

5 June 2017

Today 5 June is World Environment Day
We work to make every day an environment day.

Paper Coffee Cups – Are they recyclable?

*Is the Paper Cup Company's (TPCC) cup recyclable? **YES***
*Is enough being done in Australia to recycle paper cups? **NO***
What's TPCC doing about it?

Brief Background

The Paper Cup Company (TPCC) is a family owned business established in 2004. It has grown from humble beginnings to being one of the largest manufacturers of the largest range of paper cups in Australia. Other paper cup manufacturers in Australia focus on a small range of products to service multinational end users.

TPCC caters for a very large number of local Australian end users – cafes, restaurants, hospitals, event organisers and the like. In recent years we have attracted international brand names and we export to the USA, Japan, South Africa, France, Kuwait, Dubai and New Zealand.

TPCC goes to great lengths and expense to source high quality raw material from reputable global suppliers.

Our paper is sourced from Finland and produced from sustainable plantation timber. We monitor our suppliers on their performance against a range of key indicators such as environmental, international labour laws, business ethics and food safety compliance.

We retain control of almost every step of the manufacturing process. We buy virgin paper board, we assist customers with graphic design, we print in-house using water-based inks, we pack and dispatch from our factory in Tullamarine, Victoria.

We employ Australian workers and comply with Australian Industrial Awards.

ABC TV - War on Waste

Following the ABC television program *War on Waste* screened on Tuesday 30 May 2017, we have had several enquiries asking if our product is recyclable. The short answer is yes. We are grateful for the public airing that the ABC has given this important issue.

From the best knowledge available to us, the information on the *War on Waste* program was mostly correct:

paper coffee cups are made from paper.
The paper is coated with a polyethylene lining (PE).
PE is a plastic product.
Both PE and paper are recyclable.

The bigger question the program raised was whether the recyclable cups are being recycled

The program concluded, rightly, that there was confusion and lack of information about the recyclability of the paper coffee cup; and an awareness and education program is necessary. We agree. It also suggested that not enough separation of the product at collection points or at waste stations was occurring. We agree. And that there are no recycling facilities in Australia recycling coffee cups. Some evidence suggests that a small percentage *is* being recycled but certainly not enough.

What is TPCC doing about recycling? We already recycle PE-coated paper

TPCC's own experience confirms that the paper we use to manufacture the paper cups coated with PE is being recycled. We know this because we have a large industrial collection bin which is filled with the off-cuts – an inevitable result from manufacturing. This bin is collected each week by a recycling business in Melbourne.

The recycler pays us for the PE coated paper by the kilogram.

Are used paper coffee cups being recycled? Some evidence suggests yes, but not enough

Recycling our off-cuts is within our control and we do not waste any of it.

It is a different task once the cups are dispersed through end use.

The *ABC TV* program **left the impression that no coffee cups are being recycled in Australia.**

TPCC is aware of the *Australian Packaging Covenant* (APC) – a recent government and industry initiative working to address sustainability issues in the packaging industry.

The APC published a media release on 31 May 2017. It refers to an Issues Paper (see link below) to which TPCC has contributed.

The Issues Paper cites a recent study that found that polymer coated paper (PCP) under normal conditions is 'easily' able to be recycled when co-mingled with 'mixed' fibre and 'cardboard'¹, and that:

nearly 700 tonnes of paper cups are already being recovered and re processed into paperboard²

Like the APC, we recognize that not enough is being done. We conduct research and collaborate with paper mills to develop a different paper product with a better life cycle, less dependent on complex processes involving many parties, in an effort to achieve the lowest possible impact on the environment.

TPCC commends the APC Issues Paper and the work of the APC:

<http://www.packagingcovenant.org.au/news.php/76/recycle-your-takeaway-coffee-cups>

¹ *Industry Edge, Research into Australian Polymer Coated Fibre, Packaging(PCP) Material Flows and Collection, Recovery and Recycling Opportunities.*

² *APC Issues Paper- Recyclability of takeaway coffee cups in Australia, Polymer-coated Paperboard Working Group (PCPBWG) May 2017, p15.*