

Version 1: December 2025

WHAT ARE PACKAGING COMPONENTS?

Illustrative examples of packaging components
to include in your APCO Annual Report.



Contents

Introduction.....	3
Legislative reference: National Environment Protection (Used Packaging Materials) Measure 2011 (NEPM)	3
Illustrative examples of primary consumer packaging components	4
Illustrative examples of distribution packaging (secondary and tertiary packaging) components	8

Disclaimers

All rights reserved. No part of this document may be reproduced in any material form or transmitted to any other person without the prior written permission of the Australian Packaging Covenant Organisation Ltd. (APCO) except as permitted under the Copyright Act 1968 (Cth) (as amended) or unless expressly permitted in writing by APCO and all authorised material must at all times be acknowledged.

The Australian Packaging Covenant Organisation Ltd (APCO) and the contributing authors have prepared this document with a high-level of care and thoroughness and recommend that it is read in full. This document is based on generally accepted practices and standards at the time it was prepared. It was prepared in accordance with the scope of work and for the purpose outlined in the project brief. The method adopted, and sources of information used are outlined in this document, except where they were provided on a confidential basis. This document has been prepared for use by APCO, and only other third parties who have been authorised by APCO. APCO and the contributing authors are not liable for any loss or damage that may be occasioned from directly or indirectly using, or relying on, the contents of this publication. This report does not purport to give legal or financial advice. No other warranty, expressed or implied, is made as to the professional advice included in this report.

Contact APCO

Suite 1402, Level 14, 55 Clarence Street, Sydney, NSW, 2000 | apco@apco.org.au | (02) 8381 3700

Introduction

This guidance reflects packaging components identified by the Australian Packaging Covenant Organisation (APCO) for the [Consumption and Recovery Report](#). These are illustrative examples and do not cover all packaging. The packaging components are categorised between primary consumer packaging and distribution (secondary and tertiary) packaging. This conveys typical use cases of the packaging component and is not an exclusive categorisation. There can be instances where a packaging component is used as either primary consumer or distribution packaging (e.g., a box).

The list of packaging component names can be used in conjunction with [APCO's Optional Calculator Tool \(OCT\)](#) to aid in identifying packaging components in individual stock keeping units (SKU) for Annual Member Reporting. For APCO Members who use the [Australasian Recycling Label Program \(ARL\)](#), this provides suggestions where applicable on labelling packaging components for disposal information. Please note that eligibility for labelling with the ARL needs to be determined before applying the label.

Legislative reference: [National Environment Protection \(Used Packaging Materials\) Measure 2011 \(NEPM\)](#)



Consumer packaging means:

- (a) from 15 July 2005 until registration of this Measure on the Federal Register of Legislative Instruments (registration), all packaging products made of any material, or combination of materials, for the containment, protection, marketing and handling of retail consumer products. This also includes distribution packaging that contains multiples of products intended for direct consumer purchase; and
- (b) from registration, all packaging products made of any material, or combination of materials, for the containment, protection, marketing or handling of consumer products. This also includes distribution packaging.

Distribution packaging means all packaging that contains multiples of products (the same or mixed) intended for direct consumer purchase, including:

- (a) secondary packaging used to secure or unitise multiples of consumer products such as cardboard boxes, shipper, shrink film overwrap;
- (b) tertiary packaging used to secure or unitise multiples of secondary packaging such as pallet wrapping stretch film, shrink film, strapping.



Illustrative examples of primary consumer packaging components

Component Name	Definition	Suggested ARL Labelling 
Absorbent	Pouches, sachets or similar filled with an absorbent material or chemical for absorbing liquids or gases (e.g., moisture pads & oxygen scavengers).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pad
Aerosol	<p>A gas-tight, pressure-resistant container with a valve and propellant (e.g., a spray can).</p> <p><i>Note: This packaging component does not include atomizers. Please refer to definition of ‘Applicator.’</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Can
Applicator	Includes balls for roll-on deodorants, pump dispensers from sprays and atomizers, and the tubing and springs that accompany such, and any other fitting that is used to apply a product.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dropper ▪ Nozzle ▪ Pipette ▪ Pump ▪ Spray ▪ Trigger
Barrel, cask or keg	<p>Packaging of circular cross-section, with greater length than breadth, with convex sides and two ends of equal diameter. A barrel is normally made of wooden staves bound together with hoops.</p> <p><i>Note: This packaging component does not include drums. Please refer to definition of ‘Drum.’</i></p>	
Blister pack	<p>This packaging component relates to the thermoformed dome or “bubble” (usually transparent plastic) component. Typically, an item is secured between this “bubble” and a paperboard surface or “carrier.” For pharmaceutical goods, the blister pack is more like a tray, with an aluminium “seal” rather than “carrier”.</p> <p><i>Note: This packaging component does not include carriers or seals. Please refer to definition of ‘Carrier’ and ‘Seal.’</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Blister
Bottle	A container having a round neck of relatively smaller diameter than the body and an opening capable of holding a closure for retention of the contents. Specifically, a narrow-necked container as compared with a jug, jar or wide-mouth container. The cross section of the bottle may be round, oval, square, oblong, or a combination of these. The bottle may also have an integrated handle. Bottles generally are made of glass or plastics, but can also be earthenware or metal.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ampoule ▪ Bottle
Bowl	Any size bowl, intended for single-use for takeaway food.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bowl
Can	<p>A generally cylindrical container of unspecified size. It is often metallic and typically unpressurised.</p> <p><i>Note: This packaging component does not include aerosol cans. Please refer to definition of ‘Aerosol.’</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Can

