Australasian Recycling Label Program Processes – Submissions

This document outlines the process for submissions in the Australasian Recycling Label (ARL) program. Submissions can be made be any stakeholder of the ARL program, by submitting the appropriate submission form to the ARL team.

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1. Submission Types

There are 4 key criteria for recyclability under the ARL program. These are:
a. 80% of the population has convenient access to a service that collects the packaging.
b. The item can be recovered and sorted in a stream where at least 70% of its weight can be recycled into another product, excluding energy.
c. The item can be accurately sorted through a Material Recovery Facility.
d. There is a valuable end-market for the reprocessed material and product.

Criteria A and B are defined in the Sustainable Packaging Guidelines and are therefore not able to be exempted through the ARL program. Submissions may be made where packaging is considered Not Recyclable due to potential sortation and end-market issues. The organisation will need to demonstrate that criteria A, B, C and D are met through the submission process.

The types of submissions available in the ARL program are:

Recyclability Evaluation Submission: An application made by an ARL program stakeholder to dispute a recyclability outcome in PREP. Refer to the below process and the ARL program recyclability evaluation submission process.

> *Approval of the submission permits an exemption to override the disputed Not Recyclable classification to an agreed alternative classification (e.g. Recyclable, Recyclable with Lost Value, Conditionally Recyclable) under the ARL program.*

Consumer Behaviour Submission: An application made by an ARL program stakeholder to add a new consumer behaviour to the ARL program. Refer to the below process and the ARL program consumer behaviour submission process.

> *A consumer behaviour under the ARL program is a recognised behaviour intended to be followed by consumers to improve the recyclability of a packaging component. Consumer behaviours are communicated via the consumer instruction text located on a Conditionally Recyclable ARL.*

Alternative Destination Submission: An application made by an ARL program stakeholder to add a new alternative destination to the ARL program. Refer to the below process and ARL program alternative destination submission process.

> *An Alternative Destination is a recycling scheme that operates separately from kerbside collection. Alternative Destinations must be financially and easily accessible to consumers and support high value recycling outcomes and end markets. Alternative Destinations are communicated using a Conditionally Recyclable ARL with the geotag symbol and accompanying instructions.*

The process of review for the above three submission types is detailed in this document.

Soft Plastics Submission: An application made by an ARL program stakeholder

to dispute a recyclability outcome in PREP, specifically where soft plastics have been assessed as Not Recyclable in Australia. This submission is relevant to Australia only.

Approval of the submission permits an exemption to override the Not Recyclable classification to Check Locally under the ARL program.

Fibre Submission: An application made by an ARL program stakeholder to dispute a recyclability outcome in PREP, or to confirm the recyclability classification for fibre-based packaging in Australia. This submission is relevant to Australia only.

Approval of the submission permits an exemption to override the disputed Not Recyclable classification to an agreed alternative classification (e.g., Recyclable, Recyclable with Lost Value, Conditionally Recyclable) under the ARL program.

The process of review for the above two submission types is detailed in the Fibre Submission and Soft Plastics Submission process documents.

2. Roles and Responsibilities

2.1 Applicant

The Applicant is responsible for:
- Completing the appropriate submission form, and relevant submission criteria forms.
- Providing complete and accurate information to APCO regarding their submission.
- Conducting testing and research in accordance with APCO's requirements for each submission type.
- Where further information is requested through the Submissions Process, the Applicant is responsible for providing this information at least one week prior to the next applicable committee meeting, as required.
- Meet the ongoing compliance obligations outlined in Section 5.6.

2.2 ARL Team

The ARL team is responsible for:
- The timely communication between the applicant, key industry stakeholders, and relevant committees.
- Collating the industry research that is associated with a submission. This may include further requests for research arising from the committees.
- Supporting the applicant to understand the feedback of the committees.
- Reviewing submitted information to ensure the response is adequate for referral to the committees.
- Where necessary, working with internal APCO teams, including the Packaging Transformation team to support the review of the submission.

2.3 Material Stewardship Committees

The Material Stewardship Committees (MSCs) are responsible for providing technical insights from across the value chain on relevant submissions for the Australian market.

These technical insights form a technical recommendation to the Internal Review Committee (IRC).

