



Positive environmental actions, for everyone.

ABC's Four Corners recently featured "Trashed" about the waste and recycling industry. Planet Ark supports coverage of important issues facing the waste and recycling industry and positive changes that will improve environmental outcomes. There were however some omissions and misrepresentations that need to be addressed.

It was not stated in the program that ABC interviewed Planet Ark as part of the filming, so our position was not shared with viewers. In that interview we made clear our position on the lack of a QLD Waste Levy and consequent transportation of waste across state boundaries as well as our partnership with Bingo Industries. We have included these responses below along with other reactions to issues raised on the program.

Why did Planet Ark partner with Bingo Industries?

Planet Ark Environmental Foundation is a not-for-profit organisation that regularly works with businesses that want to become more sustainable and lessen their impact on the environment. By partnering with business to achieve these goals, we believe we can make the biggest and most positive impact on the environment.

In 2010 Bingo Industries approached Planet Ark seeking advice on how to transform its business from a small waste management company to a full-scale recovery and recycling business with a focus on the problematic construction and demolition (C&D) waste stream. We were pleased to work with Bingo on its transformation. Bingo is now the industry leader in C&D waste management, having invested tens of millions of dollars on state-of-the-art waste separation technologies in NSW alone. They are now expanding into other states and we look forward to working together to achieve even greater sustainability goals in the future.

What does the partnership with Bingo Industries involve?

Planet Ark partners with businesses that have an interest in and passion for improving their environmental footprint, such as Bingo. Often when a partnership begins there is a lot of work to do. Businesses may want to lessen their impact on the environment but are unsure which steps to take. This is where Planet Ark comes in. We work closely with businesses and offer advice and expertise for improving and refining their existing practices, to make them more environmentally sound. In the case of Bingo, we have helped them transform from a waste company to a recovery and recycling business. The next stage of our partnership is shortly to begin. This will focus on reducing the environmental impacts of their operations, including installing renewable energy systems on their sites, biofuels for their transport fleet and energy and water efficiencies.

How did Planet Ark verify Bingo's claim of an 85% recovery and recycling rate?

The Auburn facility is the first of Bingo's state-of-the-art recycling and recovery processing plants. Further facilities have recently opened at Minto and St Marys in Sydney, and others will be built across the country over the coming years.

As each plant achieves a minimum 12 months of operation, Planet Ark performs a verification to determine the recycling and recovery rate. The first verification relates to the Auburn facility using data from a representative 3-month continuous period of operation in 2016. Our study included a review of the workings of the facility, and how material is delivered, separated and dispatched either for use or for further processing. Software systems permit the logging of all deliveries to the site with the weights and the types of materials. Following sorting all shipments were then examined for the materials recovered and their downstream allocation either for reuse, further downstream processing or landfill. Please note the term used is resource recovery rather than recycling *per se* as a number of materials are separated for secondary processing/ recycling by other companies.

Planet Ark's verification of Bingo's hi-tech Auburn facility in Sydney, (based on facility data generated between April to June 2016), yielded an average resource recovery rate of 85%, which is well above industry average.

Does Planet Ark receive funding from Bingo Industries?

The foundation of our partnership with Bingo is our common goal to make the company more sustainable and reduce its environmental footprint. A commercial arrangement makes it possible for us to spend time and resources working with Bingo to achieve their environmental goals. Funding from our partners, sponsors and endorsees also enables us to run our campaigns and programs that educate and assist other businesses, schools and consumers on how to take positive environmental action.

Is Mangrove Mountain an illegal landfill?

Mangrove Mountain is a legally compliant landfill. [The EPA commissioned an independent assessment of the Mangrove Mountain landfill](#) in 2017. One of [the report's](#) key objectives was: *'To advise the EPA and Mountain Districts Association (the Community) on the suitability of the proposed management controls and monitoring framework for the landfill expansion, and of the management controls and compliance with regards to the previous landfill activity, in the context of protecting the environment and the community'*. The report found no evidence the landfill is affecting ground or surface water quality, which confirms the assessment of water quality tests in surrounding creeks that the EPA and the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage have done previously, along with groundwater monitoring undertaken by the landfill operator's consultants.

Bingo Industries has no financial interest in the Mangrove Mountain landfill site.

What does Planet Ark see as the biggest issues in the waste and recycling industry?

