



The Ultimate Guide to
**Sustainable
Printing for
Fashion and
Retail in Australia**



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**\$821
BILLION**



Digital printing is a mainstay among many of the top fashion and retail marketing campaigns around the world. Printed materials power the spaces used by top brands to grow their popularity and recall among their target markets. Likewise, they're largely responsible for shaping the atmosphere found in stores and pop-ups.

By 2022, the global market for printing is **set to hit \$821 billion**. It's an industry that isn't just alive and well, but one that's thriving across various metrics.

Naturally, it begs the question: *what's the catch?*

The catch is sustainability.

It takes an endless stream of ink, paper, canvas, plastic, and other materials to ring up a multi-billion dollar price tag, and a heap of waste and damaging byproducts to keep that stream flowing. Few manufacturers produce hardware that's friendly to the environment, and even fewer printing shops conduct business with minimal waste.

And yet, the demand stays high. With countless businesses relying on print for their marketing and operations, digital printing has shown the potential to be a destructive force to our land, skies, and oceans.

The fashion and retail industries are a notable dot on the hazard map, as both a cause for harmful practices as well as a shining example of inspiring and creative end-products. They're a sector that needs to strike a balance: continue to create astounding media while minimising their ecological impact.

To help bridge that gap, we've prepared a guide that covers everything you need to know about sustainable printing for Australian fashion and retail. In it, you'll learn:

- What sustainable printing means,
- What it can do, and most importantly,
- How to find partners that print sustainably.

What is Sustainable Printing?

Sustainable printing is the process of creating digitally printed materials without leaving a negative impact on the environment. This means minimising waste, deforestation, and carbon emissions at every point along the supply chain. Since sustainability is also a matter of producing output that's easy to re-use, recycle, and/or biodegrade, sustainable printing has to create end products with a reasonable lifespan.

A good example of sustainable versus unsustainable printing in action would be banner printing.

On the other hand, you can always opt to transfer your designs to a banner made of fabric. The technology behind **modern fabric printing** makes it highly sustainable, **with Next Printing being one of the first to use fabrics made of 100% recycled material as part of our standard range.**

Sustainable printing also has much to do with the machinery used during the production process. Not all printer manufacturers **have demonstrated a commitment to environmentalism**, and certain brands (notably, **HP** and **Durst**) have a far better track record for eco-friendliness.

You'd do well to ask your printing partners what brands they trust to power their operations.

What Can Sustainable Printing Do?



There are two common fears surrounding eco-friendly options. First is cost, or the fear that sustainable business practices are a shortcut to bankruptcy. Second is quality, or the fear that eco-friendly materials look terrible, fall apart, or otherwise fail to make a positive impression on customers.

LESS EXPENSE, MORE PROFIT

To answer the first concern, it may surprise you to know that there's a fast-growing number of reasons why sustainable practices can help reduce costs. Planet-friendly materials are getting more affordable, and zero-waste policies are getting more popular among businesses looking to increase profit.

For the average Australian fashion or retail outfit, what this means at a glance is that sustainable printing shouldn't run up a significantly higher cost than more destructive options.

Looking deeper, however, sustainable printing may prove to be *profitable*. Green products are a hot commodity, and the trend of demand has been increasing year over year—carving a reputation for eco-friendliness is an effective way of boosting sales and winning brand loyalty.

As far as many analysts are concerned, the case is closed when it comes to the cost of doing business sustainably: the financial benefits of going green far outweigh the costs, and the same benefits hold for printing.

BIGGER IMPACT, BETTER RESULTS

The goal of any marketing manager in fashion or retail is to deliver genuine and memorable brand experiences. Marketers invest in pop-ups, showrooms, and excellent point-of-sale design because they know that there's only so much you can do with remote media (e.g. TV and the internet).

People gravitate towards tactile

experiences; things they can touch or occupy space with are poised to make a much better impression than monitors and billboards. As such, your choices in digital printing are limited by the demands of your creative process: you either find a partner that can print to your specifications, or cut ideas into something your suppliers can achieve.

Contrary to popular belief, sustainable printing materials have earned a reputation for high quality and user satisfaction.

CASE EXAMPLE: RE-BOARD®

A shining example of this would be **Re-Board®**: a durable, lightweight paperboard that's 100% recyclable, and crafted using materials sourced from FSC certified wood mills. It's a world-class, printer-friendly material that's making waves around the world, while also being great for the planet.