These recommendations may require further research or information from the Applicant. In this instance, the Committee shall identify the criteria for assessing this additional information in line with the recommendation made.

2.4 New Zealand ARL Steering Committee

The New Zealand ARL Steering Committee (NZ ASC) is responsible for providing marketing, technical and consumer behaviour insights from across the value chain on relevant submissions for the New Zealand Market.

These insights are collated into a consolidated overall recommendation to the IRC in accordance with the NZ ASC Charter.

These recommendations may require further research or information from the Applicant. In this instance, the Committee shall identify the criteria for assessing this additional information in line with the recommendation made.

2.5 Internal Review Committee

The IRC is responsible for deciding whether a submission has satisfied or not satisfied the submission criteria for each submission type.

The IRC shall consider all evidence provided, including any recommendation from the MSCs and the NZ ASC. *Refer to the* ARL program IRC charter *for more information about this committee.* for more information about this committee.

Decisions made by the IRC shall be logged by the ARL team and shared with the technical committees for their information.

2.6 Independent Review Panel

The IRP's involvement is only triggered by an ongoing dispute, defined by a submission that has been re-reviewed at least twice and there is maintained disagreement from the Applicant on the IRC decision.

The IRP is responsible for reviewing whether APCO has done its due diligence in the assessment of a submission and whether the appropriate processes have been followed. The IRP shall produce an independent report to demonstrate the findings. *See* ARL program IRP process *for further detail on the IRP Process.*

3. Who may make a submission?

A submission may be made by any stakeholder of the ARL program. This includes, but is not limited to a:
- Brand owner

- Manufacturer/supplier
- APCO
- Industry association
- Consumer
- Non-government organisation
- Government

A submission may be made at any time via the APCO Member Centre or by contacting the ARL team, arl@apco.org.au.

4. Required documentation

Online submission form
To make a submission, the relevant submission form shall be completed and submitted to the ARL team. These forms are found on the APCO Member Centre under the Forms & Submissions section, or by contacting the ARL team.

Submission criteria forms
Each submission type requires specific submission criteria forms to be completed to evidence how the format/material, consumer behaviour or alternative destination being proposed for inclusion meets the ARL program criteria.

Submission criteria forms are the primary tool for communicating information about the submission between the Applicant and relevant committees. Applicant information can be anonymised at request to ensure integrity in the review.

A separate supporting resource has been created for each submission type, see:
- ARL program recyclability evaluation submission process
- ARL program alternative destination submission process
- ARL program consumer behaviour submission process
- ARL program soft plastics submissions process
- ARL program fibre submissions process

Each supporting resource outlines the relevant criteria for each submission type. The supporting resources also include the submission criteria forms that must be completed for each submission type – in some cases, this may be more than one.

Other documentation
Each submission type may also require other information or documentation for review – e.g. PREP reports. Any further documentation required will be outlined in the online submission form and the supporting resources for each submission type.

All submission documents, including supporting evidence for the decision, are saved in APCO's files, alongside all correspondence with the Applicant.

