



Media release

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## Seasonal festivities hit environment hard

While Christmas is known as the time to be kinder to our fellow man, spare a thought for the planet.

Over the festive season, we eat, drink, party and buy more than any other time of the year, but it's also when we're toughest on the environment due to the extra waste we generate and the extra resources we consume.

Australian households throw out about A\$5.2 billion of food every year, enough to fill more than 450,000 garbage trucks<sup>1</sup>, yet last year we still spent around \$913 million on extra food at Christmas<sup>2</sup>. The level of emissions generated by household food waste in landfill is similar to the total emissions involved in the manufacture and supply of iron and steel in Australia<sup>1</sup>.

In recent years we've also been spending up to \$500 on presents<sup>2</sup>, many of which are unwanted.

Planet Ark is asking everyone to undertake some simple actions to reduce their impact on the environment and their pockets over the festive season. Planet Ark's *The 12 DOs of Christmas* awareness campaign includes tips for reducing food waste and excess packaging, buying green gifts, and recycling items like wrapping paper, foil, cartons, drink containers, plastic and cards as well as electronics and batteries.

"A few basic actions can make a big difference to your environmental impact and your budget over Christmas," says Planet Ark Spokesperson Rebecca Gilling. "Planning meals ahead of time is one of the easiest ways to prevent food wastage. Buying presents in plenty of time also avoids those last-minute panic buys that never get used by the recipient."

Taking someone shopping for their present, giving experiences, gift vouchers or donations are great ways of reducing the likelihood of a present sitting in a cupboard unused.

Electronic waste is also a big theme at Christmas as people receive new electronic items and toys as gifts, which are also often battery-heavy. Last year it was electronics vendors such as JB Hi-Fi, Apple, Dick Smith and Harvey Norman that dominated Christmas sales, a trend that looks set to continue.

A survey from MobileMuster showed that nearly half of all Australians were planning to buy a new mobile over Christmas and the summer sales. Electronics, mobile phones and batteries all have recycling options available through national manufacturer and retailer schemes.

Contamination of recycling bins at the work Christmas party and at home is another environmental impact easily avoidable through clear signage for guests, and learning what is acceptable in your kerbside recycling bin.

The *12 DOs of Christmas* action sheet provides helpful ideas for addressing these and other wasteful practices. It can be found on [RecyclingNearYou.com.au](http://RecyclingNearYou.com.au), a comprehensive household recycling directory that lists recycling options for all sorts of items, by council area.

Visit Planet Ark's [RecyclingNearYou.com.au](http://RecyclingNearYou.com.au) website and hotline (1300 733 712) to find out more.

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<sup>1</sup> Recycling Revolutions report, Planet Ark October 2013

<sup>2</sup> CBA Consumer Christmas Spend Report 2012

### **About Planet Ark**

Planet Ark Environmental Foundation is an Australian not-for-profit organisation established to help people, governments and businesses reduce their impact on the environment. We create simple, powerful and positive actions that help people live in balance with nature, through our program of inspiring campaigns, which promote sustainable resource use, low carbon lifestyles and connect people with nature.

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