



*Two Sides is a campaign that has been pushing the environmental credentials of paper and print for almost a decade, and despite some strong success, it is not taking a rest - it continues to lead the charge for members, and more broadly, the industry. Working hand in hand with the Keep Me Posted campaign, Two Sides is challenging companies to explain Go Paperless.*

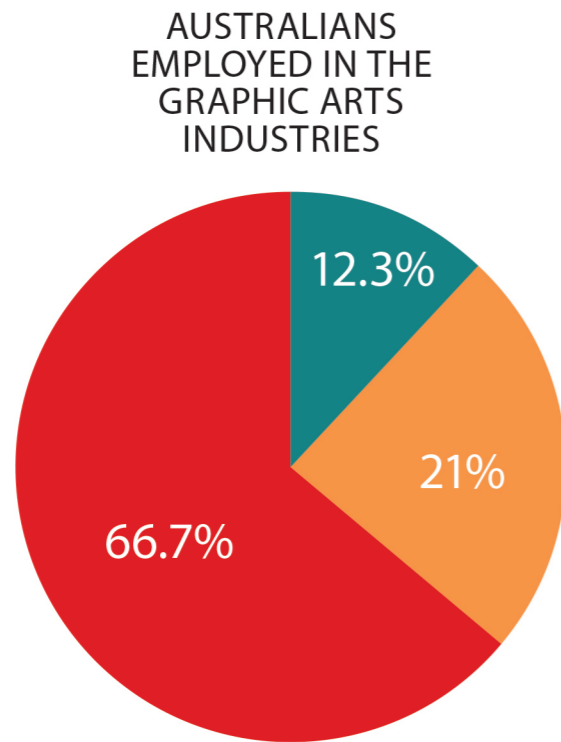
## Two Sides: Going paperless is a nonsense

Millions of us are being encouraged to 'go paperless' with bills and statements, receiving them digitally rather than in print. But could this do more damage to the environment and our finances rather than less?

If you have received a printed bank statement or utility bill recently, it is likely that the company that sent it to you will have added a message, encouraging you to switch to digital communications. The message could be tied to an environmental argument ('Go Green. Go Paperless'), or it could just be a blunt warning that you will be charged for any future print statement or bill. Either way, the majority of companies want you online rather than off.

It doesn't take a business genius to work out why. Printing and mailing pieces of paper to millions of customers is a significant cost for any company, whether it is a high street bank or a domestic water company, while making customers log into a website in order to download their bill is a cheaper and far less labour-intensive option.

But while businesses are rubbing their hands at this cost-saving move, customers are becoming increasingly concerned about their lack of financial control, as well as key pieces of personal information being in the hands of profit-driven companies, raising important questions about privacy and security.



- ▣ ASSOCIATED 160,000
- ▣ PULP AND PAPER 60,000
- ▣ PRINT 31,000

### 'Go paperless, save a tree' - not the case

Companies and brands have been trying to get their customers to go paperless for a while now. But to persuade consumers to give something up, there has to be a solid reason - one that is not definitely linked to commercial revenue. So, with social purpose high on the agenda in many boardrooms, the environment has been held up as the main driver for change. The trouble is, the facts about paper and the environment don't fit with what big business is telling us.

Paper is one of the most environmentally friendly forms of communication available, and the paper industry is one of the world's most sustainable. Australia enjoys one of the highest paper recovery and recycling rates in the world (87 per cent recovered, 70 per cent recycled), and the volume of its forests increased by over 308,000 hectares in just five years (2010-2015) - the second highest forest gain on the planet.

Australia has two million hectares of working forests, while New Zealand has a total of 2.1 million out of the 10.1 million-hectare total forests area, which covers 38 per cent of the land area. In NZ, forests increased by 27 per cent for Radiata and 54 per cent for Douglas Pine from 2003 to 2013. Take the paper industry's rigorous replanting schemes out of the equation and these increases could swiftly reverse.

