EPSA NEWSLETTER – MID YEAR REVIEW 2024

A Message from the President

Simon Pickett

It has been an exceptionally busy and productive period for the Expanded Polystyrene (EPS) sector in Australia. We have made significant strides in various initiatives and are excited to share these updates with you.

Our participation at the fourth session of the UN Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC-4) in Canada was a pivotal moment, showcasing our commitment to addressing global plastic pollution. We have also been closely monitoring the development of product stewardship strategies by the Australian Packaging Covenant for EPS, ensuring that our industry continues to lead in sustainable practices.

I am particularly proud of the growth of Styrocycle, our innovative recycling initiative. This program continues to expand across the eastern seaboard, with plans to extend to every state in Australia.

The recognition of EPS as a recyclable material by the United Nations Environment Program is a testament to our collective efforts. This achievement, spearheaded by the Global Expanded Polystyrene Sustainability Alliance, underscores the importance of EPS in sustainable practices worldwide.

Additionally, we are launching a new website dedicated to educating the public about the benefits of EPS waffle pods, countering misinformation, and advocating for their continued use in construction.

Thank you for your continued support and dedication to advancing the EPS industry.

Simon Pickett

EPSA Attends INC-4 in Canada

The Expanded Polystyrene Australia (EPSA) team recently attended the fourth session of the UN Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC-4) in Ottawa, Canada. This critical gathering aimed to address global plastic pollution and develop a legally binding instrument to tackle this issue.

Key Outcomes:

1. **Production Bans:** While some advocates push for plastic production bans, the consensus suggests these are unlikely to be implemented.

2. **Extended Producer Responsibility:** There is broad agreement on the need for recycling schemes, though these are expected to be managed on a country-by-country basis rather than through a global treaty.

3. **Chemicals of Concern:** A significant focus is on identifying chemicals of concern. Countries like Australia, Europe, and Canada support this initiative, while others like the US, China, and Russia argue it extends beyond the scope of the agreement.

These discussions are far from over, stay tuned for future updates.

Pictured: The delegates from the Global EPS Sustainability Alliance

Global Expanded Sustainability Alliance has significant win

Expanded Polystyrene used for storage and transportation of food products, white goods and vital medical supplies has been recognised as recyclable in practice and at scale by the United Nations Environment Program. (1)

This recognition has been achieved thanks to the hard work of the Global Expanded Polystyrene Sustainability Alliance, which brings together EPS representative organisations from throughout the world, including Australia.

This development contradicts misleading claims EPS is a problematic plastic and highlights EPS is not only 100 per cent recyclable but also confirms it is recycled at scale and volume throughout the world.

Unfortunately for the EPS sector, much damage has been done by claims the product is problematic, so the hard work now begins in Australia and overseas to demonstrate EPS is in fact recycled at scale and volume throughout the world.

Instead of decision makers going for simplistic solutions and banning EPS based on misinformation, the Global Expanded Sustainability Alliance is working hard through the United Nations Environment Program to ensure a pathway forward for the sector.

Styrocycle Network Expansion

Congratulations to all EPSA members who have joined the Styrocycle network! This innovative recycling initiative now covers the eastern seaboard, with plans to expand to Northern Tasmania and Western Australia. Our 12 drop-off locations provide communities with opportunities to recycle EPS packaging waste, promoting a circular economy.

This will mean the network will be in every State of Australia and give the local community an opportunity to be responsible with their expanded polystyrene packaging waste and see it recycled and reused as part of the circular economy.

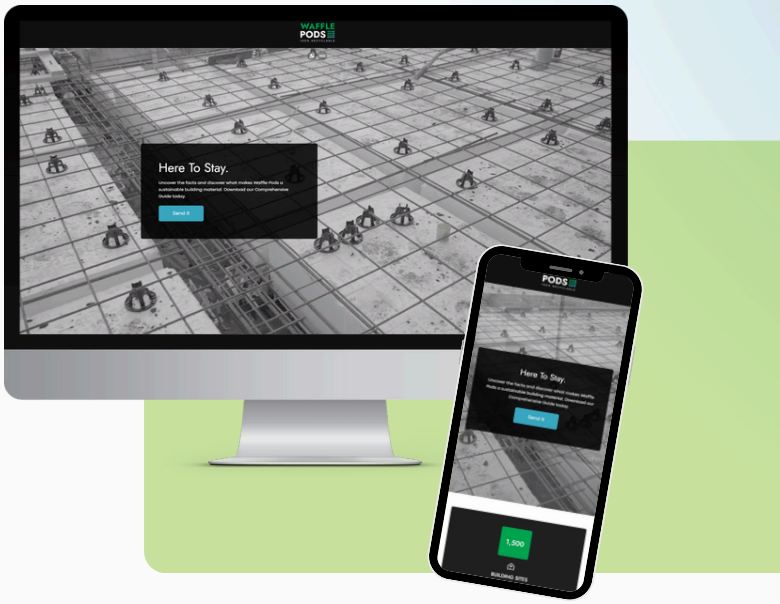
Our website and social media platforms continue to educate the public and decision-makers about the recyclability of EPS, reinforcing its value in sustainable practices. All members are encouraged to continue to promote via their own digital channels.