5. Review of a submission

The ARL team is responsible for coordinating and sharing information between the relevant parties and collating additional information as requested by the committees. The submission review process for Australia and New Zealand is shown in Figure 2 and 3.
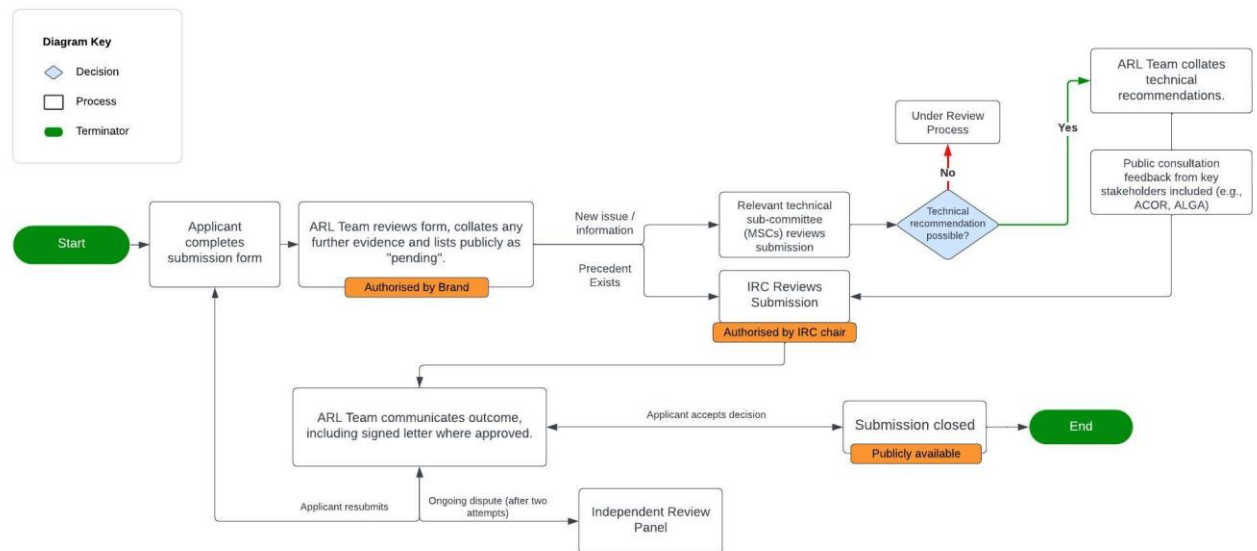

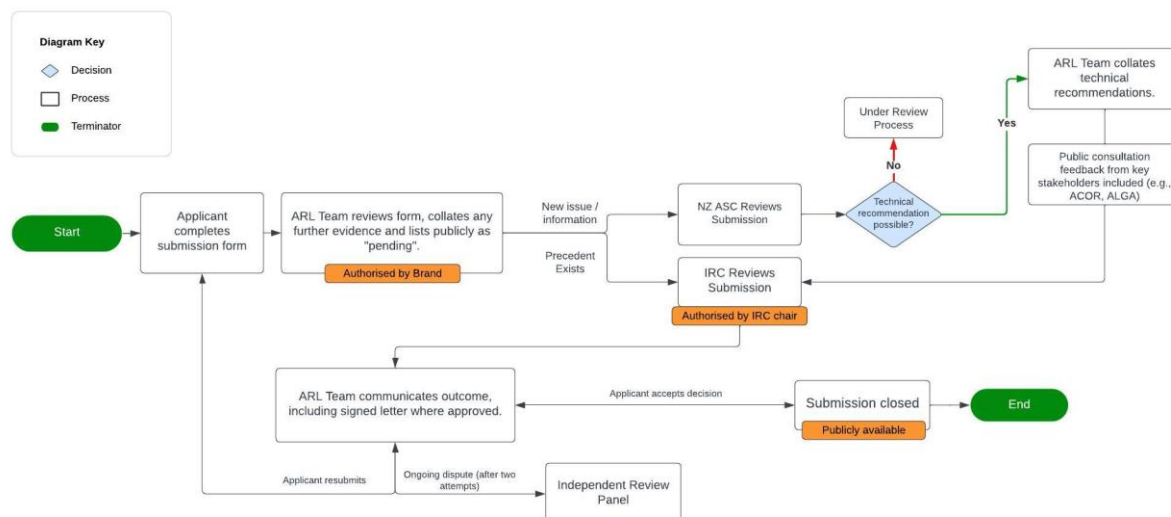*Figure 1: Overview of submission process – Australia*

Figure 2: Overview of submission process - New Zealand

5.1 Initial review

The ARL team supports the Applicant to complete all the required information in the submission criteria form/s. The ARL team reviews the submission and collates any further industry research into the submission form with the support of the ARL team and Packaging Transformation team. This includes a review of local and international resources on best practice design for recyclability, as well as reaching out to local stakeholders for insights into current recycling across Australia and New Zealand.

5.2 Stakeholder and public consultation

Where precedent does not already exist for the submission, the ARL team progresses the submission through public and industry consultation.

For the public consultation, the submission is listed on the ARL website as open for comment. This status remains in place for a minimum of 30 days and invites public feedback on the submission via email directly to the ARL team.

