

Environmental Purchasing Checklist

Cleaning services

This checklist suggests environmental criteria for use by Australian Government departments and agencies in procurement of cleaning services. These environmental criteria would generally be considered together with price, quality and other purchasing criteria, in accordance with the [Commonwealth Procurement Guidelines and Best Practice Guidance](#). The checklist also provides tips for purchasers and users and links to further information. Purchasers may choose to amend the criteria and specifications to meet their own requirements.

WHAT ARE THE ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES?

All products or services have some impact on the environment, which may occur at any or all stages of a product's life cycle – raw material acquisition, manufacture, distribution, use and disposal. This checklist focuses on the environmental impacts that may be relevant to procurement of cleaning services. Cleaning of offices and other facilities generally involves the use of a number of products that may:

- affect the health of cleaners – overseas studies suggest that cleaners suffer relatively high rates of illness or injury compared to other workers.
- contribute to indoor air pollution, which can cause allergic reactions and other health effects for people working in the office or facility.
- interfere with waste treatment processes because cleaning products are typically washed down drains and sent to waste treatment facilities
- pass through treatment plants, and contribute to pollution in rivers, bays or the ocean.

Many trials of environmentally preferable cleaners have shown that it is possible to meet the public health objective of cleaning whilst also reducing environmental and human health impacts.

Federal and state regulations for control of hazardous substances include a hierarchy of control: first, elimination; second, 'safe place' options - substitution, isolation, engineering controls; and where neither elimination nor substitution is possible, 'safe person' options - administrative controls/safe work practices, personal protective equipment.

Cleaning services supply paper products, such as tissue and towels. The manufacture and disposal of paper can affect the environment through logging operations, manufacturing emissions, and landfill. (See Environmental Purchasing Checklist on [Paper and Cardboard](#) for more detail).

KEY AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT POLICIES

The [Commonwealth Procurement Guidelines and Best Practice Guidance](#) state that the core principle governing Australian Government procurement is value for money, a concept evaluated on a whole of life basis for the goods or services being procured. Officials buying

goods and services need to be satisfied that the best possible outcome has been achieved, taking into account all relevant costs and benefits over the whole of the procurement cycle.

According to the [Commonwealth Procurement Guidelines and Best Practice Guidance](#), “officials should be aware of any relevant environmental legislation and targets set by the Commonwealth, and ensure they take into account matters affecting the environment or the national estate when formulating requirements. They should include relevant environmental criteria in specifications and requests for tender.”

The Australian Government has a number of policies and regulations related to the use and disposal of hazardous substances. Those most relevant to cleaning products are:

National Occupational Health and Safety Commission (NOHSC):

Control of Workplace Hazardous Substances: [National Model Regulations](#) [NOHSC:1005 (1994)] and [National Code of Practice](#) [NOHSC:2007(1994)] (implemented through State legislation).

[Approved Criteria for Classifying Hazardous Substances](#) [NOHSC:1008(1999)].

[List Of Designated Hazardous Substances](#), [NOHSC:10005(1999)].

The Commonwealth, State and Territory governments endorsed the [National Government Waste Reduction and Purchasing Guidelines](#) at the November 1996 meeting of the Australian and New Zealand Environment and Conservation Council (ANZECC). Members agreed to a range of actions, including establishing purchasing policies to reduce waste.

SUGGESTED ENVIRONMENTAL PURCHASING CRITERIA FOR CLEANING SERVICES

Give consideration to service providers ...	Comments
... that are committed to eliminating use of hazardous cleaning products wherever possible.	<p>Appropriate evidence of capacity for evaluating and adopting less hazardous products:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • documentation of other service contracts involving focus on use of non-hazardous products • documentation of a testing program for non-hazardous cleaning products. Testing may be conducted by third party assessors, including on behalf of manufacturers.
... that present a systematic plan for phasing out or minimising use of hazardous cleaning products.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cleaning service companies should document that they are in compliance with relevant State regulations for control of hazardous substances in the workplace, including risk assessment, use of the hierarchy of control, training, and documentation. • Tenders should include a requirement for companies to report any penalties or warnings received for violation of regulations related to hazardous substances in the workplace • A systematic plan for eliminating or minimising use of hazardous chemicals should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - program for evaluation of procedures to identify opportunities for elimination of hazardous substances - program and procedures for identification, testing and introduction of alternative lower risk products

