

From landfill to clean boxing bag fill

SUSTAINABILITY COVENANT CASE STUDY

Since 2006, Ai Group has provided funding assistance for 34 sustainability and environmental projects involving 62 participating organisations. More than \$1 million has been invested in grants in the past three years.

A new Sustainability Covenant with EPA Victoria was launched in March 2009, with funding of \$3 million available over the next three years.

From landfill to clean boxing bag fill.

That's just one of the environmental outcomes from a pilot study turned full-time recycling program to reuse cleaning rags at the Amcor Packaging Group site at Laverton.

Previously, the rags – to clean printing dies – were discarded, contaminated with hydrocarbon-based printing inks, after just one use.

Now, the rags are cleaned and reused between 8-12 times before further recycling in other industrial cleaning operations. Eventually, when past use for cleaning tasks, the rags are cleaned, shredded and used in boxing training bags.

Amcor Group Manager Sustainability and Environment John Newton said the program was now an important part of the company's environmental direction.

"While waste avoidance is a primary goal, there are some operations where waste reduction, via reuse and recycling, becomes the best solution," Mr Newton said.

"Through our waste managers, Theiss Service Management, we trialed this process. Our aims were to achieve significant environmental outcomes – that of removing waste from landfill – and accompanying financial savings."

This program, now employed full-time at Laverton and is being rolled out at other Amcor sites, ticks both environmental and financial boxes, with cost savings of some 25% and a reduced environmental impact from Amcor's operations.

"Not only have we removed the rags from landfill, because we are reusing the rags up to a dozen times or more, we are also



From landfill to clean boxing bag fill

SUSTAINABILITY COVENANT CASE STUDY

Further information

Australian Industry Group
Tel: 1300 733 752
Email: sustainablebusiness@aigroup.asn.au
www.aigroup.com.au

Paul Newbury
Branch General Manager
AlSCO
Mulgrave Branch
41-43 Miles Street
Mulgrave VIC, 3170

John Newton
Group Manager Sustainability and Environment
Amcor
109 Burwood Road
Hawthorn VIC, 3122

or contact EPA Victoria
Tel: 03 9695 2722
Email: business.programs@epa.vic.gov.au



creating fewer rags.”
Mr Newton commented.

In Victoria alone, Amcor operations had been disposing of more than 60 tonnes of used rags each year.

Mr Newton said the program had also engendered cultural change at its worksites.

Amcor employs more than 4,500 people and posts turnover in excess of \$2 billion in 70 sites across its Australian and New Zealand operations.

Thiess Service Management Special Projects Manager David Elder said the recycling/reuse project began by conducting waste audits.

“We identified the opportunity to remove the rags from the waste stream and had initial discussions with AlSCO, the textile services business, about Amcor’s preferred outcomes.

“Once the key targets were set, Thiess gathered information from its reporting system to identify sites to benefit from the rag reuse operation. After the three-month trial period, a cost feasibility was completed and the operation was put in place.

“The key to the success of Amcor’s program has been the upfront work with staff and management on the individual sites, that has allowed for a smooth transition to the new system.”

AlSCO removes the rags from Amcor’s sites and replaces them with cleaned rags – for example 1000 rags collected and 1000 rags delivered. The soiled rags are collected and transported in specially designed containers to AlSCO’s plant, where they are cleaned in massive hydraulic presses. The eliminated hydrocarbon waste materials are then removed by an EPA-approved processor and further recycled as alternate fuels.