

# Environmental Purchasing Checklist

## Paper and cardboard

This checklist suggests environmental criteria for use by Australian Government departments and agencies when purchasing paper and cardboard products, including copy paper, printing paper, tissues and packaging. These environmental criteria would generally be considered together with price, quality and other purchasing criteria in accordance with [Commonwealth Procurement Guidelines and Best Practice Guidance](#). Officials buying goods and services need to be satisfied that the best outcome has been achieved taking into account all relevant costs and benefits over the whole of the procurement cycle. Accepting the lowest price is not necessarily an indicator of best Value for Money. The checklist also provides tips for purchasers and users, testimonials and links to further information. A separate Checklist is also available for Recycled products not made from paper fibre. 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 the product's life cycle - raw material acquisition, manufacture, distribution, use and disposal. This checklist focuses on the environmental issues that may be relevant to purchasers of paper and cardboard.

The manufacture and disposal of paper products can affect the environment through:

- Resource Consumption – manufacturing paper (including recycled paper) requires the consumption of energy, water and fibre. Fibre is a renewable resource if managed sustainably.
- Manufacturing emissions – de-inking, pulping and paper making can pose environmental risks for the receiving environment.
- Landfill – discarded paper and cardboard uses landfill space. Degradation of these materials in landfills contributes to leachate that can contaminate groundwater, and generates methane, which is a potent greenhouse gas unless it is captured and burned.
- Recycling – paper and cardboard products are recyclable and biodegradable, whereas some alternative products may not be. Recycling paper within Australia can reduce the amount of waste going to landfill. The process of recycling involves transport emissions, energy consumption and water use.

The Australian Government purchases large quantities of paper products, including a significant proportion of all office paper sold in Australia. By making environmentally appropriate choices, Australian Government departments and agencies can reduce their impact on the environment and help sustain robust markets for environmentally preferable paper products.

Australian paper manufacturers are required to comply with relevant production and emission licensing requirements. These are administered by State governments and are designed to encourage continuous environmental improvement. Paper products not produced in Australia may not meet similar standards of environmental performance. Purchasers should require that any environmental performance claims be verified by the supplier and manufacturer of the product.

## **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 [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 ... when formulating requirements. They should include relevant environmental criteria in specifications and requests for tender.”

As a signatory to the [National Packaging Covenant](#), the Australian Government has agreed to facilitate implementation of purchasing policies for recycled goods.

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 PAPER AND CARDBOARD PRODUCTS

Give consideration to paper and cardboard products ...	Comments
<p>... containing a high percentage of Australian recycled fibre and/or made with any virgin fibre content obtained from sustainably managed sources, such as plantations or sustainably managed native forests (governed by RFAs, and/or AFS or their equivalent)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recycling reduces pressure on forests and diverts waste from landfill.</li> <li>• Manufacturing recycled paper generally uses less energy and water than manufacturing from virgin fibre.</li> <li>• Buying Australian recycled paper helps 'close the loop' for waste collected for recycling in Australia.</li> <li>• Recycled papers don't suit every end use application. Accordingly a fit for purpose consideration should apply.</li> <li>• As old fibres degrade and are lost over time, a supply of virgin fibre into the loop is essential to maintain stock and is needed to ensure that paper products maintain their strength.</li> <li>• Sustainably managed fibre sources may include some plantations, forests or agricultural by-products such as sugar cane bagasse.</li> <li>• Sustainability is a key criterion in the development of <a href="#">Regional Forest Agreements</a> between the Commonwealth and States, and the Australian Forestry Standard.</li> </ul>
<p>... made from the lightest weight paper acceptable for the job.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The heavier the paper you choose, the more fibre and energy is required in manufacture and transport</li> </ul>
<p>... manufactured using EPA licensed or equivalent licensed effluent systems</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EPA licences provide for legal compliance with desired environmental outcomes.</li> <li>• EPA licencing requires continuous environmental improvement.</li> </ul>
<p>...manufactured in facilities that perform better than required by relevant licencing standards for effluent emissions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some operations exceed the requirements of their EPA licence.</li> </ul>
<p>... that do not have non-recyclable coatings, if possible.</p>	<p>These coatings can cause problems in recycling facilities and create unnecessary waste.</p>
<p>... with low environmental impact packaging.</p>	<p>See <a href="#">Packaging</a> checklist.</p>

