

Consultation on colours for bins and bin lids for recycling and waste containers

Introduction

- Currently councils and businesses in New Zealand use a variety of colours on bins and bin lids to signal what items can be recycled where. This can create confusion when the colours are used inconsistently, and increases the likelihood of contamination. A consultation was conducted in February 2015 to agree on standardised colours for recycling and rubbish bins based on the Australian Standard¹.
- As a result of feedback from the consultation seven out of eight recommendations were adopted. This second consultation is to reach agreement on recommendation 7 the colour for commingled glass only collections and the colour for paper and cardboard.

Recommendations endorsed through round 1 of the consultation process.

1. For 240 litre and 120 litre wheelie bins, black or dark green should be used for the bin body.
2. Different waste streams should have different colour bin lids.
3. Red lids should be used for rubbish.
4. Yellow lids should be used for commingled recycling.
5. Lime green lids should be used for food waste and food waste /garden waste combined; noting that food waste only collections are strongly encouraged to use a smaller bin size than combined food and garden collections.
6. Dark Green lids should be used for garden waste.
7. The Australian Standard should not be followed for the colour of commingled glass only collections as the colour used yellow is the same as the colour for commingled plastic, glass **and** paper recycling. In New Zealand significant work has been undertaken to encourage the separate collection of glass. In some public places, commingled glass is collected in one bin

¹ An Australian Standard was developed in 2006 for mobile bin colours (AS4123.7-2006 mobile waste containers - Part 7: colours, markings and designation requirements). The standard specified that darker colours (black and dark green) be used when manufacturing bin bodies, in order to include a higher amount of recycled material (HDPE). The use of darker coloured plastics allows for the introduction of recycled material without affecting the visual appearance of the container.

and commingled plastics and cans are collected in separate bins. Bins of identical colour would increase confusion for the public.

Colour of bin lids for commingled glass and paper

- No consensus was reached by the consultation process, nor the technical working group, nor the Behaviour Change steering committee as to what the colour for commingled glass only collections should be. The majority of commingled glass only recycling bins in New Zealand use a light blue colour PMS299 shown below for either the bin lid or the bin symbol. However, the colour blue is used in the Australian Standard for paper and cardboard.



Figure 1 PMS 299 used in NZ for glass

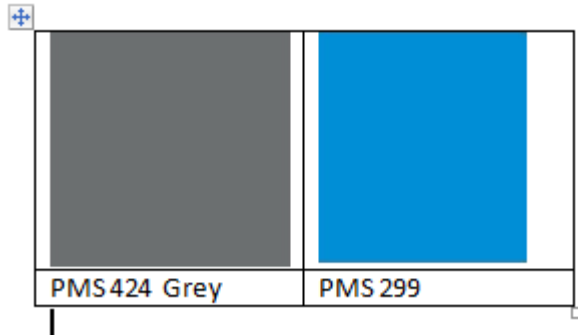


Figure 1 RAL 5015 used in AUS for paper

- There was agreement in the consultation that paper and glass would be better having separate colours 65%. This was endorsed by the technical working group and the Behaviour Change Steering Committee.
- The colour of blue following the Australian standard was proposed for paper and cardboard and the colour black for commingled glass only. Respondents were equally split as to whether blue or black was their preferred colour for commingled glass.
- It was noted that quite a few respondents objected to the colour black and its connotations of rubbish.
- It was discussed that if a different colour option instead of black had been offered, there may have been a clearer consensus.

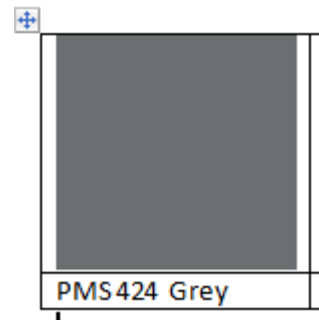
New recommendation for paper and commingled glass

Having considered all the evidence the Behaviour Change Steering committee and technical working group is now recommending that the colour **grey PMS 424** should be adopted for paper and cardboard and that **PMS 299 blue** remains the colour of commingled glass collection. This is however, not a unanimous recommendation, so we are seeking feedback from industry before a final decision is made.



Rationale for recommendation

- The working group and steering committee both agree that colours such as pink and purple would not be appropriate for bin lids. The only other primary colour that is not already being widely used is grey.
- Light grey is used in the Australian standard, but only for metal cans. Some resource recovery centres in New Zealand have skips for collecting scrap metal, and some transfer stations do use posters for metal can recycling. To the knowledge of the working group and steering committee there are no bin collections for metal cans or other metals.
- Grey is the colour for paper on the RONZ symbols PMS 424 so one solution would be to use the colour grey for paper and continue to use the colour PMS 299 blue for commingled glass only collections.



Glass

- Currently there are two main avenues where glass is collected via commingled collections. Firstly, in public place and event recycling where separate bins are used for rubbish, plastics paper and cans, and commingled glass. The majority of these bins use the light blue colour PMS299 for either the bin lid or the bin symbol.
- Glass is also collected currently by nine councils comingled at kerbside in crates. Three of these councils use light blue crates, three use black crates and three use green crates.
- The view of the Packaging Forum, who funds public place recycling schemes with glass only receptacles, is that they would prefer the colour blue for glass, which they have already used widely around the country.

Paper

- Paper and cardboard is collected in New Zealand at businesses via small internal office bins; wheelie bins provided by waste companies, and cages for cardboard. Some companies also have bins for paper document destruction. Bins supplied by paper collectors and document destruction companies range from yellow to green to blue to grey. See Appendix A for a more detailed breakdown.

- For commercial waste providers the expectation would be that they use the designated colour on their signs and labels given their current infrastructure investment, but that over time when ordering new bins they would give consideration to using the designated colour. Full Circle, who is a major collector of paper currently using green bins, has indicated they would be willing to use the RONZ grey colour on their labelling. Most paper collectors contacted do not have a strong preference as to which colour is used.
- In Auckland and Christchurch particularly many organisations have rolled out blue internal office bins for collecting paper, so there would be significant financial impacts for those organisations, if the colour grey was chosen. Though once again these organisations would be encouraged to replace their bins over time, if the colour grey was chosen.
- Some councils have separate paper only collections, but for those collections cardboard boxes or plastic bags are typically used so there would be no used.
- Fonterra has sponsored the roll out of grey crates for collecting paper in schools through EERST. The bins are made from 100% recycled triple layer milk bottle and the grey that is produced from that is unique to this product. It is a coincidence that the colour looks similar to the RONZ symbol, however, as there is no colour added. The grey is formed from the white and the inner layer on black in the triple layer milk bottle.



Figure 4 Fonterra Bins

Overseas

- In Australia blue is used for paper and yellow is used for both commingled glass and commingled recycling (paper, plastics and glass combined)
- In the [UK](#) blue is used for paper and aqua is used for glass.
- In the [United States](#) blue is used for commingled recycling and paper /cardboard only and orange is used for glass



Figure 5 UK Colour



Figure 6 US Colours

Appendix A Paper and Document Destruction Companies and Colours used

Company	Colour for document destruction	Colour for paper recycling
On site shredding services	Grey bins and lids	n/a
Online security		
Recall	50% gray body blue lid 50% blue body blue lid	Grey bins and lids
Rubbish Direct	Black body blue lid	
Mastagard now owned by Envirowaste (CHCH)		Green body yellow or red lid
Onslow	Some grey green and some black	
Docushred Hastings	Dark blue bin and lid	n/a
Full Circle	Green body and lid	Green body and green lid
Paper Reclaim	Yellow body dark grey lids	Green body green lids