Western Teacher goes green



New *Western Teacher* bio-film: biobased, biodegradable and home-compostable.

Have you noticed a difference to the packaging of your *Western Teacher* magazine?

Introducing biobased, biodegradable and home-compostable bio-film – a greener alternative to petroleum-based mail wrap, supplied by local Perth company, Vanguard Media Group.

The SSTUWA has switched over to using this bio-film when posting out your physical copy of the magazine, and we're one of the first in the state to do so. We even helped trial the new product when it was in its testing stage, prior to market introduction.

It's no secret that as a society, we need to curb our current plastic production to improve the fragile state of our environment, which is why we've adopted this new, more environmentally friendly mail-wrapping solution.

Biodegradable plastics – particularly those that are biobased and compostable like the new mail wrap – are a vital tool with a key role to play in addressing plastic pollution.

Derived from natural resources, such as sugarcane, cassava and corn, the bio-film is compostable into biomass, carbon dioxide and water.

Here are some reasons why biobased and biodegradable options are an ideal choice for mail-wrapping:

- They are made from renewable biomass sources, not fossil fuels like some other biodegradable or oxo-degradable plastics, thus reducing carbon output.
- Biobased and biodegradable mail-wrapping mixes are compostable and home-compostable – a legitimate and encouraged recycling solution.
- They will also biodegrade in landfill, curbing the accumulation of non-biodegradable plastic waste and breaking down into organic matter.

- It stimulates demand for an industrial composting facility, a solution for a greener future.

Home compostable

The *Western Teacher* bio-film wrap is home-compostable.

There's plenty of information online about how to kick-start your home composting system, but here are some basics to get started:

1. Choose a shady site outside so worms and microbes have the best chance of survival.
2. If possible, choose a spot close to the kitchen for convenient disposal of scraps.
3. Dig the bin into the ground at least 10cm to deter unwanted pests.
4. Add a layer of twigs, egg cartons and/or dry leaves to assist with aeration.
5. Add activators such as comfrey and yarrow, animal manures (not pet poo), compost from an old heap, or blood and bone.
6. Lightly spray with water.

Make sure two thirds of the contents are kitchen scrap to one third carbon ingredients. The more diverse the better. When your bin is one third full, turn your compost and repeat every couple of weeks for aeration.

Avoid recycling

Biodegradable and biobased plastics should not be disposed of through traditional recycling means as their chemical composition and degradation properties differ to conventional plastics. Mixing them can disrupt the recycling process of traditional plastics.

FOGO is a no-go

Also avoid placing the wrap in your council food organics and garden organics (FOGO) bin. Council FOGO disposal systems do not currently recognise compostable plastics, other than authorised compostable bags, so the wrap may disrupt their systems.

If you don't have a home compost system, pop the wrap in your landfill bin. Because it is made of biomaterial, it will decompose into biomass, carbon dioxide and water.

Authorised by Sally Dennis, General Secretary, The State School Teachers' Union of W.A.
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