Case study
Melbourne Water's on track with reporting of sustainable purchases

ECO-Buy surveyed 21 state government entities on how they track and report purchases that are classified as sustainable. Melbourne Water was one of the best performing Victorian state government entities surveyed. This case study gives a brief overview of its systems in place to track and report sustainable product purchases.

For more than two years, a separate check box has been part of Melbourne Water's finance system, Technology One. It has proved a simple and effective way to capture a sustainable product purchase. When such a purchase is made, the purchaser selects up to two sustainability attribute(s) from a drop down menu including: energy efficiency, maintain habitat, not applicable, other, packaging, supplier has sustainability principles, minimise toxicity, waste reduction and waste efficiency (refer to Image One over page).

The purchaser also completes the 'sustainable initiative' column by using the free text field (up to 40 characters) to describe the actual initiative or procurement decision, supporting the product sustainability attributes.

All purchases with a sustainable attribute assigned to it are compiled into a spread sheet for follow up by a procurement officer to verify the item's sustainability attributes.

Melbourne Water specifies which products with sustainability attributes are to be used in capital works projects, which are included in sustainable purchasing reports.

Environmental benefits achieved through purchasing sustainable products are measured using specific indicators. For example, the indicator used to measure environmental benefits of introducing more sustainable fleet vehicles is the reduction in carbon dioxide emissions, while the indicator used to measure environmental benefits for switching to more energy efficient computers is the reduction in energy consumption.

Information gathered is compiled annually. It is used for Melbourne Water's annual report, publicity, and both internal and external benchmarking. Melbourne Water estimates that the tracking process captures approximately 61-80% of sustainable product purchases organisation-wide.
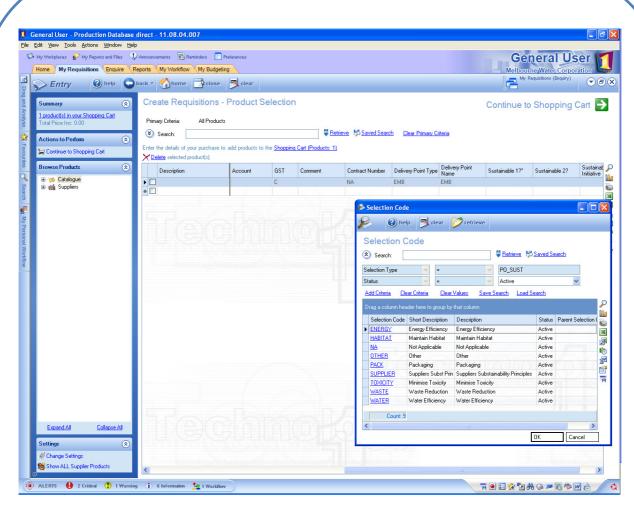
Image One. Screen shot of how products with sustainability attributes are coded at Melbourne Water