



Environmental Protection (Prohibited Plastics and Balloons) Regulations 2018

Guidance on biodegradability certification bodies for lined paperboard products

Purpose

This document provides guidance on identifying a body or person accredited in a manner approved by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (department) to issue a certification for biodegradability as specified under Part 1 – 3(A)(4) of the Environmental Protection (Prohibited Plastics and Balloons) Regulations 2018 (the Regulations).

The department will apply these instructions when assessing the compliance of an item's biodegradability certification with the Regulations.

Legislative context

Under Regulation 3A(4),

For the purposes of subregulation (3)(c) and (d), an item is certified as biodegradable if —

- (a) a person or body accredited in a manner approved by the CEO has issued a certificate verifying that the item complies with AS 4736-2006 or AS 5810-2010; and
- (b) the certificate's period of validity has not expired.

Certificate of conformance with the Australian Standard

Being certified as biodegradable means an item is compostable and meets the requirements of Australia Standard AS 4736-2006 (industrial composting) or AS 5810-2010 (home composting).

A certificate verifying conformance to one of these Australian composting standards means the tested item has met all the requirements of the relevant standard in terms of biodegradation, disintegration and both plant and worm ecotoxicity.

Approved accreditation and certification bodies

A person or body for issuing biodegradability (i.e. compostability) certification must conduct verification through laboratories independently accredited to provide testing for the Australian composting standards. The certification process follows the verification of conformance.



Currently, the only way to verify that the requirements of the Australian composting standards have been met and achieve a certificate of conformance is through the verification process administered by the Australasian Bioplastics Association (ABA).

Note: ABA avoids using the term 'biodegradable' on its own and prefers to work with 'certified compostable' because its meaning is backed by Australian Standards.

Under these instructions, the manner approved by the CEO for issuing biodegradability certification is the verification program administered by ABA.

Any other means proposed should provide documentation to the CEO for consideration including:

- detail of the verification process to the relevant Australian composting standard
- laboratory accreditation to the relevant standard(s)
- the process for issuing a certificate of conformance and maintaining a public register.

ABA's verification process

Under the ABA's verification program, an application form must be submitted, and certification fees paid, to commence the verification process under the independent auditor, DIN CERTCO. Documentation and samples of products required for the verification will be then requested by DIN CERTCO.

Testing is undertaken in an accredited laboratory in accordance with the relevant Australian Standard. Testing involves ISO 14855 and ISO 14852 – methods included in AS4736 and AS5810. This determines the biodegradability and disintegration of a test substance by the measurement of carbon dioxide evolved under controlled composting conditions. The standards include other test methods used to determine ecotoxicity and characterisation, including the percentage of volatile solids and the presence of heavy metals and other potentially toxic substances. Testing is completed for whole products as they would be disposed of, such as a lined paperboard coffee cup that includes the relevant labels, stickers and packaging provided when sold to a customer.

If all the test criteria are met, the ABA and DIN CERTCO evaluate the application and, where the requirements of the Australian Standards are met, issue the applicant with a unique ABA number and certificate of conformance. This information is published on the ABA website. A logo licence agreement may also be entered into. This is encouraged to provide retailers and consumers confidence that the product is genuinely compostable to the Australian Standard.

A product's certificate of conformance needs to be renewed annually to remain active.

Further information can be found on the [ABA website](#).

Evidence of compliance

When identifying that a product is certified as biodegradable under the Regulations, evidence such as the ABA number, certificate of conformance or a listing on the ABA website is required to prove the certification is current and compliant with legislation.

The department may make other requests, such as for a breakdown of ingredients and chemicals in products, to ensure these products are compliant with the Regulations.