	-documentation that training programs for employees emphasise minimum use of hazardous substances
... that are committed to use of products and packaging made from recycled materials.	Companies could demonstrate that they are already using products or packaging made from recycled materials or agree to purchase such products (see Paper and Cardboard and Packaging checklists).
... that are committed to recycling of waste materials.	Relevant commitments could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • documentation of existing program for recycling of packaging and other materials • agreement to institute and document systematic program for recycling of cardboard and other materials from the building • agreement to handle recyclable materials separated by Department personnel as intended, and to keep them segregated from general wastes
... that agree to comply with the Department's energy efficiency program.	Cleaning service firm should agree to switch off lights in areas that will not be used for 30 minutes or more. Contract could specify cleaning during daylight hours if that is convenient for the Department.
... from companies that document additional environmental benefits of their services or superior environmental performance of their companies.	Documentation should preferably include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A certified Quality Management System and/or Environmental Management System (If no companies tendering are certified, the department could specify a date by which certification would need to be obtained). • A demonstrated track record. • Membership of industry associations. <p>Companies may make other valid environmental claims to differentiate themselves from their competitors.</p>

DEFINITIONS

Hazardous Substance – [NOHSC](#) defines hazardous substances as “chemicals or other substances which can harm people’s health, causing injury, illness or disease Health effects may be immediate and short term – such as irritation to the skin or eyes, or corrosive burns – or long term, such as tumours, cancers, or damage to organs.” A hazardous substance is one listed on the National Occupational Health and Safety Commission’s (NOHSC) ["List of Designated Hazardous Substances"](#) or has been classified as a hazardous substance by the manufacturer or importer in accordance with strict Australian Government criteria. A hazardous product can usually be recognised from key words on the supplier’s label eg ‘warning’, ‘poison’, ‘hazardous’, or other similar words or phrases. The three grades of hazard, in order of increasing seriousness, are Harmful, Toxic, and Very Toxic.

MSDS – A Materials Safety Data Sheet provides the information required for the safe handling of hazardous substances used at work. It contains information on substance contents, use, health effects, first aid, safe storage and handling. See “National Code of Practice for the Preparation of Material Safety Data Sheets” [NOHSC: 2011 (1994) at the NOHSC website. A new Code of Practice will be released shortly.

Recycled paper – According to Australian Standard AS4082-1992 *Recycled Paper: Glossary of Terms*, recycled paper is paper that contains a stated percentage of recycled

fibre. Use of the term `recycled paper' without specifying the proportion of recycled fibre content does not comply with the standard.

TIPS FOR PURCHASERS

It should be up to the cleaning service provider, not the Department, to show that the cleaning products it is using, or proposes to use, are not hazardous. Any hazardous products that are to be supplied to the workplace must be accompanied by an MSDS.

Avoid requirements that will necessitate the Department undertaking periodic audits to confirm compliance. It would be more appropriate for the cleaning service company to submit documentation of compliance at appropriate intervals.

Ensure that switching systems allow cleaning service providers to switch off lights in unused areas. If a single switch covers a very large area, consider the possibility of upgrading switching so that small areas can be separately illuminated or switched off.

Consider whether Department arrangements for individual separation of paper and other materials for recycling facilitate or discourage recycling. Consider then how services required of cleaning services can assist in facilitating recycling. Cleaning services providers may be able to inform your organisation of increasing contamination rates of materials for recycling, or disposal of recyclables in general waste.

Reduced use of hazardous products is intended to lower operating expenses associated with use and disposal of highly regulated materials, reduce potential liability owing to exposure to hazards, and decrease lost time resulting from ill effects of exposure. It will also protect the health of people and the environment.

Consider asking cleaning providers to narrow down the range of cleaning products purchased and investigate bulk purchasing of this smaller range of chemicals. This can achieve cost and risk reductions as the range of chemicals you have to manage and dispose of narrows.

SUCCESS STORIES

As part of the Department of the Environment and Heritage's contract for cleaning services, a mandatory requirement is a specification that the successful tenderer is required to use environmentally friendly products compatible with the Department's grey water reuse system. A list of all products to be used in the course of performing the services has to be provided by the Contractor to the Department for approval along with material safety data sheets.

A 1998 US Department of Interior (DOI) RFP for environmentally preferable custodial services addressed OH&S issues and recycled content products. DOI required cleaning products to be low toxicity, noncarcinogenic and biodegradable; to reduce skin, eye, and respiratory irritability; and to be without unnecessary fragrances, or dyes. The winning bid was the most environmentally preferable, the least expensive of the bids submitted, and was less than the price of the current contract. [More](#).

