SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT ABOUT RESOURCE EFFICIENCY.

Some people assume that polystyrene, especially packaging products, are exhausting our landfills and cannot be recycled.

Many of those who know that recycling is possible say it is not cost effective or there is no market for it.

THE FACT IS ...

- Polystyrene food service products form substantially less than 1% of municipal solid waste by weight and volume.

They are already being successfully recycled into useful products such as office accessories and building insulation, even though this can be a very costly procedure.

- The technology and markets for recycled polystyrene are rapidly expanding.
- For years, manufacturers of polystyrene products have reprocessed "in-house" scrap. Currently in Australia they recycle about 5,000 tonnes of scrap each year.
- The demand for recycled polystyrene is increasing. It produces a quality product that can in turn be recycled, again and again, wherever its useful life ends.

DID YOU KNOW...

Independent scientific study has shown that using polystyrene for single-use applications has less environmental impact than common alternatives.

The only effective way to properly assess the overall environmental impact of any material is "life-cycle analysis" – an internationally accepted method to evaluate all impacts, including raw materials processing, energy consumption and waste emissions.

In a study* using this cradle-to-grave method to compile the energy/environmental impacts of foam polystyrene and bleached paperboard for cups, plates and food packaging, it was found that polystyrene manufacture, use and disposal

- requires 30% less energy
- produces 46% less emissions to atmosphere
- generates 42% less water-borne waste.

These comparisons are even more favourable to polystyrene when recycling is taken into consideration.

This study conducted by Franklin Associates Ltd., a consultant to the US Environmental Protection Agency, also revealed that if the plastic products they studied in the United States were replaced with non-plastic alternative products, total energy consumption would have to be increased by 834.2 trillion kwh, enough energy to heat 4 million homes for one year. This is as many homes as there are in Victoria, NSW and Queensland added together.

* Resource and Environmental Profile Analysis of Foam Polystyrene and Bleached Paperboard Containers. Franklin Associates, June 1990.

General materials flow for "cradle-to-grave" analysis of a product distribution system.