

Contacts:

Lyn Mayes, The Packaging Forum  
Phone 021 471 261; [lynmayes@madworld.co.nz](mailto:lynmayes@madworld.co.nz)

Andrew Hewett, Chair Public Place Recycling Scheme  
021629106 [andrew.hewett@ccamatil.com](mailto:andrew.hewett@ccamatil.com)



# Press Release

## **Industry, Community and Government partnerships to recycle soft plastic bags gain momentum**

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In July the Packaging Forum announced a new initiative to introduce recycling bins so that shoppers can take back their used soft plastic bags to supermarkets and retail premises. The project is funded by industry with matched funding from the Government's Waste Minimisation Fund during the trial and will promote the Government's Love NZ recycling brand.

The new recycling bins will be in New World, PAK'nSAVE and The Warehouse stores in Auckland by Labour Day and will then roll out to Hamilton to include Countdown stores with further expansion to Wellington, Canterbury, Otago, Bay of Plenty, Manawatu and other regions over three years.

Today the contract for servicing stores in Auckland was awarded to Abilities Group. Abilities was established in 1959 to provide meaningful work and the opportunity for personal development for people with disabilities and the Glenfield based organization now employs over 130 people who might struggle to find paid work otherwise.

Peter Fraher, Managing Director said:-

"We are delighted to partner with The Packaging Forum and REDCycle providing collections from stores, baling the soft plastics ready for recycling. Abilities is the very epitome of sustainability. We were established to help drive social change with respect to employment for people with disabilities. Our operational focus is on helping reduce the environmental impact of products and their packaging and we operate within a traditional business model providing customer services at commercial rates."

Lyn Mayes, Manager of the Public Place Recycling Scheme which will manage the project said:

"It is incredible how much traction this project has got in such a short time. Securing Abilities as a service provider is a great step forward as they are aligned with our sustainability objectives and already work with a number of our members. The project involved brands across all the different soft plastic bag types – bread bags, frozen food bags, confectionery wrap, pasta and rice bags, toilet paper packaging, sanitary hygiene packaging and courier envelopes.



“Birds Eye, Cottonsoft, Goodman Fielder, Huggies, Kleenex, Nestle, New Zealand Post, Pams, SunRice, Astron, Elldex Plastics and Replas will all bring their support to promotions by the major retailers to help familiarize shoppers with this new type of recycling. This project provides a solution to a problem which most of us have - not being able to recycle this packaging at kerbside.”

Andrew Hewett, Chair of The Public Place Recycling Scheme said:-

“In just a few short weeks, we have galvanized industry, put in place a logistics solution and are in the process of placing orders for new recycling bins. We are also designing promotions to help educate Aucklanders initially about what they can recycle— basically any soft plastic packaging they can scrunch in a ball. By the time we go live, we will have a store locator app on our website <http://www.recycling.kiwi.nz/soft-plastics/> telling people where they

can recycle.

Thanks to the funding provided by the Government’s Waste Minimisation Fund, we will be able to move faster and to more regions than we would otherwise be able to do and as importantly their financial support shows that this is a true partnership between Industry, Government and the Community working together to promote recycling and the Love NZ brand. We are delighted to have Abilities working with us as our Community partner.”

**ENDS...**

### ***For Information***

The REDcycle Program is a supermarket-based recycling program that invites consumers to gather together all their single-use shopping bags, as well as food and grocery packaging that isn’t able to be recovered via kerbside collection, and take them to their nearest supermarket drop off point next time they visit. The collected soft plastic material is used as the resource to manufacture new recycled-plastic items such as sturdy outdoor furniture, signage and traffic control products suitable for use in schools, parks and other public spaces. The program was launched in Australia in 2012, and now has drop off points in around 580 supermarkets.