

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

## Introduction

- Currently councils, businesses, community recyclers and waste companies 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 with items being placed in the wrong bin. This results in increased costs and increased waste to landfill. The aim of this project is to agree on and promote the use of standardised colours for bins and bin lids so that there is greater consistency between how people recycle at home, at work and in public places. On the completion of this project there will be a second work stream to look at the use of signage and symbols to aid recycling. This focus of this consultation document is to agree on the primary domestic waste stream colours for rubbish, recyclables and organics.

## Bin Bodies

- 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.

**Recommendation 1: That for wheelie bins larger than 90 litres black or dark green be used for the bin body.**

## Bin lids

- In the Australian Standard the colours of the lids of the mobile waste containers varies according to the waste stream. Please see Appendix 1 for the colours in the Australian Standard. Many councils in New Zealand have already begun to follow the Australian Standard in their choice of colours for rubbish and commingled recycling containers.

**Recommendation 2: The colour chart in the Australian Standard AS 4123.7 2006 should be adhered to wherever possible, provided that the choice of colour reduces confusion and maximises recycling in New Zealand.**

**Recommendation 3: That the colour red should be used to signal rubbish**



**Recommendation 4: That the colour yellow should be used for comingled/mixed recycling (plastics, glass, paper all collected in one bin)**



- The Australian standard stipulates that lime green is the colour used for green (garden) waste and organics (food and green waste comingled) and that burgundy is the colour used for food waste only collections. In New Zealand the colour lime green has become commonly associated with both organics and food waste. In the South Island, Timaru District Council, Christchurch City Council and Selwyn District Council use the lime green colour for their organics food and garden waste comingled collection. Recycling at events commonly uses a three bin system of red for rubbish, yellow for recycling and lime green for food waste. Wellington City Council has a business only food waste collection using the colour brown. There are no collections in New Zealand that use the burgundy colour.

**Recommendation 5: The project team does not see the need for a separate colour for food waste only collections. The project team recommends that the colour lime green be used for both organic (mixed food and garden) and food only collections. Household Food waste only collections tend to use a smaller size bin, and food industry won't generate garden waste, so the size of the bin together with signage can be used to signal contents.**



**Recommendation 6: The project team recommends that the colour dark green be used to signal garden waste only. Garden waste collections are frequently composted at facilities which aren't licensed to accept food**



waste and therefore food waste would act as a contaminant for these collections.

## Colours of bin lids for new waste streams

- As more and more material types become recyclable, companies are requesting guidance on colours for new waste streams. For example some companies are starting to recycle polystyrene and plastic film.

**Recommendation 7: That where new waste streams are being collected for recycling , rather than creating a new colour for that waste stream, the existing colour should be used for which the material type is a subcategory and a symbol and wording used instead to differentiate. For example polystyrene is a plastic, so the colour orange, which is the colour for plastics, would be used for the bin lid. A symbol for polystyrene would be created and the wording polystyrene would be applied to the bin label to differentiate the specific plastic item. The same would apply if someone wanted to recycle aluminum cans separately to tin cans. Light grey is the colour in the Australian Standard for metal cans so wording/symbols would be used to distinguish the specific metal items not additional colours.**

## Colour of bin lids for commingled glass and paper

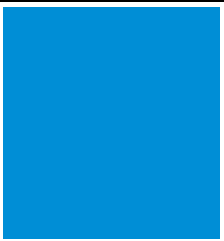



- In the Australian Standard, yellow is used for both commingled recycling and multicoloured glass only collections. In the New Zealand context, significant work has been undertaken by the Glass Packaging Forum (now known as The Packaging Forum) to encourage the separate collection of glass. In some public places, commingled glass is collected in one bin and commingled plastics and cans are collected in separate bins.

**Recommendation 8: that commingled recycling and multicoloured glass should have different colours to minimise confusion.**

- 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 rubbish, plastics paper and cans, and commingled glass. The majority of these bins use a light blue colour PMS299 shown below 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.

