

# Silver lining as trouble brews for environment

CAMERON ENGLAND



ECO ESPRESSO: Detmold's Tom Lunn with the new coffee cups which can be recycled. Picture: MATT TURNER

ABOUT a billion disposable coffee cups go into landfill in Australia each year – a problem South Australian packaging company Detmold is trying to help solve.

The Brompton company has been developing a coffee cup for the past 18 months which is much easier to recycle, with hopes its use can divert large amounts of waste from landfill into recycling.

Coffee cups have a plastic lining which, while it is only 4 per cent of the product, means it is not possible to recycle through most council recycling streams.

Detmold, which has a dedicated research and development program called Launchpad, employing more than 20 people, thinks it has come up with a solution which could make recycling coffee cups palatable to waste companies and economically attractive for coffee providers.

"We've been working for 18 months on how we can help fix the problem, which is a global problem of these cups ending up in landfill," group marketing manager Shane Fuller said.

"The *War on Waste* that the ABC ran a couple of months ago has elevated the issue in a lot of consumers' minds.

"Now, in partnership with a business out of the US called Smart Planet Technologies, there is a newly-engineered lining.

"This technology, which is a different form of lining . . . when it goes into the paper and cardboard recycling repulper, it separates the lining away from the board really easily.

"That's not recycled but it's easily separated which has been the biggest issue and why recyclers haven't treated paper cups historically."

The company has run six trials in four states with its new cups, involving their own collection bins

The trial aims to show the product is recyclable – which has been established previously in the US – but also that a sufficient stream of uncontaminated product can be collected, with larger organisations such as hospitals and airlines the sort of areas where it could initially provide a compelling business case.

Group general manager of marketing and innovation at Detmold, Tom Lunn said the company had a recycling partner in Veolia and the trials were being audited by KESAB.

"Trials have all included big customers who are interested," Mr Lunn said. "Customers want to see the trial results and see that this is a full solution."

The cups do cost more than current cups, but less than 1c a cup more, and companies can save money by diverting waste away from landfill.

"For it to become a widespread solution it needs to be that the big brands, who control 70 per cent of the coffee cups in Australia, can actually effect change, use their waste contracts, their recycling contracts and their packaging contracts to ensure that it's an effective move," Mr Lunn said.

Detmold also has a "coffee origins" program, which donates money to programs in areas where coffee is grown to help support communities.

The "I am eco" range of cups are decorated with themes which reflect the regions and Detmold recently made its first donation, of \$1500, to a charity.

Mr Fuller said Detmold's Launchpad centre, where new products were developed, was "a major advantage" for the company.

"We're making and developing products here for Australian companies, developing products here for Singapore, Hong Kong, China, customers all over the world," he said.

"It's our global hub for packaging innovation".

For example with large companies such as McDonalds, the company will get several briefs a year to develop new products for its local and international operations.

Mr Lunn said Launchpad had completed work for more than 900 brands in the past four years and produced about 2500 new products a year.

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