Carrier	<p>The base of a blister pack where the preformed “bubble” attaches to, by stapling, heat-sealing, gluing, or other means. The carrier is usually made of boxboard/cartonboard and often has labelling printed on it.</p> <p><i>Note: This packaging component does not include blister packs. Please refer to definition of ‘Blister pack.’</i></p>	
Carton	<p>A non-specific term for an open or re-closable container used mostly for perishable foods (e.g. eggs, or fruit). Also, includes rectangular-shaped packages designed primarily for liquids such as juice or milk which are usually made of aseptic PCPB packs (also known as 'bricks') or gable top PCPB cartons.</p> <p><i>Note: This packaging component does not include boxes or shipping cartons. Please refer to definition of ‘Box.’</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Carton
Cartridge	<p>A rigid cylindrical container holding an item or substance, typically designed for insertion into a delivery mechanism (e.g., coffee capsules).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Capsule ▪ Pod
Closure	<p>A component used to close a container to retain the contents (e.g., lids, caps, and stoppers).</p> <p><i>Note: This packaging component does not include seals. Please refer to definition of ‘Seal.’</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cap ▪ Closure ▪ Cork ▪ Lid
Coat hanger	<p>Coat hangers for clothes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hanger
Cup	<p>Any size cup, intended for single-use for takeaway drinks. Can be made from polymer-coated paperboard (PCPB), polystyrene (PS) or expanded polystyrene (EPS).</p> <p><i>Note: This packaging component does not include cup lids. Please refer to definition of ‘Cup lid.’</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cup
Cup lid	<p>A closure for single-use cup, commonly made from polystyrene. Can also be from polypropylene (PP) or bioplastic (PLA).</p> <p><i>Note: This packaging component does not include cups. Please refer to definition of ‘Cup.’</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lid
Cutlery	<p>Any type of utensil, usually fork, knife, or spoon, or combination of two, intended for single-use. Can be part of a shelf product, or accompany take-away food. Usually made from plastic or wood, or a composite.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fork ▪ Knife ▪ Scoop ▪ Spoon ▪ Spork
Drum	<p>Cylindrical containers of ≥ 20 L whose bottom end is permanently fixed to the body and top end (head) is either removable or non-removable. It is usually made of plastic and steel.</p> <p><i>Note: This packaging component does not include barrels, casks and kegs. Please refer to definition of ‘Barrel, cask and keg.’</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Drum

Fodder film or net wrap	<p>A plastic film or netting around a round or rectangular bale of agricultural fodder (e.g. hay) to protect the fodder from weather, maintain the bale integrity, and/or generally protect the fodder. Often referred to as silage wrap.</p>	
Hook, kimble, affixing item	<p>Components used for hanging clothing or displays; or that attach tags, accessories, and similar to clothing; and any other item that is used to link, attach or fix something temporarily to a product (e.g., hooks, kimbles, strings).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Clip ▪ Handle ▪ Hook ▪ Pin ▪ Staple ▪ Tie
Jar	<p>A rigid container with a wide-mouth opening as compared to a bottle which has narrow neck relative to its body. It is used to store products, (e.g., jams, cosmetics) and usually has a secure closure. It is typically made of glass, stone, earthenware, or plastic.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Jar
Jug	<p>A rigid container with a handle, and large opening or spout for holding and pouring liquids, generally with no secure closure. They can be cylindrical, round, oval, square, oblong, or a combination of these.</p>	
Label	<p>Sheet material that are affixed to the packaging assembly to convey information. This is an added component and is not printed directly onto a packaging component.</p> <p><i>Note: This component includes adhesive labels and wraparound sleeves and excludes labels that are printed or embossed onto other packaging components.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Label ▪ Sticker ▪ Tag
Liner	<p>Sheet material that is not acting as a bag or wrapper but is being used to protect or separate contents from outer packaging. This can be found as inner linings of liquid or pressurised containers, or as lining cartons.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Liner
Net	<p>A container of meshwork material made from threads or strips twisted or woven to form a regular pattern with spaces between the threads that is used for holding, carrying, trapping, or confining an item.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Net
Pail	<p>A typically cylindrical container of ≤20 L whose bottom end is permanently fixed to the body and lid, if present, is removable, and which may have an attached handle (e.g., paint bucket). It is usually made of plastic or tin-plate steel.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bucket ▪ Pail
Plate	<p>Any size plate, intended for single-use for takeaway food.</p>	
Pot	<p>A flat-bottomed container that has a base of any shape and which may or not be closed with a lid (e.g., makeup pot). It is usually made of cardboard, plastic, ceramic, metal or other materials and may be used for a wide array of products such as cosmetics, food/liquids, dairy products, plants.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pot