- However, the colour blue RAL 5015 is used in the Australian Standard for paper/ cardboard and office paper collections.
- Waste Management uses Reflex Blue, as do some of the other paper collection companies for bins that collect paper only
- Document destruction bins use the colour Canadian Blue

			
PMS 299 Public Place Commingled Glass Collections	RAL 5015 AUS Standard for paper	Reflex Blue NZ paper collection companies	Canadian Blue Document Destruction Bins

- The project team is divided as to whether it is appropriate to use variations of the same colour for both paper and commingled glass recycling.
- Advocates of PMS 299 for commingled glass recycling point to its widespread existing use in public place recycling. They also note that the two colours in reality look quite distinct from each other. See the picture below. Finally there are very few situations in which both waste streams are likely to be collected separately, primarily only in large workplaces and factories, thus minimising the risk of confusion.



- Others are concerned that using the colour blue for separate waste streams (i.e. both glass and paper) will increase the likelihood of confusion for the general public. Using one colour per waste stream minimises confusion and would avoid potential contamination of paper bins with glass or glass bins with paper. It also provides greater clarity in written or electronic communications with the public – when referencing the colour blue (without two blue bins to compare).
- Advocates for this point of view prefer the use of the colour black for commingled recycling. This colour is preferred as it provides cost savings to councils wanting to start commingled glass collections at kerbside as it is the cheapest colour of crate to produce (and allows for recycled content, as per recommendation 1). The colour black is not currently being used in the Australian Standard for any other waste stream. By using black for commingled glass and blue for paper the communications message to the public is very clear and easy to understand.

**Decision: The project team is divided as to whether PMS colour 299 Light Blue or whether the colour Black should be used for commingled glass. The project team is seeking feedback from the wider industry as to their preferred preference and rationale to assist them to reach a decision. All members of the project team are happy for the colour blue to remain as the colour for paper/ cardboard and office paper as per the Australian Standard but note that a darker shade of blue such as Canadian Blue and Reflex Blue would probably need to be adopted, if PMS colour 299 Light Blue was adopted for glass .**

**Conclusion:** If the recommendations above were implemented the colours for bin lids would be as follows:

<b>Material Type</b>	<b>Bin Lid Colour</b>
Rubbish	Red PMS1797C
Recyclables	Yellow PMS109C
Organics (mixed food and garden waste)	Lime Green PMS361C
Food Waste	Lime Green PMS361C
Garden waste only	Dark Green
Clear Glass	White

Brown Glass	Brown PMS4695C
Green Glass	Nature Green PMS364C
Mixed Glass Bottles	tbd
Paper/ Cardboard / Office Paper	Blue PMS tbd
Metal Cans	Light Grey PMS5455C
Plastics	Orange PMS021C
Electronics	White
Clinical and related incineration Note: bin body yellow	Orange
Clinical and related other technologies than incineration Note: bin body yellow	Yellow
Cytotoxic Note: bin body purple	Purple
Radioactive Note: bin body red	Red

## Appendix A

Table 4.1 sets out colour designations for bodies and lids of mobile waste containers that relate to the type of waste material.

**TABLE 4.1**  
**COLOUR DESIGNATION**

<b>Types of material</b>	<b>Body</b>	<b>Lid</b>
Garbage / General waste	Dark Green or Black	Red
Paper/cardboard	Dark Green or Black	Blue
Green waste/organics	Dark Green or Black	Lime Green
Recyclables	Dark Green or Black	Yellow
Metal cans	Dark Green or Black	Light Grey
Food waste	Dark Green or Black	Burgundy
Clear glass	Nature Green	White
Brown glass	Nature Green	Brown
Green glass	Nature Green	Nature Green
Mixed glass bottles	Nature Green	Yellow
Plastics	Dark Green or Black	Orange
Office paper	Blue	Blue
Electronics	Dark Green or Black	White
* Clinical and related—incineration	Yellow	Orange
* Clinical and related—technologies other than incineration	Yellow	Yellow
* Cytotoxic	Purple	Purple
* Radioactive	Red	Red