Re-Board® is widely hailed as counting among the top materials for sustainable printing, as well as a smash hit among brands and artists looking to **unleash some serious creativity**. We've had clients who used the material to construct event booths, amazing set pieces, and even custom furniture. See how Sephora used Re-board® [here](#)



CASE EXAMPLE: HP PRINTERS

On the other hand, you also have very capable printer manufacturers that are also dedicated to getting sustainability right. We partnered with HP for the quality of their machines, and also offerings like **the Planet Partner program**, a recycling initiative that makes it easy for us to return used printheads, cartridges, and other components.

All told, sustainable printing can help a brand score big wins with their campaigns. They can go toe-to-toe with top exhibition construction materials without demanding an arm and a leg in exchange.

Partnering with a Sustainable Printing Firm

It's important to know the features of a sustainable printing firm in order to reap the benefits of more sustainable business. For this last section, we'll walk you through a checklist of practices you can find in a greener partner.

1. ASK ABOUT THEIR MATERIALS

As we've mentioned, there are many kinds of materials that count as eco-friendly. Sustainable printing service providers do not rely on plastics or plastic-based inputs, but instead offer a healthy range of alternatives such as cloth and paper.

If you're dealing with a printing shop that exclusively offers plastic, or prices more ethical (yes, ethical) alternatives above a reasonable limit, then you'd be better off looking elsewhere.





2. ASK ABOUT THEIR PROCESSES

You're within your rights to demand transparency from your print service providers about the sustainability of their practices.

First off, find out what steps they take towards waste reduction. The average printing firm produces a large amount of waste over the course of doing business. All that extra material has to go *somewhere*, after all, and efforts at reduction and responsible disposal are core to sustainability.

3. ASK ABOUT RECYCLING

After your campaigns have run their course, you shouldn't ship your collaterals away to the nearest landfill. Upcycling or recycling options ought to be considered as the first course of action for printed materials that have outlived their usefulness to you.

Since taking the extra step to recycle can be an added burden to players in the fashion and retail industries, it helps


to find a printing partner that can offer services (at best) or consultancy (at least) for dealing with exhausted collaterals.

Some may take them off your hands entirely, while others might connect you to pick-up services near you. In either case, an offer to help you dispose of waste should be taken as a very positive sign.

4. NEVER COMPROMISE ON QUALITY.

Finally, you should never buy into the myth that sustainable business means lowering your expectations for quality. Any printing shop that tells you to temper your creativity or diminish the experiences you offer your customers is wasting your time.

Your end products should be a reflection of your brand's innate creativity, and should survive whatever settings you choose to house them. Likewise, you ought to have options to explore marketing to the various senses—meaning interactive displays built sustainably should be on the table, should you choose to go that route.



Conclusion

As the world pivots to seek more sustainable options, those working in the Australian fashion and retail industries should be relieved to know that there are easy ways to get with the times. Sustainable printing is affordable, practical, and available.

With decision-makers around the world growing to understand the role and importance of choosing sustainability, you wouldn't want to fall behind. Rather than contribute to the uncertainty surrounding life after our time, step up and make a difference—opt for planet-friendly methods and bring more than just your ideas to life.

You can contact us to learn more about the services we offer and processes we've adopted, or visit our product pages to dive deeper into solutions like **Re-Board®**.



Next Printing Environmental Pledge

Next Printing pledges to research, explore options and offer environmentally friendly alternatives to the solutions we provide our clients.

We will challenge our internal processes and give higher sourcing preference to our suppliers who offer eco-friendly products. We will seek and favour pro-active partners who care about the planet as much as we do and acknowledge that we all play a part in caring for the environment.

We promise to regularly review how we can reduce our production emissions and waste and continually search and introduce new products and materials for better ways to manage our environmental footprint.

We will lead and inspire our team to be mindful of their own environmental impact and offer better alternatives inline with our pledge such as:

- Carpool or use public transport
- Using eco-friendly cleaning products
- Reducing the unnecessary use of electricity
- Understanding the difference between recycling and recyclable
- Recycling plastics internally
- Using reusable cups, plates, bowls, cutlery rather than disposable
- Repurposing offcuts for packaging
- Working towards a paperless office environment

In a world of escalating waste, we are committed to doing what is right for our planet.

**Creativity through
sustainability.**