

SAC Backs ACCC Greenwash Guidelines: Calling for Honest, Transparent Sustainability Claims in Seafood

The Seafood Consumers Association (SCA) today strongly endorses the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission's (ACCC) Greenwash Guidelines, reaffirming its commitment to honest, evidence-based sustainability claims in Australia's seafood sector.

Peter Wright, Chair of the SCA, said:

"Consumers deserve the truth when it comes to sustainability. The ACCC's Greenwash Guidelines are a critical step forward in ensuring that every claim made regarding seafood packaging is clear, accurate, and backed by factual evidence—not just a marketing spin. The SCA is proud to support these guidelines and calls on all seafood brands and retailers to meet this higher standard."

The Challenge of Greenwashing in Seafood

Greenwashing—the practice of making misleading or exaggerated environmental claims—has become a significant concern in the food sector, especially seafood. Recent research from the University of Tasmania, found that more than half of canned tuna brands in Australia make sustainability claims that lack sufficient evidence or clarity. The study, *Greenwashing in the Tuna Industry*, evaluated fourteen popular brands against the ACCC's principles for trustworthy environmental claims and found wide variation in compliance.

Brands need to set a benchmark, consistently providing clear, transparent information and aligning closely with ACCC guidelines. However, many brands still fall short—using vague language, omitting key details, or relying on self-produced ecolabels that do not reflect independent verification.

Why the ACCC Guidelines Matter

ACCC's Greenwash Guidelines set out eight clear principles for making environmental claims, including:

- Making accurate and truthful statements.

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- Providing evidence to back up claims
- Avoiding hidden or omitted information.
- Using clear, easy-to-understand language.
- Avoiding broad, unqualified statements.
- Ensuring visual elements and symbols do not mislead.
- Being transparent about future sustainability goals.

Peter Wright explained:

“These principles are not just regulatory requirements—they are the foundation of consumer trust. When brands fail to meet them, they not only mislead shoppers but also undermine the efforts of those investing in genuine sustainability. The SCA urges all seafood businesses to adopt these guidelines in full. SCA also reminds Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) that the Australian Fish Name Standard needs to be included into Food Standards as mandatory rather than the current voluntary arrangement to tighten regulation and support this ‘truth in labelling’ process.”

The Role of Certification and Transparency

The UTAS study found that brands with independent, third-party sustainability certification were more likely to comply with the ACCC guidelines and win consumer trust.

“Certification can be helpful giving consumers confidence that their seafood choices support healthy oceans and responsible fisheries,” said Wright. “but certification must be accompanied by clear, honest communication on packaging and online. Governments regulate fisheries through licensing and quotas but allow international certification organisations to ‘over administrate’ and consumers end up paying extra.”

A Call for Industry-Wide Accountability

The SCA supports the ACCC’s ongoing enforcement efforts to crack down on greenwashing and urges the government to go further by supporting increased penalties for misleading claims. At the same time, the SCA calls on retailers and producers to improve transparency, disclose both strengths and limitations in their sustainability practices, and communicate future goals openly.

“Consumers are rightly demanding more transparency and accountability,” said Wright. “It’s time for the entire seafood industry to step up, embrace the ACCC’s guidelines, and make trust the standard—not the exception.”

About the Seafood Consumers Association

The SCA is an independent, not-for-profit organisation dedicated to advocating for safe, sustainable, transparent, and affordable seafood choices for all Australians. We work with industry, regulators, and consumers to ensure the highest standards of integrity in seafood marketing and labelling.

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