



Australia: A Nation of Hoarders



Old mobiles, worth keeping?

A report from the mobile phone industry's official recycling program MobileMuster to uncover the real value of old mobile phones.



“Australians are hanging on to between 14 and 16 million old and unused mobile phones, batteries and accessories. Some of these have been forgotten, others serve as a trusty back-up, but many however are broken or simply unused.

“So why are people hoarding old mobile phones? Do people believe their old phones are still worth something? Many will be surprised to learn that for broken phones and those older than four years, the environmental returns are greater than those to your wallet.”

Rose Read, Manager Recycling,
Australian Mobile Telecommunications Association (AMTA).

A nation of hoarders

Australians love mobile phones. There are 24.22 million mobile phone subscribers¹ in a population of 21.8 million², most of whom choose to update their mobile phone every 18 to 24 months.

In 2008/2009 the total net imports of mobile phones was 7.86 million units, or 1,573 tonnes. In 2010, this figure is expected to grow by another 3 per cent as mobile users replace their old phones or migrate to smart or touch screen phones.

So as more new mobile phones enter the country and subscribers upgrade, what are Australians doing with their old phones that are no longer in use? The percentage of people recycling their old phones has lifted from 3 per cent to 9 per cent over the past four years, but as many as 79 per cent of people still choose to keep them at home³.

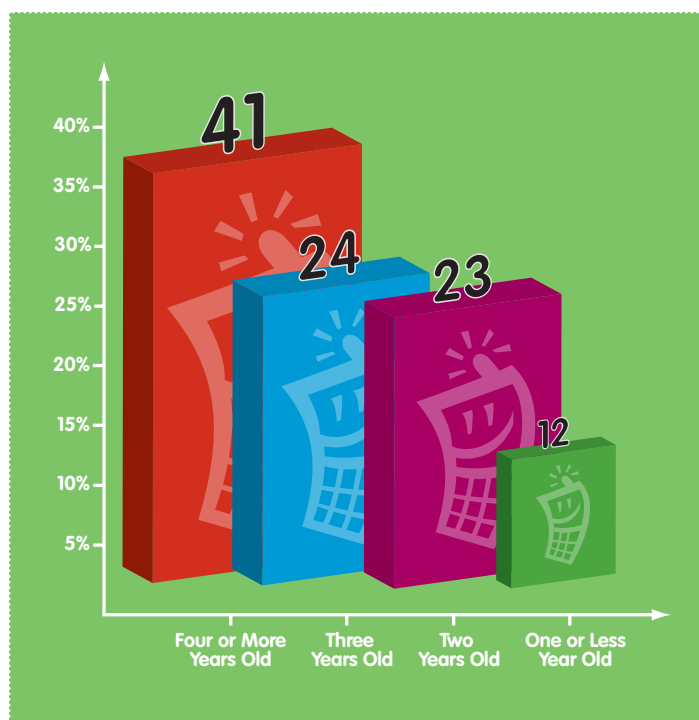
According to the Australian Mobile Telecommunications Association (AMTA), 63 per cent of mobile phone subscribers admit to having one mobile not in use, while 33 per cent admit to having two or more mobile phones stashed away at home⁴.

Of these mobiles, 41 per cent are estimated to be four or more years old and nearly a third are believed to be broken or not in working order⁴.

Since 2005, MobileMuster's educational campaigns have been successful; with less and less Australians throwing old mobile phones into the bin. Only 2 per

cent of mobile phones now end up in landfill, down from 9 per cent in 2005. Seventy-nine per cent of Australians are now aware that old mobile phones can be recycled, compared with only 46 per cent in 2005³.

Despite increased awareness about mobile phone recycling, the bad habit of hoarding continues. So, why are Australians hoarding old mobile phones, accessories and batteries that they no longer use?



Age of phones Australians have in their homes or offices no longer in use⁴.



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Who's Hoarding Old Phones?



