



THE AUDIT OFFICE
OF NEW SOUTH WALES

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MEDIA RELEASE

**AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORT
Recycling and Reuse of Waste by the NSW Public Sector**

This morning the Auditor-General of New South Wales, Peter Achterstraat, released a report on how well the NSW public sector is reducing waste and improving recycling and reuse.

The four key areas of waste we examined were paper and cardboard, office equipment, vegetation, such as leaves and tree clippings, and construction materials.

"Government agencies have increased recycling and reuse, reduced the amounts of waste going to landfill and also purchased more material with recycled content", said Peter Achterstraat.

"The Department of Environment and Climate Change has provided clear guidance and support to government agencies."

In the 2007 period 5.4 million tonnes of waste was reused or recycled by the public sector. Around half a million tonnes of waste was disposed of to landfill. Over 90 per cent of waste is generated by construction activities.

Exhibit 5: Waste Reuse and Recycling by the Public Sector		
Waste type	Percentage reused or recycled	
	2001	2007
Overall	73	92
Paper and cardboard	60	79
Computer equipment	51	92
Vegetation	88	64
Construction materials	73	93

The purchase of recycled content construction materials (such as concrete, asphalt, aggregates and timber) had increased from six per cent in 2001 to 45 per cent in 2007. The use of recycled content copy paper had increased from 19 per cent in 2001 to 45 per cent in 2007 and there has been a large increase in the purchase of recycled content stationery.

There was, however, a decline in purchase of recycled content paper for publishing from 39 per cent in 2001 to 19 per cent in 2007.

“Government agencies have done well in implementing the Government’s Waste Reduction and Purchasing Policy”, said Peter Achterstraat.

“The policy is now ten years old and much has changed in community expectations about reducing damage to the environment. It is time to review the policy.”

We identified some opportunities to further improve the program. These include:

- introducing targets to encourage the purchase of recycled content materials
- making it easier for agencies to buy recycled content goods such as recycled content paper and toner cartridges
- identifying practices to reduce paper consumption such as greater use of electronic publishing and double-sided printing.

“The Audit Office looked more closely at its own printing and found the quality and cost of recycled content paper is now very close to virgin paper”, said Peter Achterstraat. “I have therefore decided to print this and future reports on paper with recycled content. I encourage other agencies to have another look at their practices to see if they too can do more to increase recycling and reuse.”

For further information please contact Phil Thomas, Assistant Auditor-General on 9275 7106.