemes, which is why they have sought regulatory support from governments to maintain a level playing field in the market.

Council has initiated action to investigate these regulatory options. This includes researching the nature and scale of the problems associated with landfilling end of life televisions and computers and the benefits of recycling them, identifying options for tackling the environmental problems created by disposal and analysing the costs and benefits of each possible solution. A key aim of this work is to establish whether the problems caused by end of life televisions and computers are significant enough to justify government intervention in the market and if so, to find the most efficient and effective approach to achieve this.

Council takes the issue of end of life televisions and computers very seriously. It is committed to ensuring the best possible outcome for the community by taking a decision based on the most recent and accurate information. Work is scheduled to be completed so that Council can take an informed decision on this issue in 2009.

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) guidelines on Regulatory Impact Statements now require more quantitative evidence of impacts and benefits to determine if government intervention would result in a net benefit to the community. This has required Council to research valuation methodologies that have not previously been used for waste issues and to gather data so that it can undertake a robust cost benefit analysis of its regulatory options. Council acknowledges that this work is taking a significant amount of time.

Once the current work is completed, Council will release the findings of the research, which will also provide an opportunity for the community to both understand and provide comment on the options for action, including the economic analysis underpinning it.