

# Position Statement on alternatives to single-use plastic foodware

April 2022

## **Boomerang Alliance supports alternatives to single-use plastic takeaway foodware items using the following hierarchy of recommendations (in order of preference)**

*Note: this does not apply to plastic bags or beverage containers – refer to our other statements on these*

**1. Avoidance.** In all cases, we encourage the avoidance of unnecessary single-use packaging.

**2. Reusable items.** These are the next best alternative to single-use disposable products. Wherever possible we encourage reusable products that meet an agreed reusable standard (e.g. ISO 18603 Reusable Standard or equivalent). See our position statement on Mandatory Packaging Standards and Labelling.

Where reusables are not an option and single-use foodware items are used, we recommend compostable substitutes in line with the below hierarchy, taking into consideration plastic bans in place. We recommend these in combination with strategies to avoid and reduce single use.

**Where compostable products are used, we advocate that all products should be certified to the AS compost standard, a necessary and higher standard than overseas standards. Compost will be returned to the land and must not contain any chemical residues above accepted limits. Many Australian commercial composters do not accept foreign compostable standard products. We also recommend clear, specific, and credible labelling as to the materials used for the whole product, and collection processes for recovery established.**

**In all cases, we prefer the use of products which contain no plastic elements, and sustainably sourced.**

**3. 100% Home compostable (certified under Australian Standard AS5810).** *Note: Some manufacturers claim certifications on a product, when the certifications do not pertain to the finished item, but instead part of the item (e.g., a base material, an unprinted version). 100% certified refers to products with certifications on the finished product. Where a relevant state government has requirements on AS certified products, foreign standards are not acceptable. Where a relevant state government has banned products containing plastic elements, only non-plastic products are acceptable.*

**4. 100% Home compostable (certified under foreign standard TUV OK Compost Home).** *Where a relevant state government has requirements on AS certified products, foreign standards are not acceptable. These standards are often not accepted by composters. Where a relevant state government has banned products containing plastic elements, only non-plastic products are acceptable.*

**5. A paper/board/cane/leaf/wood or other product containing no plastic elements that is partly certified, uncertified or of undetermined certification.** *Note: Most products made from these materials are assumed to be compostable, however this is not necessarily the case - some contain inks, dyes, glues etc that can contaminate compost. Composters prefer certifications but in an unregulated market this is not enforced. We will maintain communications with composters and businesses to expose unacceptable items and push for better regulation.*

**6. 100% Commercially compostable (certified Australian Standard AS4736) products (this includes bioplastics, wholly or partly used).** *Note: It is always our practice to minimise plastics. If a product containing plastic is required, we will always recommend products containing less plastic (e.g., a bioplastic lined cold cup over a bioplastic clear cup). Where a relevant state government has banned products containing plastic elements, only non-plastic products are acceptable.*

**The packaging options below are currently available in the market, however they are not preferred by Australian composters and we do not support their availability in Australia in the medium term.**

**7. 100% commercially compostable (certified under foreign standards ASTM 6400, EN 13432 or TUV OK Compost Industrial) products (this includes plastics, wholly or partly used).** *Note: as for 8., we minimise the use of plastics. Where a relevant state government has requirements on AS certified products, foreign standards are not acceptable. Where a relevant state government has banned products containing plastic elements, only non-plastic products are acceptable.*

**8. Products containing plastic elements that are only partly certified compostable** – i.e., the certification does not pertain to the finished product. In this case, home compost standards are preferred over commercial, Australian Standards are preferred over foreign, and at a minimum, the certification must cover any plastic elements.

**9. Products that claim to be compostable but do not have certifications are unacceptable and should be avoided.**

## What we do NOT accept

- Fossil-fuel based **non-compostable plastic products** (including oxo-degradable/biodegradable plastics).
- **Compostable/degradable/biodegradable plastic carry bags** (refer to separate position statement).
- **Compostable water bottles** (refer to separate position statement).
- Products that do not have a compost certification **covering all plastic elements**.

**Note:** All single-use packaging can become a litter or waste issue when discarded. The shift towards compostable single-use packaging does not prevent this. Effective collection and recovery still needs to be put in place to ensure that this packaging is recovered. However, the shift towards compostable packaging does mean that packaging will not be derived from fossil fuels and will be less harmful to the environment compared to non-compostable or recyclable plastic packaging.

In line with our hierarchy, we allow certified compostable products to the Australian Commercial standard (AS 4736) because, for some products, this is the only currently fit-for-purpose option. As more non-plastic or home compostable products come in to the market, we support the phasing out of the commercial standard.

For takeaway packaging, avoiding or replacing with genuinely reusable alternatives are the preferred options.