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Electoral Commission material posted in 'greenwashed' plastic wrap

A recent mailout to all voters from the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) has ironically highlighted a key issue that our federal politicians need to address – finding better solutions to our worsening plastic pollution problems.

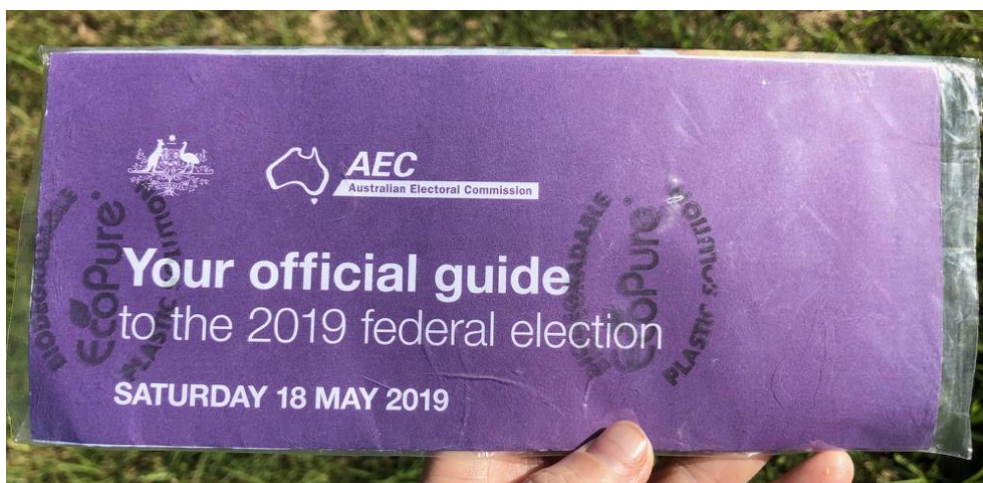
“In an attempt to reduce the impacts of single use plastic, the AEC mailout sent to 16 million registered voters, was wrapped in a plastic film labelled ‘biodegradable. It’s disappointing the AEC did not look carefully at what it was buying. This plastic packaging is oxo-biodegradable plastic and is not biodegradable in landfill or the environment, as inferred by the manufacturer,” said Jeff Angel of the Boomerang Alliance, the national waste and recycling NGO.

“As a result, the AEC is contributing to even more excessive and unnecessary plastic being used, wasted or littered.”

“Boomerang Alliance suggests that in future the AEC makes greater efforts to check the bona fides of products it uses. Evidence that they are no better has been known for years. We encourage the AEC to strengthen their guidelines with regards to products boasting sustainable assertions.”

“Also the DL sized mail out could have been sent without a wrap, with alternative copies available on-line and at outlets like post offices.”

AEC Election material wrapping



About Oxo-biodegradable packaging

A study by the University of Plymouth has shown that so-called oxo-biodegradable plastic bags are nothing but complete greenwash. The study revealed supposedly biodegradable plastic bags still intact after three years spent either at sea or buried underground¹.

Oxo-biodegradable plastics are conventional fossil-fuel based plastics with an additive that allows them to partially or fully break down, but only under certain conditions. Ocean, terrestrial and landfill environments do not meet those conditions.²

Marine environments don't contain the right types of microorganisms needed to break down plastics, and soil and landfill conditions usually lack oxygen, which limits the types of microorganisms that can exist there.²

Boomerang views this type of greenwashing in all types of plastic consumer packaging, including bags and so-called eco-straws. In many cases it can actually be worse for the environment, as consumers believe it is biodegradable and is thus littered more often.

We suggest that the government do their research, as unsubstantiated claims about biodegradable plastic and evidence that they are no better has been known for years'.

Mr Angel encouraged the AEC to strengthen their guidelines with regards to products boasting sustainable assertions.

Authorised by Jeff Angel, Boomerang Alliance, 99 Devonshire St, Surry Hills, NSW 2010

¹ <https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/news/biodegradable-bags-can-hold-a-full-load-of-shopping-three-years-after-being-discarded-in-the-environment>

² <https://theconversation.com/ditch-plastic-dog-poo-bags-go-compostable-112605>
<https://theconversation.com/additives-to-make-plastic-biodegradable-dont-cut-it-39212>