Targeted industry consultation with key stakeholders in the value chain is also conducted to ensure that any impacts to sortation, reprocessing and end markets have been considered. This includes engagement with key stakeholders like the Australian Council of Recycling's (ACOR) Kerbside Industry Leadership Group and the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) where relevant, to capture feedback from stakeholders that may be impacted by the change including recyclers, reprocessors and local councils.

Feedback is collated by the ARL team, and Applicants will be invited to provide any further evidence before being included in the original submission criteria form for MSC recommendation and IRC decision. Any material objections to the approval are provided to the IRC for consideration and response.

5.3 MSC recommendation

At the conclusion of the public and industry consultation period, the ARL team collates and verifies all feedback received into a paper to be presented to the relevant MSC. The MSC then provides feedback by way of a recommendation to the IRC. This recommendation could be to approve, adjust or deny the proposed threshold or update.

5.4 Internal Review Committee decision

The ARL team collates the feedback from the consultation period and the MSC recommendations into a paper to be presented for decision at the next closest IRC. The IRC shall deem the submission criteria satisfied or not satisfied and decide to approve or deny accordingly.

Where a recommendation is unable to be provided by the relevant committees, the review may follow the *Under Review* process.

An applicant may resubmit at any stage. Where a dispute arises and no agreement can be reached, APCO or the Applicant may trigger a review by the Independent Review Panel. *See ARL program IRP process.*

5.5 Communication of submission outcomes

Following the IRC decision, the ARL team will communicate the outcome of the submission to the Applicant and outline next steps – e.g. Approval, expected timelines for implementation in PREP, resubmission, etc.

Where the IRC has found a submission to satisfy or not satisfy the criteria, this decision shall be communicated to the relevant committees for noting.

To ensure timely communication of the outcome, the ARL team shall circulate the outcome to the relevant committees following the approval of the minutes from the IRC meeting.

The communication of the outcome of a submission shall include the attachments of the completed submission document(s) with all relevant feedback and responses.

The communication of a submission unable to be approved shall state the criteria that were unable to be satisfied.

The status and outcome of the submission will be communicated via the ARL program public consultation table on the ARL website.

5.6 Ongoing compliance obligations

Following IRC approval of a submission, the Applicant shall receive a formal letter confirming the material/format, consumer behaviour or alternative destination which has now been approved.

The letter will detail:

- The type of submission approval provided and, where applicable if an exemption to the ARL program has been granted.
- Who the letter of approval can be shared with and for what purpose.
- How long the letter of approval is applicable for
- When the letter of approval may no longer apply
- The requirement that, should any changes to ARL program thresholds (PREP thresholds) be announced during the period over which the letter is applicable for, Applicants must re-assess the material/format to confirm any change to their outcomes. Such a change will override the approval and the Applicant must either update the ARL logo accordingly or seek re-approval from APCO for the Submission.
- Any further ARL program submission compliance obligations that Applicants must meet.

This approval letter shall include an expiry date of not more than 24 months from the date of approval or less at the discretion of the IRC.

The Applicant shall notify APCO of any material changes to the packaging, market or local reprocessing capacity that may materially impact the ability to satisfy the relevant submission criteria within 5 business days of these changes occurring.

APCO reserves the right to amend submission criteria based on new information that APCO receives regarding recyclability outcomes. In addition, APCO reserves the right to rescind a Submission at any time should new information arise. In this instance, APCO will work with the applicant and APCO Members to transition the material appropriately.

The Applicant may re-submit at the expiry date for a further period of approval.

Document Control

Version	Date	Changes	Authorised by:
1	18/08/2021	Original	Sarah Sannen
2	12/12/2021	TAC and MAC to ASC and IRC Transparency and communication processes Reference to new submissions forms Clarify roles and responsibilities Clarify who can make an submission Updates to align with ISEAL	Sarah Sannen
3	16/02/2023	Changes to committee structure to reflect MSCs Introduction of ongoing compliance requirements	Sarah Sannen
4	4/12/2023	Changes to reflect the updated ARL governance structure Updates to the communication of submission outcomes given the new ARL website	Song-Hee Warrell
5	15/09/2024	Longevity of approved submissions	Anneliese Syder

6. Proposed Future Changes

Proposed Updates
Process for supplier led applications and PREP updates