

Environmental Purchasing Checklist

Recycled products

This checklist suggests environmental criteria for use by Commonwealth departments and agencies when purchasing products that can be made from recycled materials, including the materials listed below. 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 links to further information. Separate checklists are available for particular products that can be made from recycled materials, including [Paper and cardboard](#), [Packaging](#) and [Office equipment consumables](#). Purchasers may choose to amend the criteria and specifications to meet their own requirements.

WHAT ARE THE ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES?

There are important sustainability benefits associated with recycled content products. Recycling helps the environment by reducing the need to manufacture virgin materials, which involves greater energy consumption and more air and water emissions. Recycling also reduces pressure on virgin resources and reduces waste to landfill. The long-term success of recycling depends on developing sustainable markets for products made from post-consumer recycled materials. Buying recycled 'closes the loop' by providing a market outlet for materials saved from landfill. It represents an accessible way to demonstrate environmental leadership.

WHAT RECYCLED PRODUCTS ARE AVAILABLE?

A wide range of products made from recycled materials is available, including products in the following categories:

- animal care products
- building products
- clothing and textiles
- packaging products (see [Packaging](#) checklist)
- furniture
- garden and landscape products
- industrial products
- paper products (see [Paper and cardboard](#) checklist)
- office products (see also [Office equipment](#) and [Office equipment consumables](#) checklists)
- recycling and waste management products
- road and pavement products
- traffic management products
- sport and recreational products
- water, sewerage and drainage products
- others.

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 ... 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 PRODUCTS THAT CAN BE MADE FROM RECYCLED MATERIALS

Give consideration to products ...	Comments
... manufactured using a high percentage of recycled material.	Some companies supply a range of products made from recycled materials
... that reduce overall waste and use fewer resources.	Where applicable, recycled products should be selected that are light weight, low maintenance and have a long life.
... with low environmental impact packaging.	See Packaging checklist
... from companies that document additional environmental benefits of their products or superior environmental performance of their companies.	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 for companies could include environmental management systems certified to ISO 14001, public environmental reporting, Design for Environment policies etc.

DEFINITIONS

According to Australian Standard ISO 14021:2000 *Environmental labels and declarations – Self-declared environmental claims (Type II environmental labelling)*:

- Recycled material is material that has been reprocessed from recovered [reclaimed] material by means of a manufacturing process and made into a final product or into a component for incorporation into a product.

- Post-consumer material is material generated by households or by commercial, industrial and institutional facilities in their role as end-users of the product that can no longer be used for its intended purpose. This includes returns of material from the distribution chain.
- Pre-consumer material is material diverted from the waste stream during a manufacturing process. Excluded is re-utilisation of materials such as rework, regrind or scrap generated in a process and capable of being reclaimed within the same process that generated it.

TIPS FOR PURCHASERS

Recycled content products will generally provide the same and sometimes better level of service than virgin material products. Manufacturers of these products often have to work especially hard to produce goods of sufficient quality to overcome negative perceptions about materials made from former wastes. If in doubt, seek assurances from the supplier. Evidence may be available of compliance with a relevant Australian or international standard.

The recycling industry mainly comprises locally based small and medium enterprises. Buying recycled will therefore normally promote Australian employment and help in achieving the Australian Government policy requirement that at least 10% of the agency's purchases are sourced from small and medium enterprises.

There are seven classes of plastic, with each type identified by a number. 1 is PET, 2 is HDPE, 3 is either plasticised or un-plasticised PVC, 4 is LDPE, 5 is polypropylene or PP, 6 covers both polystyrene and expanded polystyrene, and 7 includes all other plastics.

Most parts of Australia can recycle plastics 1-3, many also covering 4. In the ACT, all rigid plastics (1-7) can be recycled, though not plastic bags or film. Check with waste management authorities in your state, territory and council area to confirm the availability and extent of recycling services for plastics. For more details, see <http://www.ea.gov.au/industry/sustainable/greening-govt/factsheets/plastics.html>

SUCCESS STORIES

As part of The Department of Environment and Heritage contract for cleaning services, a specification was included that all consumables such as toilet paper and hand towel would need to be 100% recycled.

Frankston City Council in Victoria uses recycled plastic signage. This is lower maintenance, easier to install, and poses less of an OH&S risk to employees.

Ernst and Young (London) recycle plastic cups used in their offices. These are turned into 100% recycled pencils and are sold back to the office. [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>

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

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

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

Buy Recycled Business Alliance (national) – Website of an organisation to promote recycling in the business sector, containing a variety of support and advocacy tools including a ‘Buying Recycled for Business Tool Box’: <http://www.brba.com.au>.

Buy Recycled Local Government Alliance (Victoria) – Website of an organisation to promote recycling in the local government sector, containing a variety of support and advocacy tools: <http://www.mav.asn.au/buyrecycled>. The website also contains the EcoRecycle Victoria **WasteWise Purchasing Guide for Government and Industry**, sources of recycled products in Victoria:

http://www.mav.asn.au/buyrecycled/Purch_Guide.pdf

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

Recycled products

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 recycled products.

Consideration will be given to products ...	Information required from companies	Weighting
... manufactured using a high percentage of recycled material.	Specify the percentage recycled content of your product by weight.	65-75%
... that reduce overall waste and use fewer resources.	Specify any ways that your product reduces waste and/or resource use (for example, light weight, low maintenance or long-life).	5-15%
... 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"> the total weight per unit product, the proportion of recycled material used, and whether the packaging can be recycled locally. 	5-15%
	State whether you will take back the packaging for reuse or recycling after delivery.	
	Describe any disposal advice provided on your product packaging, including the size, location and colour of the advice.	
	Specify whether your packaging includes any loose fill material.	
	Specify whether your company is a signatory to the National Packaging Covenant . See http://www.ea.gov.au/industry/waste/covenant/signatories.html .	
... that document additional environmental benefits of their products or superior environmental performance of their companies.	Provide appropriate documentation to support any environmental claims made.	5-15%