Name: Shane O'Neill

Occupation: IT Engineer

Age: 32

Un-used mobile phones at home: 3

Reason for hoarding: I work in IT and am upgrading my phone constantly. I really should recycle the old ones.



Name: Jason Gemenis

Occupation: Designer

Age: 41

Un-used mobile phones at home: 2

Reason for hoarding: I paid a lot of money for my old phones. I keep meaning to try and sell them but I never seem to get around to it.

Isn't it worth something?

For many mobile users, letting go of an old phone can be difficult because they believe it is still worth something. Some also hold onto old phones as a back up; because it has information on it that they might need; or, for its perceived monetary value.

AMTA recently surveyed mobile phone users on what they estimated their old phone to be worth⁴. The results were surprising with some Australians estimating their old phones to be worth as much as \$1,000.

Others were more realistic, with the average estimated re-sale value close to \$27. Interestingly, 35 per cent believed that their phone has no re-sale value, yet they have not recycled them.

According to Dr Pol McCann, program director of the Bachelor of Applied Social Science at the Jansen Newman Institute⁵, individuals are attached to their old mobile phones for a number of reasons.

"For many of us, we think about the initial cost of our old mobile phone and continue to value it at that same level. People also attach sentimental value to old phones, because the messages sent and received are so personal.

"It's important however that we recognise that these are just material items. We should ask ourselves; do we really need to keep them? Is the sentimental value more important than recycling them?" says Dr McCann.



What if I need my old mobile?

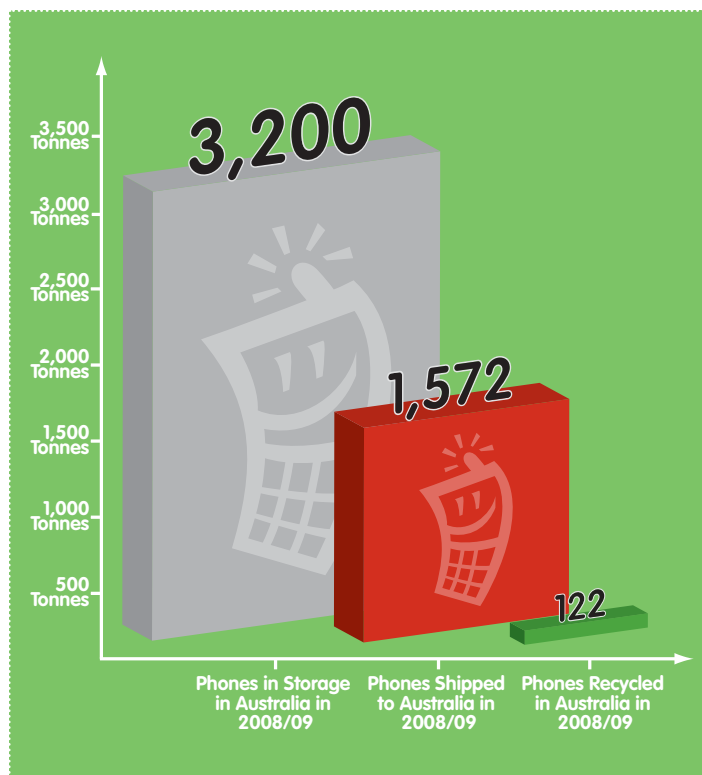
Hanging onto one old mobile as a spare or back-up phone makes sense. According to AMTA, 61 per cent of Australians choose to keep a mobile phone at home for emergencies³.

However, AMTA estimates that as many as one third of the old phones currently not in use don't actually work.

With the majority of Australians replacing or upgrading their mobiles every 18 to 24 months, their previous phone tends to become the back-up, and is usually two to four years old.

However, with each upgrade, Australians are accumulating several ageing or broken phones at home. This results in many mobiles four or more years old sitting unused in cupboards and drawers that would be better off recycled.