... from companies that document additional environmental benefits of their products or superior environmental performance of their companies, such as an environmental management system certified for each site to ISO14001 (or equivalent standard)

- Documentation for products could include external verification of claims, e.g. certification of the product through a reputable environmental labelling program. (Imported products may be certified under an overseas program.) Documentation may be available showing that virgin fibre is sourced from forests certified by a reputable program as well managed. Documentation for companies could include environmental management systems certified to ISO 14001, public environmental reporting, Design for Environment (DfE) policies etc.
- ISO14001 provides a comparable measure of environmental management systems, as well as requiring continual environmental improvement.

## DEFINITIONS

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.
- Recycled fibre includes fibre derived from both post-consumer and pre-consumer waste, but excludes mill broke. Mill broke is paper discarded at any stage during the paper manufacturing process.
- Pre-consumer waste is any wastepaper that is not post-consumer waste paper, but is wastepaper that a paper converter has no further use for and if not recycled would be directed to landfill or incineration. It is not paper produced from mill broke or paper that has not left the mill gate and been through a conversion process.
- Post-consumer waste is any paper product for which the consumer has no further use.

## TIPS FOR PURCHASERS

Good quality recycled office paper should not cause problems in office equipment. The poor quality of early recycled paper often led to equipment blockages and dust problems. Nowadays recycled copy papers are of much higher quality and such performance problems are generally confined to lower quality papers (both recycled and virgin) in older and higher speed equipment. If in doubt, run a trial. Any general claim that use of recycled office paper will increase service costs or violate product warranties is likely to represent a violation of the *Trade Practices Act 1974*.

Many recycled papers are not guaranteed for long-term archiving because manufacturers cannot guarantee the quality of all fibre sources. There is an Australian standard for archival papers. Check with the supplier if long term archiving is required.

Terms such as 'recycled paper' and 'post-consumer waste' have sometimes been applied to imported papers in ways that are inconsistent with Australian standards. If in doubt, ask the supplier to confirm the precise meanings of the terms they are using.

## TIPS FOR USERS

Specify the functional and environmental characteristics of your paper on your reports and publications. This may include the inks used in printing.

Promote double-sided printing to reduce consumption and save money.

Recycle waste paper.

Consider using electronic scanning of documents rather than generating additional paper copies.

## SUCCESS STORIES

The Department of the Environment and Heritage has an extensive waste management program that includes the separation of organic waste, recyclables and non-recyclable materials. The Department has been actively recycling since 1996, and last year consigned 118 tonnes of paper and cardboard to be recycled.

[Resource NSW](#) uses 100% recycled card for their staff business cards.

[Brisbane City Council](#), one of the largest local governments in the world, recently switched to the purchase of Australian made recycled content paper. The unit cost was slightly higher than their previous paper, but the switch was part of a coordinated paper use reduction campaign. The savings from these initiatives offset the costs of switching papers.

[NSW State Electoral Office](#) - Cardboard ballot boxes, screens and signage used at polling places for elections, together with cardboard furniture provided to Returning Officer offices are manufactured from recycled Australian-made materials. When elections are finished they can be recycled or reused for school, community service or local council activities. Apart from the positive environmental and corporate image, the initiative has resulted in considerable savings in storage, transport, cartage and hiring costs.

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>

**Australian Paper Industry Council** – frequently asked questions about recycled paper:  
<http://www.apic.asn.au/recycling/default.htm>

**Product performance investigation of recycled content office paper** – a detailed and product-specific investigation of performance and environmental issues relating to the use of recycled office paper: <http://www.sswb.nsw.gov.au/ci/33.pdf>.

