

# PLASTICWISE INDIGO

## MAKING SUSTAINABLE CHOICES

When purchasing items, ranging from toilet paper to road base, it is important to consider the environmental impacts of the product and attempt to make the most sustainable choice (within reason). But, choosing a sustainable product can be confusing because:

- There is no set definition of a sustainable product;
- There are many elements to consider within this concept (environmental, social, ethical and economic)
- There are a variety of voluntary schemes for sustainability certification; and
- Unfortunately there is some degree of “greenwash” out there (marketing spin to increase perception that a product is sustainable).

## THE PRODUCT LIFE CYCLE

When making choices consider all aspects of the life cycle

### End-of-life

How is the product disposed of at the end of its life?

Is it reusable?

Can it be recycled in our waste system?

Is the correct waste bin going to be available where it is used?

If it goes to landfill, are there any harmful elements that may leach out?

### Materials

What is the product made of?

Is it a renewable resource?

### Production

Where is it produced, and who makes it?

Does the manufacturing process involve hazardous substances that may cause environment harm at the location it is produced?



### Use and lifetime

How long is the product going to last?

Is it worth paying more now for a product that lasts longer?

Is it easy to use and fit for purpose? Will it be used?

### Distribution

How far does the product have to travel to get to you?

Local is better: both for greenhouse gas emissions and local economic benefit.

How is the product packaged? Try to minimise packaging waste wherever practicable

For more information

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## TERM

## EXAMPLE

## IS THIS A GOOD THING?

### Degradable

Can be broken down by chemical or biological process.

### Plastic bags



No. Don't be fooled by products labelled "degradable" – by breaking into smaller pieces of plastic actually becomes more of a problem, because it can be eaten by wildlife, enter waterways and becomes harder to pick up as litter. When not exposed to sunlight, e.g. in landfill: no degradation of the product occurs, it will remain in landfill for up to hundreds of years.

Yes, better than degradable. Not as good as compostable, but if composting is not a practical solution for the item you have purchased (needs to be separately collected), biodegradable is a good alternative.

### Biodegradable

Made from natural materials which breaks down into organic material over time.

### BioBag



### Compostable

A subset of biodegradable, made from material assessed to be compostable in a commercial composting environment in accordance with Australian standards.

### BioPak clear cups



Be careful: usually commercial composting facilities aren't available, and the product will not "compost" in a regular compost. Commercial composting facilities have tightly controlled parameters, particularly temperature and moisture.

### BioPak sugarcane clamshells



Yes, if you actually collect them for compost and then compost them. Product information specifies that this product is home compostable.