



AORA/ABA - Joint Position Paper

Certified Compostable Bioplastics

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The Australian Organics Recycling Association (AORA) is the National Peak Industry body for the recycled organics industry. Organics that can be recycled include food waste, green or garden waste and food soiled packaging amongst many others.

Certified compostable plastics suitable for microbial treatment in commercial composting or anaerobic digestion (AD), are those materials that conform to the Australian Standard AS 4736:2006, or for home composting are those that conform to AS 5810-2010.

In the case of commercial scale organics recycling, verification of certification and therefore conformance to AS 4736 is critical for organics recyclers to know that these materials will biodegrade in their facilities without interfering with normal processes and ensure they will not leave any physical or chemical residues in the finished organic output after processing.

AORA endorses the use of AS 4736 certified materials for the source separation of food waste in the home or commercial premises and also as a suitable alternative to otherwise non-recyclable packaging. Compostable coffee cups, capsules and compostable bags can all be successfully processed through normal organic recycling processes without concern of contamination.

Conventional plastics such as polyethylene are not certified compostable and are not biodegradable in any context. These materials are not suitable for organics recycling as they will not biodegrade and will remain in the organic output after processing leaving unacceptable physical residue.

Other varieties of polyethylene containing additives, such as those called oxo-degradable or oxo-biodegradable are not certified compostable and are not biodegradable. These and their conventional plastic alternatives should not be used for food waste source separation or disposal of or with food waste or organics in a kerbside FOGO collection or home composting.

The Australasian Bioplastics Association (ABA) offers a verification program for individuals or companies that wish to have their claims of conformance to the Australian Standard verified. Further details on this verification process can be found at www.bioplastics.org.au

Whilst there are other Standards that cover commercial and home compostability throughout the world, these Standards are not equivalent to the Australian Standard. The Australian Standard contains an important ecotoxicity test for earthworm survival, which has been included to assure users of the recycled organics of zero residuals of the compostable plastics in the organic output.

Regardless of claims about benefits of biodegradable plastics, products that do not comply with AS 4736 should not be included in the inputs for organics recycling. To do so may cause unacceptable physical contamination (small pieces of plastic, chips or film) and render the finished organics product worthless.

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