



A bottle of milk in a supermarket trolley heads for the checkout.



Megan, 2, gets milk out of the fridge for her breakfast.

A bottle's tale

Photo essay by Dean Purcell

Ever wondered where your milk bottle goes after you've popped it in the recycling bin?

Not every bottle's journey is the same, but every day, thousands of recyclable items are collected and taken to factories where the recycling process begins.

Milk bottles — including the fairly new Anchor Light Proof bottles — are placed on a conveyor and taken through a rigorous washing cycle. The bottles are broken down into small plastic chips, which are then moved to another part of the factory to be broken down further.

The result is dark grey resin, which is bagged and sold or taken to be used for the manufacture of various plastic-based products, including underground cable covers and signs.

Oddly, other things made from the recycled material are recycling bins and crates used in daycare centres and schools around the country.

Large blue bins are made from 50 per cent of recycled milk bottle plastics, while smaller grey crates are made entirely from recycled Anchor Light Proof milk bottle plastics.

The blue bins are used in the Fonterra Milk for Schools programme and the grey crates in the Paper4Trees programme; both encourage youngsters to recycle at school.



Mary Bradley (left) places an empty milk bottle into the recycling bin. Milk bottles (above) are placed on a conveyor for washing, then granulated into small chips (right), which are sent away to be converted into recycled resin.



The resin is bagged (top left) and sold to make plastic-based products, including underground polymeric cable covers (left) produced at Astron Plastics. Baverstock Oaks School (Flat Bush) pupils (from left) Connor Mackie, 5, Ella Mackay, 8, Sarah Mackie, 10, and Jorja Mackay, 9, with the recycled Milk for Schools bins made from 50 per cent recycled milk bottles.