

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Who is MobileMuster and is it part of your organisation?

MobileMuster is the mobile telecommunications industry's product stewardship program, and it is managed by the Australian Mobile Telecommunications Association (AMTA) on behalf of its members. It is a voluntary, not-for-profit scheme that is funded by all the major handset manufacturers and network carriers to provide a free mobile phone recycling program in Australia.

What does MobileMuster do?

MobileMuster provides a free and secure recycling program for mobile phones and accessories as well as other e-waste such as modems, landline phones, smart home tech, and wearables. Partnering with local councils, mobile phone retailers, repair stores, other retailers, schools, charities, and other organisations, it is able to provide a collection network of more than 3,000 drop-off points Australia-wide, with a MobileMuster drop-off point within 10km for 96% of the population. This network is supported by a free post-back option. MobileMuster also raises awareness and provides resources about reuse options and recycling of unused mobile phones and other e-waste.

Why choose MobileMuster?

The award-winning scheme is accredited by the Australian government, which means it has the government's stamp of approval as it achieves sustainable outcomes, aligns with circular economy principles, and has high industry support. To be and remain accredited, MobileMuster has to continuously demonstrate to the government that it is recycling to the highest environmental standard, and it contributes to Australia's recycling and waste reduction objectives.

What products does MobileMuster accept for recycling?

MobileMuster collects:

- All brands of mobile phones, their chargers and accessories

From 1 July 2022 the following products are accepted at your local Telstra, Optus or Vodafone stores:

- Modems, landline phones and TV streaming devices
- Smart speakers and smart digital hubs (only Apple, Amazon, Google products)
- Smartwatches, smart pens, tracking tags and VR headsets (only Apple, Amazon, Fitbit, Google products)

Why won't you take other electronic waste such as laptops and computers?

As the scheme is voluntarily funded by the mobile telecommunications industry, companies take financial responsibility for these types of products that they manufacture and/or distribute. On 1 July 2022, MobileMuster expanded the scheme to also include network connectivity products, smart home technology, and wearables and peripherals. There is an existing product stewardship scheme for TVs and computers that is run by the government,

which gives Australians free access to collection and recycling services. To find a collection point for these products and others, check out recyclingnearyou.com.au

Why should I recycle my unused mobile phone and other e-waste?

When you recycle, you reduce the need to extract and use raw materials, saving our natural resources in the process. Recycling also improves air quality by reducing the demand for power used in mining, refining, processing, and shipping of raw materials. Additionally, recycling prevents pollution and minimises hazardous waste going to landfill.

Independent research has shown that there are about 26 million unused phones currently being stored in Australia, four million of which are unusable. If we recycled all these phones, we would make a significant positive impact on human and environmental health.

How much of a mobile phone is recycled?

MobileMuster's recycling partner is a global leader in e-waste recycling and its process can recover more than 95% of the materials in a mobile phone. They can even recycle your plastic cases and accessories, and the paper and cardboard from your mobile phone packaging.

Materials that are extracted from your mobile phone include glass from the screen, aluminium from the phone casing, valuable metals such as gold, silver, palladium, platinum, and copper from the circuit board, as well as metals such as steel and a mixed metal compound of graphene, nickel, cobalt, and lithium from the lithium batteries.

What happens to mobile phones and other e-waste once they're collected for recycling?

Mobile phones, accessories, and other accepted e-waste are transported to one of two recycling facilities in Sydney and Melbourne. Products are dismantled manually with components separated into streams – circuit boards, metal, glass, plastics, and batteries

Some plastics and metals are processed in Australia. Circuit boards, batteries, and other plastics are processed by MobileMuster's recycling partner at their facility in Singapore. These materials are recovered and used in the manufacture of a range of products, including mobile phones, glass bottles, recycled plastic park benches, other electronics, mobile phone batteries, and stainless-steel products.

Nothing we collect is reused or resold. MobileMuster's priority is to recover the majority of the materials to use in the manufacture of new products.

What happens to the data that may still be on my phone when it's recycled?

Consumers are encouraged to delete or transfer data they want to keep from the device before dropping it off for recycling, and MobileMuster offers guides on how to do this on its website. However, any data left on the phone is destroyed during the recycling process.

What happens if somebody takes or steals a phone from a collection point?



As a collection partner, we keep our MobileMuster collection unit in a visible and secure location where it can be monitored by staff to deter theft. If a theft incident does occur, MobileMuster works closely with local police to recover the device(s) and bring charges where necessary.

If a mobile phone contains so many precious metals, including gold and silver, is MobileMuster making money off the phones we drop off?

No. MobileMuster is a not-for-profit program and continues to invest millions of dollars to enhance the scheme. The monetary value of materials recovered from phones to-date is in fact, a fraction of what has been spent on collecting, processing, and promoting the scheme.

Do mobile phones end up in developing countries for recycling and how does MobileMuster ensure that recycling occurs at the highest environmental standard?

Everything collected through the MobileMuster program is dismantled in Australia. Some materials are processed and recycled in Australia, while others are done overseas, including Singapore, where there is the appropriate infrastructure, capacity, and market demand.

MobileMuster believes in transparency and accountability, so we ensure that our recycling partner maintains the relevant accreditation and regular audits are conducted on the recycling process.

What is product stewardship?

Product stewardship is an approach to managing the environmental impacts of products and materials throughout their lifecycle, from production to disposal. It acknowledges that waste management is a shared responsibility and enables those who are involved in designing, manufacturing, and selling products to be proactive in ensuring that their products and materials are managed in a way that reduces environmental and human health impacts throughout their lifecycles and across the supply chain.

What is a circular economy?

Our current economy is linear, meaning we take materials from the Earth, make products from them, use them, and eventually throw them out. A circular economy on the other hand, is based on three principles that are driven by product design – eliminate waste and pollution in the first instance, circulate products and materials at their highest value, and regenerate nature. Recycling, resource recovery, and re-manufacturing are all actions that support a circular economy.