Mobiles collected for recycling in 2008/09 equalled 122 tonnes, which included 806,000 handsets and batteries and over 73 tonnes of accessories and associated plastics.



*Annual Net Imports for 2008/09 = 7.86 million units or 1,572 tonnes.
Phones in storage for 2008/09 = 16 million or 3,200 tonnes
(including batteries, chargers or accessories).*



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Who's Hoarding Old Phones?



Name: Jodie Walsh

Occupation: New Mum and Nanny

Age: 32

Un-used mobile phones at home: 3

Reason for hoarding: I know it's not good to throw them in the bin, but I haven't thought about what to do with them next.



Name: Avril Turner

Occupation: Student

Age: 22

Un-used mobile phones at home: 1

Reason for hoarding: I've given one old mobile away to my sister but I like to have a spare phone as back-up. I'm pretty careless with mobile phones.

What's your old mobile phone worth to you?

To discover the real value of used mobile phones, MobileMuster enlisted the help of eBay to see how many second-hand mobiles were available on eBay.com.au⁶.

In the final quarter of 2009, 4,075 used mobile phones were listed on eBay.com.au.

"Used mobile phones and their accessories are popular items for sale on eBay and there certainly are some bargains for buyers. However the final sale price differs significantly depending on the model, condition and most importantly, the age of the mobile phone being listed," says eBay spokesperson Sian Gipslis.

"Looking back at the sales for the last quarter of 2009 there were some newer models that sold very well, however, older models don't tend to bring in the same amount of dollars," continues Mrs Gipslis.

According to eBay.com.au, the most popular phones to be sold were less than two years old, with second hand sales of some of the latest models fetching up to \$500.

Some of the most popular used models to sell were those less than two years old such as the Nokia N and 6000 series, Apple iPhone and some of the latest Samsung models.

Almost 40 per cent of the mobile phones for sale in the quarter were listed on eBay.com.au for around \$20. The majority of these phones were more than four years old, with some two to four years old.



MobileMuster also developed its own 'watchlist' to track the prices of a variety of used phones aged four or more years old listed for sale on eBay.com.au.

"The phones 'watched' by MobileMuster demonstrated that the average sale price for a phone was likely to be just over \$20, with some struggling to find buyers at all. Sellers also had to wear the cost of posting their old phone on eBay.com.au, which on average would have been up to \$5.

"The 'watchlist' demonstrates that old phones, especially if they are four or more years old, are likely to be worth more to the environment than to your wallet," says Ms Read.

PHONE MODEL	AGE	SELL PRICE RANGE	AVERAGE SALE PRICE
Nokia 5110	4 yrs plus	Lowest: Did not sell Highest: \$36.50	\$20.82
Nokia 3315	4 yrs plus	Lowest: Did not sell Highest: \$51.00	\$29.50
Nokia 1100	4 yrs plus	Lowest: \$14.50 Highest: \$28.95	\$22.61
Nokia 3210	4 yrs plus	Lowest: \$26.00 Highest: \$32.00	\$28.67
Nokia 6610	4 yrs plus	Lowest: \$5.00 Highest: \$43.00	\$22.36

MobileMuster eBay.com.au 'watchlist' was conducted between 11–18 January 2010. Phones were mostly sold with cables, batteries and chargers.



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What phones are being recycled?

So which phones should be recycled? AMTA recently conducted an audit of 1,000 handsets sent in for recycling⁷.

“Over the month of October 2009, MobileMuster received nearly 270 different brands and models of mobiles for recycling that date back to 1987, including analogue mobiles that were phased out in 2000 and can no longer be used.

“There were various CDMA handsets and many different types of GSM models from brands like Nokia, Samsung, Sony Ericsson, Blackberry, Motorola, LG, Siemens, Sagem, NEC, Panasonic and Sharp,” says Ms Read.

“Eight out of the top 10 mobiles recycled in October 2009 were four or more years old. Typically we don’t receive many phones that are less than 12 months old unless they are broken,” adds Ms Read.

