

# Environmental Purchasing Checklist

## Printing services

This checklist suggests environmental criteria for use by Australian Government departments and agencies in procurement of printing 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 printing services. Printing and distributing publications involves the use of paper, inks, and sometimes plastic wrappers. Energy is used in the manufacture of these products, in printing processes and in transport of publications to recipients. All of these create environmental impacts.

The manufacture and disposal of paper can affect the environment through forestry operations, air and water emissions from manufacturing operations, and landfilling of waste ([see Paper and Cardboard Checklist](#)). Printing papers may also be coated, and this type of paper is harder to recycle.

Conventional printing inks are made from petroleum, a non-renewable resource, and some types of ink release volatile organic compounds (VOCs) into the air during printing. VOCs contribute to smog and can cause health effects among printers.

### 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.”

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 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 PRINTING SERVICES

Give consideration to ...	Comments
... printers that will retain the films made for your publication (or supply them to you for retention) so re-ordering is little different in cost from increasing the initial print run.	Printing more copies than you really need is not only an unnecessary expense, it creates waste and takes up limited storage space.
... the lightest weight paper acceptable for the job.	The heavier the paper you choose, the more fibre is required in manufacture.
... low environmental impact paper	See <a href="#">Paper and cardboard</a> checklist
... binding methods that facilitate recycling.	Some printers avoid the use of chlorinated glues and other binding methods that inhibit easy recycling.
... plant-based inks, eg soy-based ink.	Use of plant-based inks reduces the amount of VOCs produced during printing; VOCs contribute to smog. Soy-based inks are readily available in Australia and many printers will use them if you request it. Avoid colours that contain heavy metals (your printer can advise what these are).
... with low environmental impact packaging	See <a href="#">Packaging</a> checklist
... from companies that document additional environmental benefits of their products or services or superior environmental performance of their companies.	<p>Documentation for services could include external verification of claims, e.g., certification through a reputable certification program where one exists.</p> <p>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.).</p> <p>Documentation for companies could include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A certified Quality Management System or an environmental management system. (If no companies tendering can demonstrate certification, the Department could specify a date by which certification would need to be obtained.)</li> <li>• A demonstrated track record.</li> <li>• Membership of industry associations</li> </ul>

## TIPS FOR PURCHASERS

Encourage your department to make publications available for downloading from their web pages. In publicity about the publication, provide the web address so people will download copies rather than ask for hard copies.

Labels and tags may contain materials or adhesives that can contaminate paper recycling streams. You can specify that all labels and tags should be appropriate for inclusion in office waste paper recycling.

Some printing service providers may also be able to provide information about their programmes for the phase out of hazardous substances in the workplace.

## TIPS FOR USERS

Good layout can make efficient use of paper by using both sides of paper as well as minimising blank pages and other wasted space that doesn't add to readability.

Update mailing lists so copies of your publications are not sent to people who are not interested in receiving them or wasted through sending to obsolete addresses.

Consider whether you need a printed version of your document at all.

## SUCCESS STORIES

The [Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation \(RIRDC\)](#) endeavours to work with printing services providers to maximise the use of recycled papers and organic inks in their publications. This has included a 15,000 copy print run of a 16 page self-covered brochure printed on 115 gsm recycled paper in full colour using soy inks. They have found their printers to be highly cooperative in meeting environmental specifications.

The Department of the Environment and Heritage uses its letterhead to display membership in the Greenhouse Challenge programme and that the department has an ISO14001 certified environmental management system (EMS).

The US Army at Fort Bragg purchased new digital printing equipment. As a result, they have eliminated 1,500 gallons of hazardous waste, cut the costs of chemicals purchasing and disposal by more than US\$100,000 per year.

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>

**Know your paper** – a guide to purchasing recycled content office paper:  
<http://www.sswb.nsw.gov.au/general/publications.html>

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

**NSW Nature Conservation Council Eco-Office website** section on paper:  
<http://www.ecooffice.com.au/paper/>

**The Blue Ribbon Task Force** Print Buyer Guidelines provides step-by-step guidance on how to minimise environmental impacts of your printed materials while accounting for cost, quality and design. <http://www.mn-ei.org/btrfpage.html>

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

## Environmental Specification

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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 service providers. The information that would be requested from printers is shown in the Information required column. Items in this specification are based on criteria in the Environmental Purchasing Checklist for Printing services.

Consideration will be given to ...	Information required from companies	Weighting (total= 100%)
... printers that will retain the films made for your publication (or supply them to you for retention).	Specify how long films will be retained once printing is complete, and whether there is a charge for film storage. Specify also whether films will be returned when your retention period is complete.	15-25%
... low environmental impact paper	Identify paper that will be used for printing, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• what percentage (by weight) is made from:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>post-consumer recycled fibre; and</li> <li>pre-consumer recycled fibre.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• whether virgin fibre in the paper is obtained from sustainably managed sources</li> <li>• weight of paper (gsm)</li> <li>• the pulp bleaching materials used</li> <li>• whether any effluent discharges to the environment occur during the manufacture of the paper</li> <li>• whether plastic or wax coatings are used</li> </ul> See <a href="#">Paper and Cardboard</a> checklist for more	15-25%
... binding methods that facilitate recycling.	Provide details of binding method, including extent to which it facilitates recycling	15-25%
... plant-based inks, eg soy-based ink.	Provide specification of inks that will be used in printing, including details on volatile organic compounds (VOCs) produced	15-25%

<p>... with low environmental impact packaging (this criterion to be used only where packaging is significant).</p>	<p>List each element of packaging used in delivering your product, including bulk delivery packaging. For each packaging element, specify:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the total mass used per unit product,</li> <li>• the materials from which the element is made,</li> <li>• the percentage of recycled material used in making the element, and</li> <li>• whether the element can be recycled.</li> </ul> <p>Specify which, if any, packaging elements can be reused, and describe those uses.</p> <p>Describe any disposal advice provided on your product packaging, including the size, location and colour of the advice notice.</p> <p>Specify whether your product packaging includes any loose-fill foam or other material having high potential to cause litter.</p> <p>Specify whether your company is a signatory to the <a href="#">National Packaging Covenant</a>.</p> <p>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>5-15%</p>
<p>... from companies that document additional environmental benefits of their products or services or superior environmental performance of their companies.</p>	<p>Provide appropriate documentation to support any environmental claims made.</p>	<p>5-15%</p>