

20th March 2005

Media alert

Attention: Radio and TV talkback hosts/producers

A nation of wasters: New report

The Australia Institute has released a new report showing that Australians waste some \$10.5 billion worth of the goods and services they buy each year. Based on a survey of 1644 Australians by Roy Morgan Research the findings include:

- On average, each Australian household wasted \$1226 on items purchased but unused in 2004. This exceeds spending by Australian Governments on roads and universities.
- Australians threw away \$5.3 billion in unused food last year, which represents more than 13 times the amount donated by Australian households to overseas aid agencies in 2003.
- Other items accounting for huge levels of waste included clothes, books, CDs, unused gym membership, unused rooms in increasingly large Australian family homes and unused motor vehicles in two- and three-car garages.
- Young people waste more than older people.
- Much buying is done on credit, with consumers paying extra through interest.
- ACT residents were Australia's most wasteful, followed by NSW and WA, then Victoria and Queensland. South Australians and Tasmanians are the least wasteful.

The study found that the level of wasteful consumption is becoming unsustainable, with serious implications for future waste management.

A summary of the report can be found under What's New on the Institute's website www.tai.org.au.

For comment please contact

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(Note: Monday 21 March is a public holiday in the ACT.)

The Australia Institute is a public-interest think tank based in Canberra.