Yellowstone National Park piloted environmentally preferable cleaning products across facilities in several national parks areas. Reduced toxicity and improved biodegradability

were two key benefits from the project. They reduced the number of cleaning products used from 130 to 15, plus a few additional specialised products. Less sick leave, heightened productivity, increased morale among cleaning staff and a simplified procurement process have resulted from the pilot. [More.](#)

Further success stories can be found at the [Greening of Government website](#).

LINKS TO FURTHER INFORMATION

The **Greening of Government** website provides the policy framework for Greening of Government, as well as a range of Green Procurement Tools and other useful information.

<http://www.ea.gov.au/industry/sustainable/greening-govt/index.html>

National Occupational Health and Safety Commission website includes codes of practice and other documents related to the regulation of hazardous substances in the workplace: <http://www.nohsc.gov.au/>

City of Seattle, website has sample contract language included in specifications for cleaning services:

<http://www.cityofseattle.net/environment/documents/envcritjanitorialservices.doc>

ACT Government Resource Guide, suppliers of recycled products in the ACT area.

<http://www.act.gov.au/nowaste/resourceguide.htm>

EcoRecycle Victoria, **WasteWise Purchasing Guide** for Government and Industry, sources of recycled products in Victoria, http://www.mav.asn.au/buyrecycled/Purch_Guide.pdf

Buy recycled product guide (NSW): <http://www.buyrecycled.wasteboards.nsw.gov.au/>

Minnesota Office of Environmental Assistance – contains case studies and success stories from environmental purchasing under the Minnesota State Contract for Cleaning Products: <http://www.moea.state.mn.us/lc/purchasing/cleaners.cfm>

US EPA's Environmentally Preferable Purchasing Program (EPP) – database includes contract language examples for service providers, including cleaning services. Go to <http://www.epa.gov/oppt/epp/database.htm> and then browse the database to the Services Store.

Environmental Specification

Cleaning services

Purchasers should request information from potential suppliers at the time of requesting a quotation. This environmental specification is intended to provide assistance in obtaining environmental data from suppliers. The information that would be requested from suppliers is shown in the Information required column. Items in this specification are based on criteria in the Environmental Purchasing Checklist for Cleaning services.

Consideration will be given to service providers...	Information required from companies	Weighting (total= 100%)
... that are committed to eliminating use of hazardous cleaning products wherever possible.	<p>Provide details on other previous or current service contracts involving focus on use of non-hazardous products</p> <p>Document procedures used to test non-hazardous cleaning products. Testing may be conducted by third party assessors, including on behalf of manufacturers.</p>	20-30%
...that present a systematic plan for phasing out or minimising use of hazardous cleaning products.	<p>Provide detailed information describing procedures used to comply with relevant State regulations for control of hazardous substances in the workplace, with particular detail on risk assessment, use of the hierarchy of control, training, and documentation.</p> <p>Provide details on any penalties or warnings received for violation of regulations related to hazardous substances in the workplace during the past five years.</p> <p>Describe the program you will institute to identify opportunities for eliminating hazardous cleaning chemicals.</p> <p>Describe the program and procedures you will adopt to identify, test and introduce alternative lower risk products</p> <p>Document the procedures and materials used in training that emphasise minimum use of hazardous substances.</p> <p>Provide details of the documentation and reporting process that will be followed to keep the Department informed about progress in implementation of the program.</p>	25-35%
... that are committed to use of products and packaging made from recycled materials.	Provide details on your current and proposed efforts to use products or packaging made from recycled materials.	5-15%
... that are committed to recycling of waste materials.	<p>Document your existing program for recycling of packaging and other materials.</p> <p>Describe the procedures you will use for recycling of cardboard and other</p>	10-20%

	<p>recyclables from this building.</p> <p>Specify how you will ensure that cleaners handle recyclable materials separated by Department personnel, and will keep recycled materials segregated from general wastes</p>	
... that agree to comply with the Department's energy efficiency program.	Document procedures that will be used to ensure that cleaners minimise energy use by switching off lights in unused areas.	5-15%
... from companies that document additional environmental benefits of their services or superior environmental performance of their companies.	<p>Provide appropriate documentation to support any environmental claims made. This should include, where possible:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A certified Quality Management System and/or Environmental Management System (If no companies tendering are certified, the department could specify a date by which certification would need to be obtained). • A demonstrated track record. • Membership of industry associations. 	5-15%