<p>Pouch</p>	<p>A preformed, flexible container, typically enclosed with a gusset seal at the bottom of the pack. Can be shaped/arranged to allow the pack to stand on shelf. Pouches can be for single-serve food item and as such may have integrated mouthpiece, which is not detachable (e.g., yoghurt pouch). Also includes packages used for sterile products which may be torn open without touching the product inside (peel pouches).</p> <p><i>Note: This packaging component includes 'Envelopes', which are a predominantly flat container of flexible material having only two faces, and joined at three edges to form an enclosure.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Envelope ▪ Pouch
<p>Punnet or clamshell</p>	<p>A small box or square basket for the transport and sale of items. This can consist of a base only, a separable base and lid, or be a one-piece container consisting of a base and lid joined by a hinge area which allows the pack to come together to close (e.g., fruit punnets, takeaway food clamshells, clamshells for small items).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Punnet ▪ Shell
<p>Sachet</p>	<p>A small sealed bag or packet containing a small quantity of a product, usually food related (e.g., small quantities of condiments).</p> <p><i>Note: This packaging component does not include absorbents. Please refer to definition of 'Absorbent.'</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sachet
<p>Seal</p>	<p>Sheet material used to contain, maintain freshness of items or as a safety feature in rigid containers (e.g., tamper evident seals) It is usually made of plastic, polymer coated paper/paperboard, or aluminium foil.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Film ▪ Foil ▪ Seal ▪ Strip ▪ Tab
<p>Sleeve</p>	<p>An open-ended form that is slid over the contents for protection or presentation. It is usually made of paper, cardboard or plastic.</p> <p><i>Note: This packaging component does not include wraparound sleeves. Please refer to definition of 'Label.'</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sleeve
<p>Stirrer</p>	<p>Intended for single-use, to stir drinks. Usually made of plastic or wood.</p>	
<p>Straw</p>	<p>Any size straw, intended for single-use. Usually plastic or waxed paper.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Straw
<p>Tray</p>	<p>A shallow container, usually rectangular, which may or may not have a cover, and is used for displaying or carrying items. The base is bigger than the height. It may have moulded pockets or forms for holding contents.</p> <p><i>Note: This packaging component excludes reusable B2B crate and tray systems, which are included under the 'Returnable plastic crate (RPC)' component group.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tray
<p>Tub</p>	<p>A flat-bottomed container that has a base of any shape and which may or not be closed with a lid. These are typically used to contain foods such as ice cream, margarine, yoghurt, sour cream, confections, etc. It is usually made of paper, plastic or other materials.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tub

Tube – flexible	A flexible container sealed on one end that could be closed with a cap or dispenser on the other end (e.g., toothpaste tubes).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tube
Tube – rigid	A rigid cylindrical component for holding product around the outside, typically designed for holding and dispensing string or flexible films (e.g., paper towel roll, yarn reel).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Core ▪ Tube
Wrapper	A flexible material that encloses all or part of an item (e.g. chocolate blocks). <i>Note: This packaging component does not include shrink-wrap or vacuum-pack, nor items that comes from rollstock or rewind packaging film used in flow wrap, vertical form fill and seal wrapping, horizontal wrapping machines.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Wrapper

Illustrative examples of distribution packaging (secondary and tertiary packaging) components

Component Name	Definition	Suggested ARL Labelling 
Bag	A preformed, flexible container, generally enclosed on all but one side, which forms an opening that may or may not be sealed after filling. Other bag variations: produce bag, reusable bag, and single-use bag <i>Note: This packaging component includes sacks up to around 500 litres, but does not include FIBCs (of any volume) and sacks/bags above 500 litres in volume. Please refer to definition of 'IBC – flexible.'</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bag ▪ Satchel
Bin	A three-dimensional container which either has a pallet platform permanently attached at its base or alternatively requires a platform for its handling and storage as due to its constitution it cannot be handled without it. Also referred to as a 'pallet box'.	
Box	A non-specific term used to refer to a rigid, three-dimensional container with closed faces that completely enclose its contents. It may be made out of any material, but is typically made of paperboard.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Box
Cage or stillage	Containers enclosed on at least one side by a grating of wires or bars that lets in air and light.	
Crate (single-use)	A non-specific term usually referring to a rigid three-dimensional container with semi-closed faces that enclose its contents for shipment or storage. Crates could have an open or closed top and may have internal dividers.	