**Know your paper – a guide to purchasing recycled content office paper** – builds on the findings of the above study, 2002 revised edition available at:  
<http://www.resource.nsw.gov.au/officebuildings/>

**Office products – guide to sustainable purchasing and use** – addresses environmental purchasing issues relating to a range of office products including paper:  
[http://www.resource.nsw.gov.au/data/office\\_guide.pdf](http://www.resource.nsw.gov.au/data/office_guide.pdf).

NSW Nature Conservation Council **ecoOFFICE** website – aims to give practical advice on green office practice. It includes a section on paper at:

<http://www.ecooffice.com.au/paper/>

**An Australian Forestry Standard** - supported by the Australian Government has been developed. Further information can be found at:

<http://www.forestrystandard.org.au/index.html>

**The Regional Forest Agreement** process was developed to provide for the sustainable management of Australian forests – further information can be found at:

<http://www.rfa.gov.au>

**Design for Environment** - Reducing environmental impacts through better design (such as using less toxic components, or making the product easier to disassemble and recycle or reuse) is referred to as Design for Environment or DfE. Many manufacturers, suppliers and industry associations may be able to provide information on their DfE activities. The Department of the Environment and Heritage has an introduction to DfE in business available at <http://www.ea.gov.au/industry/finance/publications/producer.html>

## Environmental Specification

# Paper and cardboard

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 the criteria in the Environmental Purchasing Checklist for paper and cardboard.

Consideration will be given to paper and cardboard products ...	Information required from companies	Weighting
... containing a high percentage of Australian recycled fibre and/or made with any virgin fibre content obtained from sustainably managed sources, such as plantations or sustainably managed native forests (governed by RFAs, and/or AFS or their equivalent)	Specify the percentage by weight of the product that is made from Australian recycled fibre: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- If the product contains any virgin fibre, specify whether this is obtained from sustainably managed sources.</li> <li>- Sustainability is a key criterion in the development of <a href="#">Regional Forest Agreements</a> between the Commonwealth and States, and the Australian Forestry Standard.</li> </ul>	35-45%
... made from the lightest weight paper acceptable for the job.	Specify the weight of the product in grams per square metre	5-15%
... manufactured using EPA licensed or equivalent licensed effluent systems	Proof of EPA licensing or equivalent overseas licensing system for paper production.	3-13%
... manufactured in facilities that perform better than required by relevant licencing standards for effluent emissions.	Specify the extent to which any environmental conditions are better than that required under the relevant licence conditions.	2-12%
... that do not have non recyclable coatings, if possible.	Specify whether the product has recyclable coatings.	0-10%
... with low environmental impact packaging (use this criterion only when packaging is significant).	List the types of packaging used in delivering your product, including bulk delivery packaging. Specify: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the total weight per unit product,</li> <li>• the proportion of recycled material used, and</li> <li>• whether the packaging can be recycled locally.</li> </ul> State whether you will take back the packaging after delivery.	0-10%

Consideration will be given to paper and cardboard products ...	Information required from companies	Weighting
	<p>Describe any disposal advice provided on your product packaging, including the size, location and colour of the advice.</p> <p>Specify whether your packaging includes any loose fill material.</p> <p>Specify whether your company is a signatory to the <a href="http://www.ea.gov.au/industry/waste/covenant/signatories.html">National Packaging Covenant</a>. See <a href="http://www.ea.gov.au/industry/waste/covenant/signatories.html">http://www.ea.gov.au/industry/waste/covenant/signatories.html</a>.</p>	
<p>.... that document additional environmental benefits of their products or superior environmental performance of their companies, such as an EMS for each site certified to ISO14001, or of an equivalent standard.</p>	<p>Provide appropriate documentation to support any environmental claims made.</p>	<p>20-30%</p>