



Charitable Donation Bins: Voluntary Code of Practice

1. Background

The National Association of Charitable Recycling Organisations Limited trading as *Charitable Recycling Australia* exists to championing the circular economy for a sustainable environment and an equitable society. It upholds trust in, and promotes the impact of the charitable reuse, recycling and retail sector as a collaborative and progressive network. It enables charities to maximise their financial returns from their recycling and retail operations, and uphold their charitable mission and purpose.

Membership of *Charitable Recycling Australia* is an indication that a charity complies with the highest standards of transparency, accountability and trustworthiness for clothing bin management. In order to become a member, charities must meet strict criteria including:

- Being a not-for-profit registered with the ACNC
- Having Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) Status from the ATO
- Directly running recycling programs exclusively to support the charitable purpose of the organisation
- Not selling or otherwise allowing the charity brand name to be used by a commercial operator to solicit donated goods
- Being actively involved in the consistent operation of a recycling program for a minimum of 12 months

Charitable Recycling Australia members operate approximately 10,000 donation bins around Australia. These bins are an important way for the community to directly support charitable causes, while also diverting materials from landfill and giving them a second life. Every year, an estimated 600,000 tonnes of material is diverted from landfill by charitable recyclers.

2. Purpose of this Code of Practice

This Code of Practice sets out voluntary standards for the design, management and servicing of donation bins. Compliance with these voluntary standards is a priority for all members and is part of the sector's commitment to serving the community.

3. Bin Design

Charitable donation bins are a well-recognised and respected institution in Australia, and for many people, are their first point of contact with the charitable recycling industry. Ensuring that bins are well-designed for visibility and safety is essential. Whenever bins are refurbished or retired, their replacements should meet the

minimum standards outlined below. Wherever possible, charitable recyclers who are investing in new bins will also explore improved solutions for bin management and design, including technology such as 'fullness sensors', if appropriate.

3.1. Theft and Public Safety

It is important that bins are designed to minimise the potential for a person to enter through the donation chute, a practice that can result in serious injury or risk of death. In addition to the requirements for bin placement outlined in item 4.1 below, charity bin operators should ensure that, where used, swing chutes are sufficiently high placed and narrow to prevent entry.

3.2. WHS for Collection Staff

In order to minimise the WHS risks of bending and lifting clothing from inside bins, it is preferable that bins are designed to minimise manual handling. Bins that have a full-height door, and which can be fitted with a bale and emptied using hydraulic arms, are one way of achieving this, but there may be others. All options will be considered in bin and process design.

3.3. Appearance and Signage

Charity donation bins should be regularly repainted, and any graffiti should be removed as soon as possible. All bins should have the outside clearly labelled with the following information:

- the name of the charity responsible for the bin,
- a list of items that can be donated – this could be depicted by photographs or pictures of suitable items,
- how the donated goods will be used,
- an instruction not to leave items outside the charity donation bin,
- a business hours phone number to report issues with the bin such as illegal dumping or damage.
- Any additional signage or notices required by state or local government regulations.

Charitable bin operators should also consider investing in bins with replaceable panels, which will assist with the process of repair or replacement if vandalism occurs.

4. Bin Management

Charities that are able to take responsibility for site maintenance, respond to issues promptly, and service bins regularly are more likely to be given priority when spaces are allocated by landlords. A clean, safe and well-maintained site is also the best way of communicating the charitable recycling sector's professionalism and trustworthiness to the public. By ensuring that items are not left outside bins, charities can prevent bins from being perceived as a potential target for theft or vandalism.

Where multiple bins are co-located on a single site, it is recommended that charities work together to monitor and service the area. This may take the form of a reciprocal arrangement where each charity agrees to service a particular area with multiple bins, a co-funding arrangement where charities fund a single collection, monitoring and maintenance service, or another arrangement deemed appropriate by the relevant charities. Wherever possible, the guiding principle in bin management should be for charitable bin operators to work together to monitor, service and clean their shared sites, as a single charity's poor bin management practices will reflect badly on all charities.

4.1. Placement and Security

Bin placement is largely a matter for charitable bin operators to negotiate with landlords, including local governments and businesses. Bin placement should take into consideration a range of factors to ensure they do not detract from the amenity and appearance of the site, and do not increase the risk of illegal dumping. In general, the following types of sites have been found to be successful:

- Highly visible sites with good lighting, regular foot traffic and security cameras, or
- Sites that can be secured outside business hours – such as churches, community centres or businesses, or
- Sites that can be actively managed and monitored by local government workers or security guards – such as transfer stations, shopping centre grounds, or carparks.

4.2. Servicing

Charities must service bins regularly to ensure they are never too full for donations, and to assist in avoiding illegal dumping. Servicing frequency will depend on bin location and traffic, but should be clearly outlined in a maintenance schedule or similar document.

4.3. Dumped rubbish

Illegal dumping is unfortunately a common issue faced by charitable bin operators, and constitutes a significant burden that diverts funds away from the organisations' core charitable purpose. Individual site agreements will contain specific details of how illegal dumping is to be managed. *Charitable Recycling Australia* members in many states have access to concessions and rebates to offset the impact of illegal dumping, but ongoing access to these benefits depend on the commitment of charities to ensuring donation bin sites are kept as clean and tidy as practicable.

- Dumped rubbish should be cleaned up as soon as possible – as a general guide, within one business day of the illegal dumping being reported.
- Illegal dumping should also be reported to the relevant authorities, including state environmental regulators and landlords, to ensure that data regarding the prevalence and impact of illegal dumping is collected.
- Recognising that repeated instances of severe illegal dumping may result in bin relocation or removal, it is essential that charitable bin operators commit to long-term site planning and bin management practices, including but not limited to those included in this Code of Practice.

4.4. Relationship with Landlords

Charitable Recycling Australia members are committed to constructive and collaborative relationships with landlords and site owners. Relationships with landlords may be formalised in a Service Level Agreements/ Arrangements, Memorandum of Understanding, contract, or similar document. The guiding principles for charitable bin operators in their relationships with landlords are to:

- Comply with all applicable regulations and by-laws, including specific signage, placement and servicing requirements for sites.
- Maintain appropriate levels of public liability insurance as required by landlord(s).
- Report any instances of non-compliance with landlord agreements - including misleading signage, placement of unauthorised bins, and poor management of bins.

The document '**Charitable Donation Bins: Planning Principles for Local Government**' is also available as a free resource for local governments who wish to host donation bins on public lands. Please visit (*weblink*) to download.