



Power tool battery recycling amps up

NORTHSIDERS can drop off old power tool batteries free for recycling.

Given the amount of home restorations and renovations around Queensland's capital in recent years, it is fitting that Brisbane has been chosen as the location for a free new power tool battery recycling program, launched yesterday by Queensland Minister for Environment Dr Steven Miles and the Australian Battery Recycling Initiative (ABRI).

Power Tool Batteryback is a free pilot program designed to collect and recycle used power tool batteries as a way of measuring the demand and structure of a future, permanent program.

More than three million used power tool batteries (approximately 2,010 tonnes) reached their end-of-life in 2012-13. The recycling rate for these batteries is unknown but is likely to be less than 5 per cent.

Many power tool batteries are made from nickel cadmium (NiCd) and are amongst the most hazardous batteries in the waste stream. Each battery contains around 18 per cent cadmium, a toxic and a known carcinogen, resulting in up to 360 tonnes of cadmium from used power tool batteries currently going to landfill each year.

Under the pilot program, customers can collect their old power tool batteries of any brand name that weigh less than 500g, visit a participating hardware store in the Brisbane area and drop the batteries into the specially marked bins completely free of charge.

The batteries will be collected and sorted by battery type or chemistry, and then transported overseas for final processing and recycling under strict regulations

and standards. As community awareness and collection volumes increase, local processing of alkaline and lithium batteries may become commercially viable in addition to the current local processing capabilities of lead acid batteries.

The pilot program will be available until June 30, 2016, subject to the available project budget and collection target. The aim of the pilot is to gather feedback from customers about the program specifically and power tool batteries generally.

The Power Tool Batteryback pilot project is an initiative of the Australian Battery Recycling Initiative (ABRI) and funded by the Queensland Department of Environment and Heritage Protection. The participating retailers are Bunnings, Masters and Trade Tools.

ABRI is a not-for-profit association, made up of industry, government and environment groups, which was established in 2008 to promote responsible environmental management of batteries at end-of-life. ABRI is working closely with government agencies, manufacturers, retailers and other stakeholders to develop a national stewardship program for all used handheld batteries.

ABRI members Planet Ark, Infoactiv, MRI and Australia Post are working together to deliver this program on behalf of ABRI.

Local drop off points include Trade-Tools Geebung, 66 Newman Road, Geebung and Bunnings Carseldine, 1925 Gympie Road, Carseldine.