



Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment Te Kaitiaki Taiao a Te Whare Pāremata

Environment Commissioner questions merit of biodegradable plastics

Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment Simon Upton has urged the Government to take a lead in dealing with the confusion surrounding biodegradable and compostable plastics.

“There are all sorts of supposedly environmentally-friendly plastics coming onto the market, but it is extremely difficult for consumers to make sense of their respective claims,” said the Commissioner.

The problem is that whatever impact biodegradable plastics may have on the environment depends very much on what they are made from and, critically, how and where they are disposed of.

“There is a surprising degree of complexity at play here. One can’t simply toss these products onto the compost heap, or into our recycling bins, and go away thinking ‘job done’,” said Mr Upton.

The Commissioner has released an online resource to help concerned consumers tackle the complexities of the issue, but he says the Government needs to step in and assume greater responsibility.

“The array of environmental claims being made about plastic packaging can lead to misunderstandings on the part of even the most environmentally conscious citizens,” he said.

“I am pleased that Minister Sage has acknowledged the issue, but there is a bigger role for the Government to play in providing much needed guidance and regulation.”

The Commissioner’s online resource, together with the accompanying infographics, and a letter to the Minister, is available [here](#).

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