

Best Stewardship Outcomes – Collective Scheme | B-cycle – Battery Stewardship Council

Creating a new value chain for batteries

B-cycle is Australia's official battery recycling scheme, managed by the Battery Stewardship Council (BSC), funded by battery industry manufacturers and importers, and supported across the full supply chain including, distributors, retailers, collectors, and recyclers. The Scheme aims to create a responsible battery lifecycle, from helping consumers buy better batteries for the planet, to safe use, and convenient and sustainable recycling when batteries reach the end of their useful life.

A national, government-backed, ACCC-authorized stewardship initiative, B-cycle focuses on traceability and accreditation for everyone across the supply chain. It is committed to a robust, transparent process that works to safely manage end-of-life batteries from recycling right through to using the recovered materials in the manufacturing of new batteries.

To foster a circular economy for batteries, minimise harm, and maximise resource recovery, B-cycle is funded by a levy on imports, uses enterprise-to-enterprise (E2E) agreements to encourage participation, enables industry to provide a convenient safe network for battery drop off, and educates consumers about risks and disposal options. The program has an extensive verification process which includes auditing Scheme participants to verify obligations such as levy payments, scheme promotion, safety, and traceability. These elements underpin the governance of the Scheme and maintain stakeholder confidence.

Handling, using, storing, and recycling batteries is not without risk. According to BSC, there are 5 million batteries in household across Australia, and 57% consider it acceptable to dispose of batteries in general waste and recycling bins. B-cycle is working hard to change this perception, since batteries that end up in landfill leach toxic materials into the environment and cause fires in the waste stream. Batteries can also pose risks to human health, with 20 children visiting emergency departments in Australia each week suspected of having inserted or ingested a button battery. To support this work, BSC released two battery safety campaigns aimed at consumers, [Never Bin Your Batteries](#), reinforcing that batteries should not be placed in general waste or recycling bins, and [This Tape Saves Lives](#), about the importance of taping used battery terminals for fire prevention and child safety.

There are five key areas that B-cycle is focused on to ensure batteries are managed safely when they have reached the end of their useful life, and to also ensure that those that distribute batteries into the Australian market are part of the solution by funding the scheme and supporting the broader work of BSC.

Traceability

Independent assurance is sought to show participants in the Scheme that all batteries collected from the more than 5,000 accredited collection points across Australia, are safely managed and recycled. This is designed eliminate any single point of failure across the value chain and aims to build consumer confidence in the process, ultimately increasing participation in the Scheme.

Accreditation

All organisations engaged in the battery collection and recycling network are accredited by B-cycle, which involves compliance with B-cycle's accreditation protocols, submission of evidence, and cooperation with audits and verification activities. It also aims to educate participants on the safe handling, storing, transporting and disposal of batteries to the highest environmental standard. This process supports participants by enhancing internal management systems which, in turn, assists in risk reduction, regulatory compliance and demonstrates best practice to insurance brokers.

Awareness

BSC recently commissioned a research agency specialising in tracking sustainable consumer practices to survey Australian households on battery use, handling, disposal, and safety. The study, conducted in 2021 and 2023, has shown a 32% increase in battery recycling through a B-cycle battery collection point. More than ever, consumers have confidence in the scheme and B-cycle expects this to continue to grow with the rollout of its new battery safety consumer campaign that promotes the safe handling and disposal of end-of-life batteries.

E2E agreements

The BSC is committed to increasing industry participation in the scheme. Those who place batteries into the Australian market within the B-cycle scheme, can be confident that when batteries reach the end of their useful life they are managed safely and sustainably. Agreements developed by the BSC allow participants to use their purchasing power to actively manage free riders and influence their involvement in the voluntary scheme.

Social and economic benefits

B-cycle commissioned the University of Technology's Institute for Sustainable Futures to conduct a lifecycle analysis of battery recycling. The resulting report identified that the scheme helps to address climate change and protect Australia's energy security by:

'Placing highly purified recycled materials from batteries onto the materials market has the potential to offset CO2e emissions of battery materials supply by around 50%.'

Reclaimed materials from recycled batteries are used to manufacture new high-value products, such as metal tools and fertilisers.

The B-cycle scheme also provides rebates to participants, including collectors, sorters, and recyclers. In 2023, through B-cycle the BSC injected over \$11 million into the recycling sector.

Importantly, as an industry-led and funded initiative, the scheme is committed to working with the industry to advocate for a voluntary approach to battery stewardship in Australia.