Offi ce Equipment Consumables

What are the environmental issues?

Office equipment consumables include toner cartridges, inkjet cartridges, drum/imaging units, disks, dot matrix cassettes and printer ribbons.

The manufacture, use and disposal of offi ce equipment consumables contributes to air and water emissions, uses toxic materials and can generate hazardous and other waste materials.

Australians use more than 18 million print cartridges every year. Around 15% of these are refi lled or remanufactured when they are empty. More than 65% go to landfi ll. Less than 20% are collected and recycled at end of life.

Refi lled Cartridges

Refi lled cartridges have been refi lled with ink, but not necessarily cleaned and checked to ensure all parts are in good working order. This has resulted in reports of print problems with some refi lled cartridges.

Remanufactured Cartridges

Remanufactured cartridges have been fully cleaned, checked, and where necessary had parts replaced to “Original Equipment Manufacturer” (OEM) specifications. It is best to use a reputable supplier who is a member of the Australasian Cartridge Remanufactures Association Inc (ACRA) www.acra.asn.au. Members of this Association should be able to provide firm quality commitments and a warranty on their workmanship.

Recycled Cartridges

Recycled cartridges are those that are collected and recycled at end of life. This diverts plastic and toxic material from landfi lls. Recycled cartridges in Australia are crushed and used to make other products. Some are shipped overseas for processing. Recycling old units at end of life ‘closes the loop’ by diverting material from landfill.

In line with the waste hierarchy, which gives preference to reuse over recycling, remanufacture (reuse) of cartridges is preferable to recycling because remanufacturing requires less energy and resources and decreases the volume of materials going to landfi ll. Only cartridges at the end of their life should be recycled.

Buying remanufactured cartridges supports local businesses and can reduce costs by up to 30% compared to the cost of virgin branded products. In the United States and Europe many state and federal governments have guidelines promoting the purchase and use of remanufactured cartridges to OEM specifications.

- Avoid cheaply refi lled cartridges without quality guarantees.
- Support recycling programs that divert cartridges from landfi ll.
Buying Sustainable Office Equipment Consumables

• Use a reputable supplier and obtain firm quality commitments.

• Warrantees on printing equipment should not be affected by the use of remanufactured consumables as fair trading laws prohibit equipment manufacturers from restricting a consumer’s right to choose an alternative supplier. If a poorly remanufactured cartridge caused damage to a printer or other equipment, the remanufacturer may be liable for the damage, but the printer warranty should remain intact.

• Some printer manufacturers may try to commit customers to long term contracts that stipulate the use of branded consumables only. Such contracts should be approached with caution.

• When choosing remanufactured consumables stipulate OEM specifications and give preference to suppliers that can provide service and quality guarantees (members of ACRA provide this assurance). Using a reputable remanufacturer from your local community may offer further sustainability benefits, supporting local jobs and reducing environmental impacts associated with transport.

Using Sustainable Office Equipment Consumables

• Most used office equipment consumables can be remanufactured or recycled. A number of organisations and companies provide a collection service.

• Using cartridges remanufactured to OEM specifications from a reputable firm can offer financial and environmental benefits to your council, without compromising print quality or equipment performance. The ACRA website can provide a full list of ACRA accredited suppliers.

• It is advisable to conduct a trial of any new printing equipment to ensure your operational and quality needs are met, prior to switching to a new product.

• Some suppliers will be able to provide data on the number of remanufactured cartridges supplied. This will be very useful in tracking your purchases enabling annual reporting. The requirement for supplying this information can be included in any specification council provides.

For more information see the Sustainable Choice Website:
http://www.lgsa-plus.net.au/sustainablechoice
Comparing Products

The most sustainable office equipment consumables will have the following features as well as meeting all your operational requirements:

**Environmental comparison**
- Supplier is committed to the promotion of remanufacture to OEM specifications.
- Supplier is committed to the promotion of recycling.
- Product contains the highest percentage of post consumer content possible.
- Minimum packaging to provide required protection.
- Manufacturer take back at end of life.
- Supplier demonstrates good environmental performance.

**Economic comparison**
- Cost of sustainable product is comparable or better than alternate product.

**Social comparison**
- Supplier supports Australian business.
- Supplier demonstrates good corporate citizenship.

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**Model Tender Clauses**

[Council] is committed to purchasing sustainable products and services whenever possible.

[Council] will give preference to organisations and individuals that can demonstrate their commitment to sustainability.

[Council] has determined that the following considerations must be met when purchasing office equipment consumables:

**Office equipment consumables must:**
- Be remanufactured to OEM “Original Equipment Manufacturer” specifications or incorporate a high percentage of post-consumer recycled content.
- Be capable of being recycled locally.
- Use minimum packaging to provide required protection.

**Ask suppliers to:**
- Specify which, if any, components of the consumables are remanufactured.
- Specify which, if any, components of the consumables are made from recycled materials.
- Specify the percentage of recycled content.
- State whether they make provision for remanufacturing or recycling of depleted consumables.
- State whether they will take back the products at end of life, and give full details of how and where they will be reprocessed.
- State whether they are a member of the Australasian Cartridge Remanufactures Association or other relevant industry association and request guarantees on the performance of their product.
- List the types of packaging used in delivering the product, including bulk delivery packaging. Specify:
  - The total weight of packaging per unit of product.
  - The proportion of recycled material used in packaging.
  - Whether the packaging can be recycled locally.
  - Specify whether the packaging includes any loose fill material.

For more information see the Sustainable Choice Website: [http://www.lgsa-plus.net.au/sustainablechoice](http://www.lgsa-plus.net.au/sustainablechoice)