NEW Website to Promote EPS Waffle Pods Facts

EPSA is proud to launch a new website dedicated to explaining the benefits of EPS waffle pods.

In recent times producers of alternative void fill products, which are double the cost, use more raw materials to produce, have a higher carbon footprint, are not thermally efficient and are sometimes inaccurately marketed as being made from 100 per cent recycled materials have chosen to attack the waffle pod technology as a solution for concrete slab construction.

To counter this, our new site – planned to launch later in July - is designed to highlight the benefits of waffle pods, which have been the mainstay of the home building sector on the eastern seaboard of Australia for the last 40 years.



The success of waffle pods has been in their low cost, ease of use and added thermal benefits. Waffle pods are 100% recyclable and offset the second highest emitter of CO_2 – cement, reducing carbon footprint whilst assisting housing affordability.

STAY TUNED! Keep an eye out for more news about our new destination. Be sure to share it with your friends and show your customers where to get the facts on the original and best void filler – EPS Waffle Pods – many others try, but none match on price, efficient recyclability or ease of use.

Product Stewardship On The Way

In recognition of the vital role Expanded Polystyrene plays in the transport of appliances and white goods, Expanded Polystyrene Australia is monitoring closely the development of a product stewardship strategy by the Australian Packaging Covenant (APCO).

The development of product stewardship by APCO is seen by EPSA as an acknowledgement EPS is vital for the transport of white goods in Australia and a simplistic approach of banning the product will simply not work.

APCO

Expanded Polystyrene (EPS) In The News

EPS Core Structural Panels Pass The Test

Positive news comes from Darwin surrounding Exterior Insulation and Finish Systems (EIFS). Arctic Installations has successfully passed rigorous cyclonic testing for its EPS core structural panels at James Cook University.

This breakthrough highlights the enhanced durability and resilience of EIFS with EPS cores, making them ideal for cyclone-prone regions. This achievement not only boosts local manufacturing capabilities but also sets a new standard for sustainable and resilient building solutions.

Read about it here
https://www.australianmanufacturing.com.au/darwin-manufacturer-meets-cyclonic-standards-eyes-volume-production/

EPS Industry Secures Pivotal Win with UN Science Report in Plastic Treaty Talks

The article discusses a significant development in the United Nations (UN) plastics treaty talks, specifically concerning expanded polystyrene (EPS) packaging used in transportation. The updated UN science report now recognises EPS transport packaging as being successfully recycled "in practice, at scale," similar to PET bottles, a classification that could potentially exempt EPS from being listed as a problematic plastic application in future treaty discussions.

Industry representatives, particularly from the EPS sector, view this recognition as a pivotal moment, potentially altering perceptions about the recyclability of EPS packaging. The EPS Industry Alliance in the U.S. and the European Manufacturers of Expanded Polystyrene Association (EUMEPS) express satisfaction with the acknowledgment from the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), emphasising that EPS transport packaging is indeed recycled widely and effectively.

Read about it here:
https://epsa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/EPS-transport-packaging-gains-key-support-in-UN-sustainability-study-_-Plastics-News.pdf

CASE STUDY

Life cycle analysis shows: Refrigerated cardboard boxes are not better for the environment than EPS cool boxes.

In a comparative life cycle analysis, the environmental effects of cardboard coolers were compared with those of coolers made from expanded polystyrene (EPS). Contrary to public opinion, cardboard coolers do not appear to be more environmentally friendly than their EPS counterparts. The study indicates that the CO2 impact of both types of boxes is likely equivalent, while EPS cool boxes score better on the overall environmental footprint and specific environmental effects, such as emissions to water.

Read about it here.

Thank you for staying engaged with our efforts and advancements. Together, we can continue to promote the sustainable and beneficial use of Expanded Polystyrene in all its applications.

STYROCYCLE — POLYSTYRENE RECYCLING

expanded polystyrene australia

Global EPS SUSTAINABILITY Alliance

Footnote

(1) https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/45368/PlasticPollutionScience.pdf