TOP 10 RECYCLED PHONES FOR OCTOBER 2009⁶

Model	Age
Nokia 5110	12 years old
QUALCOMM QCP – 860	10 years old
Nokia 3315	8 years old
Nokia 6385	8 years old
Nokia 1100	7 years old
Nokia 2280	7 years old
ZTE F851	4 years old
ZTE F850	4 years old
ZTE F252	3 years old
ZTE F150	3 years old



What's your old mobile phone worth to the environment?

Old and broken mobile phones that are recycled create significant environmental benefits and savings.

More than 90 per cent of a mobile phone and its accessories can be recycled, including the inner and outer casings, circuit boards, batteries and chargers.

The materials recovered from this recycling process are used to produce plastic fence posts, stainless steel, jewellery and even new batteries.

For every tonne of mobile phone handsets and chargers recycled, 1.1 tonne of greenhouse gases will be emitted. On the otherhand, 11.8 tonnes of greenhouse gases will be avoided when these materials are reused instead of using raw materials to make new products. This equals a net saving of 10.7 tonnes, or a 60 to 90 per cent reduction in future greenhouse gases for the environment⁸.

Hanging onto old mobiles, instead of recycling them, is the only way they can go to waste.

IF AUSTRALIANS HANDED IN THE 14-16 MILLION UNUSED OR BROKEN MOBILE PHONES* HIDDEN IN DESKS AND DRAWERS ACROSS THE COUNTRY...

It would be worth:	Environmental savings:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 160,000 plastics fence posts (enough to build a fence from Sydney to Melbourne) • 31,000 gold wedding bands • 3.2 million aluminium cans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 13,867 tonnes future greenhouse gas emissions avoided which is equal to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - planting 84,000 trees, or - taking 5,180 cars permanently off the road • Avoid the need to mine about 142,560 tonnes of gold ore (average yield of 5g/tonne) by recovering the gold from old and unused phones. This would emit 700 times less greenhouse gases than mining

** Not including batteries.*



¹ <http://www.amta.org.au/pages/Industry.statistics>

² Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australian Demographic Statistics, June 2009

³ Online survey conducted by IPSOS in February 2009 of 650 mobile phone users between the age of 16 and 64 in Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide Perth in February 2009 on behalf of AMTA

⁴ IPSOS Omnibus survey of 1,000 Australian households representative of the Australian population, November 2009

⁵ Jansen Newman Institute is a higher education college and professional counselling and psychotherapy service that has been in practice for 30 years.

⁶ ebay.com.au data sourced from its research tool, Terapeak

⁷ MobileMuster collection audit conducted by MRI from mobile phones received in October 2009

⁸ Parker and Partners / Energetics (unpublished) Mobile phone recycling greenhouse gas value – November 2007



What should I do with my old mobile now?

Whether you have one mobile phone tucked away or four, the best thing to do is to make sure it, or the materials in it, are being put to good use.

Keeping one old phone for emergencies make sense, but if you have more than one unused old mobile, then it's time to clear out the clutter!

Unused mobile phones that are less than two years old and in good working condition might fetch a good re-sale price, or could be used by a friend or family member.

Mobiles that are broken or four or more years old are best off recycled, so the materials can be reused to make new products. This will slow Australia's demand on natural resources, reduce energy use and prevent future greenhouse gas emissions, creating a sustainable future at no cost to the individual.

How to recycle your old mobile phone

1 Drop 'em off:

In an official MobileMuster collection unit located at any one of the following retail outlets or participating local councils



2 Post 'em in:

Using a free recycling satchel available from Australia Post outlets or download a mailing label from www.mobilemuster.com.au



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Call 1300 730 070 or visit www.mobilemuster.com.au

All recycling is to the highest environment standards. None of the mobiles are sold for reuse. MobileMuster is a not for profit program, funded by most handset manufacturers and all network carriers.