

Black mark for 'green' bags

Overseas tests debunk manufacturer's biodegradable claims

By FLINT DUXFIELD

MILLIONS of plastic shopping bags being touted as biodegradable in IGA supermarkets around Australia have failed to decompose as advertised during independent tests, raising serious questions over green marketing claims.

About 60 million of the plastic bags, bearing the brand name Goody and produced by packaging company NuPak, have been distributed through shopping centres, cafes and other stores.

But tests done by Belgian company Organic Waste Systems in September show that the bags were "completely intact" after 12 weeks, by which time they were supposed

to be turning into safe organic compost.

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission has been sent information questioning the green marketing claims. It would not confirm if an investigation was under way.

NuPak managing director Chris Scanlan said the bags had passed tests at Flinders University, which showed they met Australian standards for being biodegradable.

He admitted that the Belgian company was a reputable testing facility, but he said it was possible that the bags tested were a "production sample" that didn't contain the additive said to make the bags break down.

"In mass production of any product, human error can happen and faulty products do get out of the factory from time to time. I don't know where the bag came from that they tested, someone could have got a Texta and written 'Goody' on the bag."

Jon Dee, founder of environment group Do Something!, said that the findings of the test were extremely concerning.

"I am calling for the ACCC to begin an investigation into Goody bags based on these tests. If they find it doesn't biodegrade according to the national standards then it should clearly be removed from the market," Mr Dee said.

David Thompson, chief execut-

ive of Goody Environment, which produces the additive that makes the bags break down, confirmed that he had been called on to answer questions about the product by South Australia's Environment Protection Authority.

Mr Thompson said he could not explain why the bags containing the Goody additive did not pass the test.

"It could be a problem with the manufacturing at the factory in China. If that's the case, we need to go and rectify it," he said.

"We can't control every aspect of everything that happens in the manufacturing process but we'll be looking into this because we take these things very seriously."



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Page 25