



## MEDIA RELEASE

### EAT YOUR CRUSTS: PIZZA BOXES A LARGE SLICE OF RECYCLING CONTAMINATION

**EMBARGOED UNTIL SEPTEMBER 22**

Australian's pizza palette has increased during the COVID-19 pandemic, and so too has the potential for contamination in recycling bins, according to the peak body for Australian recycling.

One of the biggest recent increases in contaminated items ending up in kerbside recycling bins are pizza boxes with remaining food scraps, and that increase is due to more pizza being delivered during the pandemic, according to the Australian Council of Recycling (ACOR).

ACOR CEO Pete Shmigel said: "The simple message is: pizza boxes are fully recyclable, but leftover pizza and food scraps ain't. Eat your crusts, fellow Australians - it's better for the environment not to leave 'em in the box."

Some key points:

- Although pizza boxes themselves are recyclable and often go back into new pizza boxes, the food scraps often left in them, including pizza crusts and melted cheese, are not. Food scraps left in pizza boxes contaminate the rest of the mixed paper recycling stream they end up in.
- Nearly 100% of Australia's pizza boxes are made from recycled content and they are a greater way to keep closing the loop - if we eliminate the scraps.
- Pizza is the second most-consumed fast food in Australia, after burgers, and the fast-food favourite has enjoyed a double-digit jump in demand since the pandemic.<sup>1</sup>
- Some 20 million Aussies are likely to have had takeaway pizza last year, and Australians spent on average \$91 each on pizza last year alone<sup>2</sup>.
- Australia has the 8th highest per capita consumption of pizza in the world<sup>3</sup>, and growth in pizza consumption prior to COVID was around 9.1% per year.<sup>4</sup>

Shmigel further said "We've seen overall kerbside recycling contamination rates going up to as high as 20% during the pandemic period, and a proportion of that is food scraps as people get more packaged home delivery.

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.smh.com.au/business/companies/deodorant-sales-on-the-nose-as-shopping-habits-change-in-the-pandemic-20200904-p55sbj.html>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.businessinsider.com.au/chart-what-people-spend-on-pizza-in-different-countries-2016-4>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.insidermonkey.com/blog/11-countries-that-consume-the-most-pizza-349657/?singlepage=1>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.pmq.com/the-2019-pizza-power-report-a-state-of-the-industry-analysis/>

“This year, contamination rates have hit very high levels due to changes in consumption and unacceptable items being placed in kerbside recycling bins. Unacceptable soft plastics are another contaminating material that is finding its way into kerbside recycling bins including prepared meal trays, plastic bags, shipping packaging and bubble wrap.

“We know that Aussies are trying to do the right thing by placing their pizza boxes in their kerbside recycling bins, but at the risk of sounding like mum or dad, we need them to eat their crusts to make sure the box is recycled into a new box.

“The next time you order that pizza, please remember to recycle right rather than ‘wish-cycle’. Clean out your pizza boxes before placing them in recycling,” said Pete Shmigel.

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