

Position Statement on mandatory certifications and labelling

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Boomerang Alliance supports mandatory Australian Standard certifications on all products claiming to be compostable, and the adoption of a clear labelling system for identification of compostable and recyclable packaging.

The Australian community is becoming increasingly aware of their environmental impact and are demanding more 'sustainable' packaging. However, the lack of certifications and clarity around labelling of packaging, makes it difficult to enact environmentally conscious decisions.

There are many words used to claim sustainability, such 'ethical', 'biodegradable', 'eco-friendly' and 'sustainable' and 'compostable', but without credible certifications or independent verification, these terms are often false and misleading. Many packaging companies capitalise on the lack of regulated labelling requirements, using unsubstantiated, confusing and often deceptive terms to lead the consumer into believing they are making good environmental choices.

The consequences of wrong choices include more landfill and contamination of the compost and recycling streams as there is no clarity or assurance on end of life disposal options. In addition, once an individual or organisation becomes aware they have been misled, it can create a lack of trust of compostable packaging, including for those that are legitimate.

Clear identification of packaging material, disposal instructions and assurance about its treatment are the only way consumers can make informed choices about what they purchase and how they dispose of it. This is where compost certifications and transparent labelling come in.

Composting certifications

The relevant Australian compost standards are AS 4736 for industrial composting, and AS 5810 for home composting. Packaging holding one or both of these certifications affirms the manufacturers claim that the packaging will break down in a certain environment and within the specific time frame specified under the certification, and without toxic residue. Australian certifications allow commercial composters to accept food packaging with the assurance it will break down fully and not cause contamination.

Foreign certifications are available, however most Australian composters will not accept them as they do not provide enough surety that the product will break down under Australian conditions and leave no toxic residues. **Boomerang Alliance holds the position that all products claiming compostability should be certified under Australian Standards in order to be sold in Australia.**

Clear labelling

There is a need for government to require clearer labelling to ensure the correct information can be understood by organisations purchasing from manufacturers and individuals disposing of products at end of life.

A label should tell us whether the product is reusable, compostable or recyclable and under what relevant certifications, as well as disposal instructions. **Boomerang Alliance supports:**

- Mandating the Australasian Recycling Label (ARL) for all product packaging
- Expanding the ARL to include reusable and compostable packaging
- Requiring a condition that to use the ARL, all packaging labelled as reusable, compostable or recyclable is reused, composted or recycled in practice and at scale.