### A boost for the economy

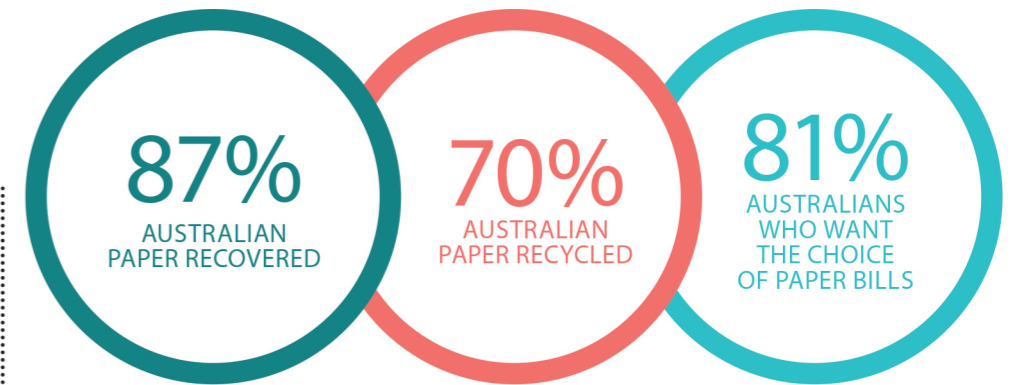
While the Australian print industry makes a significant contribution to the environment, it makes an equally significant contribution to the economy. With an annual turnover of \$7.5bn, it employs 30,500 people, while the pulp and paper industry generates an annual sales income of \$9bn, employing 60,820 people. Taken with those employed in associated industries such as mail, distribution, publishing and creative, the total amount of Australians that make a living from paper, print, mail and distribution is 251,000.

One of the less obvious economic problems with the shift from offline to digital is the movement of business and jobs overseas. By their very nature, digital communications can be created and sent from anywhere in the world, and there are always going to be cheaper options. So, it should come as no surprise to discover that Australian companies are increasingly looking at other countries to fulfil their online requirements. This is not only damaging to the Australian economy, but potentially catastrophic for the individuals that have spent their entire careers in paper and print.

### Paper Mate

Closer to home, the movement away from paper bills and statements has caused problems for those who rely on printed records to control their spending or simply cannot connect to the internet easily. As with many developments in technology, it's often the more vulnerable in society that get left behind - the elderly, disabled, or those that cannot afford electronic devices or connectivity. And for those on a tight budget, paper statements and bills can be vital for keeping track of what's being spent to ensure they don't get into financial difficulty.

"There are a range of vulnerable people in our society that are told to go online but simply cannot," says Kellie Northwood, chair of Keep Me Posted, a global campaign to



give people choice when it comes to receiving bills and statements. "What are you supposed to do if you don't have broadband, or if you have a major disability that means you can't go online? Or you can't afford it because you're unemployed or you're a student? It's terribly unfair. This digital divide is growing, not getting better."

### The right to choose

One of the main problems with the shift from print to digital communication is that the majority of companies haven't asked the opinion of the people that matter the most: their customers. If they had, it's likely they would receive a resounding 'no' to digital and a 'yes' to print.

A global survey by Toluna in early 2019 found that 81 per cent of people believe they have the right to choose how they receive their communications (printed or electronically) from financial organisations and service providers, while over half think claims about the switch to digital being 'better for the environment' are really because the sender wants to save money.

Ultimately, the choice of whether to receive print or digital communication should come down to the consumer, not the business. So, the next time you're encouraged to switch from paper to digital, consider the facts before you decide. To find out more about the Two Sides anti-greenwashing campaign, go to [www.twosides.org.au/anti-green-wash](http://www.twosides.org.au/anti-green-wash).

The Real Media Collective is an industry association representing the paper, print, mail, publishing and distribution companies across the Australian and New Zealand landscape.

For more information [www.therealmediacollective.com.au](http://www.therealmediacollective.com.au) 21

Opposite page: Big players want out of printed bills: This from NRMA

