

# Recycling plastics

## Ko te hangarua i ngā kirihou



Recycling plastics is difficult so most waste plastic is not recycled

### Te mahi hangarua What is recycling?

Recycling is a process where waste plastics are sorted, melted and made into new plastic products. Ultimately, each time a piece of plastic is recycled, the quality of the plastic declines in a process known as 'down-cycling' until it is no longer useful for recycling. Some types of plastic do not melt when heated and cannot be recycled by melting and reshaping into new products.

### He pēwhea te rahi? How much do we recycle?

Globally, an estimated 14% to 18% of plastic waste is recycled, or less than one in five pieces. Many countries, including New Zealand, can only recycle some types of commonly recycled plastic. We send some plastics to be recycled overseas but many countries have stopped accepting waste plastics, resulting in large stockpiles.

### He aha ai? Why are more plastics not recycled?

Plastics are only recycled when it is cost effective to do so. It is often cheaper to make new plastics.

Contamination is also an issue for recycling. Food residues and additives in the original plastic are two major sources of contamination. Another problem for recycling is many products contain different types of plastic or non-plastic material and these must be separated for effective recycling.

Flight Plastics Ltd in Lower Hutt can recycle 8000 tonnes of clear PET annually back into new packaging.



## Take! Kia kaha te mahi Action

Look at the table that shows how easy it is to recycle different types of plastic. Which of these items do you use and put in the recycling bin?

MĀ TĀTOU KATOĀ E ATAWHAI I TE TAONGA AO TUROA

Everyone has a role to play in conservation



# Ease of recycling different types of plastics

<b>Easy to recycle</b> Commonly collected by council recycling schemes	
 PET Polyethylene terephthalate	 HDPE High density polyethylene
<b>Possible to recycle in some places</b> Sometimes recycled	
 LDPE Low density polyethylene	 PP Polypropylene
<b>Difficult to recycle</b> Not often recycled	
 PVC Polyvinyl chloride	 PS Polystyrene
 OTHER	 Other