

PURCHASING PAPER WITH RECYCLED-CONTENT

PURPOSE:

This paper proposes that all A4 sized paper sold by the University Stores (Bookshops) and the University's stationery supplier, be mandated to be paper containing a significant content of recycled paper (a minimum of 80% recycled).

BACKGROUND:

In 2005 Victoria University's office¹ use of white paper was 61,221 reams. Of this only 2.52% (1,544 reams) contained any recycled-content. In 2006 Victoria University consumed a total of 63,413 reams of paper, of this only 2.43% (1,543 reams) contained recycled-content. The current trend shows an increase of overall paper consumption, but a decrease in recycled-content paper usage.

The environmental effects of supporting non-recycled-content paper are vast. For example, the pulp and paper industry require 80% more energy and 60% more water resources to produce a virgin fibre product, compared to a recycled-content paper. The process of bleaching the pulp and manufacturing the paper produces organic compounds, which deplete oxygen in receiving waters. Deforestation of the native habitat of wildlife, reduction in air quality and loss of the value of forest ecosystems, are only some of the impacts caused by supporting paper products made from virgin fibre.

Today recycled-content papers are as useable as virgin pulp papers and meet all the requirements for University and general office use. Manufacturers now guarantee recycled-content paper across a full range of functions².

The benefits of using paper with recycled-content are significant and indisputable. The current dominance of virgin fibre paper has more to do with its historical economic advantage rather than with environmental factors. Victoria University has the opportunity to be a sector leader by mandating the purchasing of environmentally responsible paper. Both the University's Environmental Charter and the recently signed Greenhouse Challenge Plus Agreement provide a platform for the University to consider the merits of mandating the use of recycled-content paper.

DISCUSSION:

The paper consumed by staff and students at Victoria University is currently purchased from either Corporate Express or VU Stores (Bookshops). However the vast majority of current sales (97.57%) is paper made from virgin fibre. The table below illustrates the current paper use and financial implications of changing to recycled-content paper.

Supplier	Current total paper use, reams	Current total cost	Total cost if all reams are recycled content paper*	Difference
Corporate Express	20,900	\$92,565	\$104,291	\$11,725
VU Stores	40,321	\$224,196	\$226,352	\$2,155
Totals	61,221	\$316,762	\$330,643	\$13,880

Note: *A price of \$4.99 per ream has been quoted by Corporate Express. It is assumed that paper purchased through VU Stores will have a mark-up of a 12.5 % applied. VU Stores may be able to negotiate a lower purchase price.

As detailed in the table, the economics of recycled paper has now reached a point where, on current volumes, there would be a minimal increase of approximately only \$3,800 per annum if the University were to purchase recycled content paper rather than to continue with purchasing the current virgin pulp products.

¹ Excluding printing services.

² Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability, Victoria: 'Choosing Recycled Office Paper, Nov 2006'.

There is no reason to anticipate any technical problems with the introduction of this initiative. The use of recycled-content paper is common practice among many large organisations. The successful use of recycled-content in private industry and government is widely documented. Within the University, the Facilities Department has trialled the use of 100% recycled-content paper in all its printers and photocopiers for the past year and experienced no problems.

Victoria University has the opportunity to become the first University in Australia to solely use recycled-content paper in its office and administration areas. The environmental advantages of adopting this position are clear and whilst the purchase of recycled-content paper will cause a slight increase in annual paper costs for the University, the value of the goodwill and positive press this initiative will generate should not be underestimated.

If the decision is made that the University will support the sole purchase of recycled-content paper, both VU Stores (Bookshops) and University's contracted stationery supplier need to be assured that they will not be disadvantaged in a commercial environment. Accordingly organisational units will not be able to purchase paper from other external suppliers. This will be achieved through an extensive communication strategy for staff and students and deletion of alternative supplier options for paper supply on Finance One and through the cooperation of the Finance Department in undertaking adhoc purchase order checks.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

1. All organisational units are required to purchase A4 sized paper containing recycled-content (a minimum of 80% recycled).
2. All organisational units are prevented from purchasing non recycled-content A4 sized paper.
3. VU Stores (Bookshops) and the University's stationery supplier sell only A4 sized paper containing recycled-content (a minimum of 80% recycled).