The waste management and recycling industry is not perfect and if it were, there would be no role for Planet Ark to play. We actively work with government, business and the community to improve waste management and recycling practices that will help protect the environment and lead to a more sustainable society. The key issues are:

- **The differential landfill levies between states**

One of the biggest issues for the industry is the variability of laws between states, particularly those relating to the cost of safely processing and transporting waste. Some states and territories enforce a cost-per-tonne for any waste going to landfill, while others charge no levy. This means, for example, an operator in metropolitan NSW will need to pay a levy of \$138.20 per tonne to send waste to landfill, whereas in QLD the

waste levy is \$0. Planet Ark also supports calls for legislative reforms that will make the waste management and recycling industry more equitable.

- **Illegal dumping**

Partly as a consequence of waste landfill levies, certain unscrupulous operators have resorted to illegal dumping, which we regard as a despicable practice. Planet Ark strongly supports the laws that exist to prohibit this illegal dumping and encourages governments to provide sufficient resources to their regulators to enforce these laws.

- **Fluctuations in commodity pricing of recycling materials**

The price of recycled materials is linked to the cost of virgin materials. Price reductions for virgin materials reduce the value of recycled materials, making it uneconomic to sell them into the market. This leads to stockpiling of recycled materials in anticipation of better prices in the future, which may be a long time coming. Some solutions are government incentives to encourage the maximum use of recycled material in products and packaging, and support for research and development into new ways of using recycled materials.

What is the Proximity Principle?

The Proximity Principle is a regulatory tool introduced by the NSW Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) to address the fact that the removal of the waste levy in Queensland had led to the practice of trucking waste interstate to avoid paying the levy in NSW and Victoria. The regulation aims to address the environmental impacts in NSW associated with the unnecessary transportation of waste over long distances and ensure local communities play an active role in waste management by taking greater responsibility for the waste they generate.

The Protection of the Environment Operations (Waste) Regulation 2014 (the Waste Regulation) makes it an offence to transport waste generated in NSW by motor vehicle for disposal more than 150 kilometres from the place of generation, unless the waste is transported to one of the two nearest lawful disposal facilities to the place of generation (even if that facility is located more than 150 kilometres from its place of generation).

Why is there no waste levy in Queensland?

A waste levy was introduced in Qld by the then Labor government effective from December 2011. When the LNP came to government in 2012 it removed the levy. The subsequent Labor government has not reintroduced the levy. Waste levies in other states have helped increase their resource recovery rates. We feel it is essential that the states work together for a standardised levy to create a 'level playing field' and remove any perverse economic incentives to truck waste interstate.

How does Planet Ark decide which organisations to partner with?

The single most important criterion in our decision-making is the genuine determination on the part of the organisation to create positive environmental change. The financial capacity and cultural readiness of the organisation to implement environmental improvements are also vital.

Before entering into any relationship, whether an endorsement, partnership or sponsorship, Planet Ark conducts extensive evaluation, including environmental assessments. In summary, after careful evaluation Planet Ark chooses to work with businesses and industry

that are committed to reducing their environmental impact and achieving long-lasting sustainability goals.

In what ways does Planet Ark work with businesses?

Planet Ark's work with businesses falls into three main categories: partnerships, sponsorships and endorsements. A company may be involved in one or more of these relationships.

A partnership with Planet Ark is a truly comprehensive arrangement. We only partner with businesses that are on their sustainability journey to help them improve the environmental impacts of their products and services. We work very closely with our partners offering support, expertise, guidance and verification of their activities to help them become a more sustainable business. In return, Planet Ark receives untied funding to support our various campaigns and activities. Our partners can utilise the Planet Ark brand in their own marketing and communications to help raise awareness of their positive environmental actions.

A sponsorship is a more traditional arrangement where an organisation agrees to sponsor a particular Planet Ark campaign. We look for sponsors of good repute and with sustainability programs. Without these sponsors' commitment our free campaigns and information services wouldn't go ahead.

Planet Ark's endorsement program is designed to help consumers choose more environmentally responsible products. The 'Planet Ark Endorsed' logo makes it easy for consumers to recognise the more responsible, good quality and effective products on the supermarket shelf - and it's a terrific way of supporting our community campaigns. Planet Ark goes through a rigorous assessment and verification of products we endorse, to ensure they meet the excellent environmental credentials consumers expect of us. Endorsees pay Planet Ark a fee for use of the Planet Ark logo on their product or service – our tick of approval for its environmental credentials. It is important to note that this endorsement is for a product not a company.

The funding we receive from our partners, sponsors and endorsees also enables us to continue our work to educate and assist other businesses, schools and consumers on how to reduce their environmental impact and achieve their sustainability goals.