



Enquiries to:  
**Karen Rudkin**  
 Education Project Co-ordinator  
 P: 6687 4090 M: 0401 941 330

PO Box 340  
 LENNOX HEAD NSW 2478  
 greenhouse@northeastwasteforum.org.au  
 www.northeastwasteforum.org.au

## SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTS – FACT SHEET TOILET TISSUE & HAND TOWEL

### Did You Know?

Only around five percent of the toilet paper we flush away in Australia is made from recycled paper, the rest is virgin fibre from plantation or native-forest trees



According to the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) "every tonne of paper recycled saves 13 trees, 2.5 barrels of oil, 4100 kilowatts of electricity, four cubic metres of landfill and 31,380 litres of water."

### What Is It Made From?

Most recycled toilet tissue brands use the clean office waste paper that is collected in the blue bins, which are found in many offices around Australia. It is collected and graded and the high grade clean waste is then turned into new clean toilet paper.



This paper would otherwise go to landfill, decompose and give off greenhouse gases. A 2005 NSW government (DECC) study, found that for every tonne of paper that's recycled, 400kg of greenhouse emissions are saved. This is because virgin fibre requires significant energy (and water) for harvesting raw materials, pulping and processing.

### Why Recycled?

Tissue products, such as toilet paper, handkerchiefs, kitchen towels and napkins cannot be recycled after their use, for understandable reasons! So it is important to ensure that the tissue products you buy contain a high level of recycled content.



It's simple, use toilet rolls and other tissue products made from recycled paper and you will reduce greenhouse emissions, save water and energy and lower landfill use.

Insufficient demand for recycled products can threaten the viability of recycling programs.

So it is important to '**close the loop**' and not only practice recycling, but **buy** recycled products whenever possible.



### So Which Paper Should I Choose?

So which toilet paper is better for the environment and how do consumers know which product to trust? Your carefully selected toilet paper and other sanitary products may be less environmentally friendly than you think and it's hard to tell from the packaging alone.

Firstly, try to buy recycled paper — it conserves the most resources from an environmental point of view. Recycled content paper falls into two categories:

**Post-consumer** recycled content paper is made from paper that has already been used at least once, and then recycled;

**Pre-consumer** recycled content paper is made of materials diverted from the waste stream during a manufacturing process, such as off-cuts from timber mills and paper production, and is therefore still sourced from virgin fibre.

**So paper with the highest post consumer recycled fibre content is preferable.**



Enquiries to:  
**Karen Rudkin**  
 Waste Reduction & Sustainable  
 Purchasing  
 P: 6687 4090 M: 0401 941 330

PO Box 340  
 LENNOX HEAD NSW 2478  
 greenhouse@northeastwasteforum.org.au  
 www.northeastwasteforum.org.au

## Environmental Labelling

If you can't find recycled paper, go for a brand endorsed by an environmental group. The two most widely recognised eco-labels for paper in Australia are:

- **Forest Stewardship Council (FSC):** The FSC Trademark identifies that the product being purchased originates from a forest which is managed according to internationally agreed social and environmental principles and criteria. The logo indicates that any virgin fibre in the paper is derived from sustainably managed forests.



- **Good Environmental Choice Australia (GECA):** This is Australia's national environmental assessment program for a wide range of consumer and building products. The program is administered by a non-profit organisation and the program has a spectrum of standards for a wide range of products. There are standards for both recycled and plantation fibre products, but there's currently only a limited number of products which have been endorsed with this logo.



- There are also other internationally recognised eco-labels to look out for such as: Environmental Choice New Zealand; Environmental Choice Canada; Blue Angel (Germany); Nordic Swan (Norway); Eco Mark (Japan); Green Mark (Korea).

### Useful Links:

- Understanding Misleading Environmental Claims  
<http://www.cleanup.org.au/PDF/au/understanding-environmental-claims.pdf>
- Forest Stewardship Council  
<http://www.fscaustralia.org/>
- Good Environmental Choice Australia  
<http://www.aela.org.au/>



## Other Considerations When Choosing Products

There are also other issues associated with paper manufacturing, which can potentially result in a significant burden being placed on the environment:

- Elemental chlorine-based bleaches are often used to make paper white and can result in the discharge of organochlorines into the environment, which bioaccumulate becoming toxic and resulting in the pollution of air, water and soil. To avoid this paper can be left unbleached or processes that minimise the use of chlorine can be used: Totally Chlorine Free (TCF); Elemental Chlorine Free (ECF) which uses no chlorine gas; and Processed Chlorine Free (PCF) where the pulp is not re-bleached with chlorine but may use other chlorine derivatives.
- Non-biodegradable detergents (surfactants) may also accumulate and be toxic or otherwise harmful in the environment if discharged. To avoid this only readily biodegradable surfactants should be used.
- Other issues of concern include the discharge of process effluent which is high in oxygen depleting organic materials, which can adversely impact on plant & animal life; Sulphur and hazardous materials, particularly halogenated organics used in some manufacturing processes (eg. for equipment cleaning) which can bio-accumulate and have a toxic effect on the environment.

### Disclaimer

The North East Waste Forum has provided this information in good faith and takes no responsibility for the performance of any products purchased. Please check with suppliers and manufacturers for more specific details about products before purchase. (February 2008).