<p>Intermediate bulk container – flexible (FIBC)</p>	<p>A flexible intermediate bulk container (FIBC) used for transport and storage of dry, flowable products (e.g. sand, grain, plastic granules). They are typically made from woven polypropylene fabric reinforced with nylon or polyester strapping. The FIBC component type also includes wool packs (and similar) and sacks/bags above 500 litres in volume, that are not specifically described as FIBCs.</p>	
<p>Intermediate bulk container – rigid (RIBC)</p>	<p>A rigid intermediate bulk container (RIBC) that is attached to a pallet or has the pallet integrated into the RIBC. The container is used for the transport and storage of fluids and other bulk materials. There are various types available in the marketplace: Foldable (collapsible) IBC, Plastic composite IBC, Wire Cage IBC, Steel IBC, and Stainless steel IBC.</p>	
<p>Pallet</p>	<p>A platform used to hold or transport unit loads. It is typically made of plastic or wood.</p>	
<p>Pallet wrap or stretch wrap</p>	<p>A high-tensile plastic film, stretched and wrapped around an item or group of items to secure and maintain unit integrity. The use of stretch film to tightly wrap a package or a unit load in order to bind, protect and immobilise it for further storage, handling or shipping.</p>	
<p>Reel</p>	<p>A B2B spool on which thread, wire, film, etc, is wound. Any device on which a material may be wound. Usually has flanged ends and is used for shipping or processing purposes.</p>	
<p>Returnable plastic crate (RPC)</p>	<p>Typically used as B2B shelf ready packaging for transporting fruit and vegetables from farms to supermarkets, milk bottles from dairy-processing companies to supermarkets, or baked goods to retail outlets (e.g., bread trays). Also known as 'Reusable plastic crates.'</p>	
<p>Shrink wrap</p>	<p>A plastic film around an item or group of items which is heated causing the film to shrink, securing the film. The use of shrunken film to tightly wrap a package or a unit load in order to bind, protect and immobilise it for further handling or shipping.</p> <p><i>Note: This component excludes shrink wrapped labels. Please refer to definition of 'Label.'</i></p>	
<p>Skid</p>	<p>A group of parallel runners (usually made from timber) attached to a single top-deck or the undersides of boxes, crates, and machines to allow entry of platform trucks or fork lift tines. Unlike a pallet, a skid has no bottom deck.</p>	
<p>Slip sheet</p>	<p>A strong sheet of plastic, cardboard or other material which may be grabbed, hooked or attached to a forklift or other transportation equipment. The slip sheet is used to pull the products stacked on top of it, i.e. to remove all products from a pallet in one action.</p>	

Strapping or banding	<p>Something used to bind, tie, or encircle the item or its packaging to secure and maintain unit integrity.</p> <p><i>Note: This component includes packaging tape, baling twine, cable (zip) ties, wire clasps/ties, twist ties (PET & steel), elastic bands, and larger B2B strapping such as PP pallet strap.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Band ▪ Ribbon ▪ Strap ▪ Tape ▪ Wire
Void fill	<p>Materials that prevent goods from moving around and from being damaged within secondary freight packaging (e.g., bubble wrap, creased kraft paper and EPS foam).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Divider ▪ Foam ▪ Insert ▪ Tissue
Wrap or basket	<p>An open-ended form that partially encloses multiples of packed items and can have built-in mechanisms or accessories for handling. It is usually used for beer, soft drink, ready to drink pre-mix beverages, and multi-packs of single-serve food containers or tins. This is typically made of cardboard.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Basket

Component Name	Definition	Suggested ARL Labelling 
Other component	<p>Packaging components not currently specified on the list.</p> <p>Note: Please contact APCO for determination of packaging components not included in the list above.</p>	<p>Please refer to this document for determination of labelling: ARL Approved Component Names</p>

Abbreviations	
B2B	Business-to-business
B2C	Business-to-consumer
IBC	Intermediate bulk containers
FIBC	Flexible intermediate bulk containers
RIBC	Rigid intermediate bulk container
RPC	Returnable plastic crate
PCPB	Polmer-coated paperboard
PET	Polyethylene terephthalate
HDPE	High density polyethylene
PVC	Polyvinyl chloride
LDPE	Low density polyethylene
PP	Polypropylene
PS	Polystyrene
EPS	Expanded polystyrene
PLA	Polylactic acid

Document Control

Author	Packaging Transformations Team
Last Reviewed By	Packaging Transformations Team
Approved By	External Affairs & Engagement
Published Date	13/01/2026
Next Review Date	13/01/2026

Version History

Date	Version	Amendments
13/01/2026	V1	N/A



To contact APCO please visit our website
www.apco.org.au

