

Shining Example

By Anna Game-Lopata

Viscount Plastics is a leading full-service provider of rigid plastic materials handling, packaging and industrial products with operations across 12 locations in Australia and New Zealand.

According to Viscount Plastics manager - Materials Handling Catherine Moran, the company is a leader in the Returnable Transit Packaging and customer logistics solutions market.

"With the integrity of the established Nally brand, Viscount offers knowledge, timely service and local manufacture for key retail, manufacturing and distribution markets," Moran says.

Using Returnable Transit Packaging, Viscount is able to assist customers in delivering significant environmental benefits while optimising and driving costs from their supply chain.

"The products are suitable for automated and manual systems and include foldable, rigid and swing bar crates, pallets, merchandising systems, tubs and bulk bins," she says.

Viscount Plastics is currently excited about its participation as the co-sponsor of cutting-edge new research into the life cycle of returnable plastic crates (RPC).

"Commissioned by Coles Group Limited, the Hyder Consulting Returnable Plastic Crate Life Cycle Analysis finds that plastic products far outperform competing materials such as corrugated fibreboard, waxed corrugated fibreboard and expanded polystyrene," Moran enthuses.

"Plastic, often unjustly vilified in some environmental literature, has triumphed in this new research study of materials handling and packaging products."

Conducted by international environmental engineering consultants, Hyder Consulting, the study found that RPCs outperformed their rivals across seven fresh product lines.

"The study was carried out during 2007 and a final report presented to Coles Group in late 2007," Moran says.

"Coles commissioned the study to assess the environmental impacts of these materials handling products."

The fresh product lines selected for this study were tomatoes, celery, beans, apples, chicken (roisserie birds), lamb (legs) and pork (tenderloins).

"While conducted on the supply of fresh products to Coles' Victorian stores, the conclusions were extrapolated to national impacts using existing data from a broad range of sources," Moran explains.

"The researchers used the Life Cycle Assessment method, an internationally accepted and standardised method for product-based assessments," Moran says.

"One of the interesting of the findings in the research was that using RPCs requires consumption of only 7.8 per cent of the water of alternative products," Moran says.

"This means that in 2007/08 the water savings equate to the annual water consumption of 3,200 households." In terms of energy use, the study finds using RPCs for fresh products requires 35.9 per cent of the energy required when using alternative products.

The difference in energy consumption in 2007/08 between RPCs and alternatives equates to electricity and gas consumption of 8,900 average Australian households.

Catherine Moran says the study also reveals that RPCs emit 38.2 per cent of the greenhouse gases of alternatives.

This equates to removing 20,400 cars from Australian roads for 2007/08.

"RPCs have a mere 40.7 per cent impact on non-renewable resources compared with the alternatives," she points out.

"Overall, the environmental burden of RPCs is 20.1per cent of the alternative products."

"The study demonstrates the value of using readily recyclable materials," Moran adds.

"Good environmental outcomes are also good for the bottom line. It makes sound economic sense to adopt the best environmental practices."

"In particular it's worth noting that used in the correct applications, plastics are the best environmental solution, as the Coles study has found," Moran says.

"For example, every recyclable plastic crate in use will complete an average 12.5 cycles in 2007/08."

Making use of the research findings, Viscount Plastics - Materials Handling offers a wide variety of crate and supply chain solutions.

Catherine Moran says most recent of the company's innovations is the design and launch of the Returnable Nallyenviro™ Crate.

"Developed specifically to eliminate waste from the farm and supply chain and consistently expanding, this product range provides corrugated trays with greater life expectancies of between one and five trips," Moran adds.

"It's all about offering environmental solutions from recycled product."

"Since commercialisation in February 2007, customers of the Nallyenviro™ Crate

have used 20K less cardboard waste cartons, achieved \$60 thousand savings in carton purchases and \$20 thousand saving in damaged stock due to cardboard trays collapsing," explains Moran.

"Viscount Plastics also offers to take back the crates for re-birth or to facilitate recycling."

In addition, Viscount Plastics offers materials handling solutions such as the Nally Eco Range made from post consumer waste.

"This means the product utilises landfill nasties like empty used milk bottles and shrink-wrap," Moran says.

"Reductions in greenhouse gases, water consumption and energy use through by utilising Viscount's plastic returnable crate system provides great environmental news to consumers," Moran says.

"We at Viscount Plastics therefore believe providing sponsorship to industry initiatives such as Packaging Magazine's Evolution Awards is a natural fit for our company," Moran says.

"It shows both a commitment to our customer base and to the packaging industry."

Is your company leading the way in packaging waste reduction?

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