

Sustainable Style

Eyewear Going Green

In an era where sustainability and eco-consciousness are increasingly more important, the optical industry is embracing innovative ways to reduce its environmental footprint, as April Petrusma writes.



Woodys

WRITER **April Petrusma**

We are seeing a growing demand for sustainable and eco-friendly options in all areas of eyewear, driven by consumers' increasing awareness of environmental issues.

As a result, frame and lens manufacturers are introducing 'green' eyewear options that are not only stylish but also recyclable, sustainable, and/or environmentally friendly. From frames made of recycled or biodegradable materials to plant-based lenses, the intersection of vision care and sustainability is revolutionising the Australian eyewear market.

THE NEED FOR GREEN

Opticycle – Australia's only complete recycling solution for used and empty contact lens cases and eyeglasses – estimates that close to three million pairs of discarded prescription glasses are added to landfill waste in Australia every year. Opticycle's Jason Rijnbeek explained that recycling traditional eyewear is not an easy feat.

"The design and multitude of materials used in glasses make them notoriously difficult to recycle," he said. "Glasses are a highly engineered product, which makes extracting the component materials difficult to achieve."

He said Opticycle now has the specialised technology that is needed to separate the varied materials properly and recycled lenses and frames are being used to produce new products like unique benchtop sheets and sustainable building materials.

While eyewear waste recycling programs like this signify progress, unfortunately they alone cannot fully address the broader environmental issues. Consequently, the optical industry is now seeing innovation extend towards production methods, with manufacturers adopting techniques to reduce energy usage and waste generation. The emergence of the green eyewear movement is reshaping decision making for manufacturers, eye care professionals, and consumers alike.

At eyewear company Dresden Vision, Rowan Smith said there was a "core belief in delivering a simple and sustainable product".

"Our alignment with the eco-friendly category stems from our unwavering commitment to sustainability in both materials and manufacturing processes. By utilising recycled plastics and bio-based nylon, we minimise environmental impact."

DEMYSTIFYING THE JARGON

As industry professionals, understanding the evolving eco-friendly landscape in eyewear is

crucial. Given the different interpretations of 'green' eyewear, understanding the relevant buzzwords and keeping well informed on new products will help align your stock with your optometry practice's values and your target demographic's preferences. So, what are the key terms you need to understand?

SUSTAINABLE

The United Nations defines the term sustainable as being able to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. As such, it has become a societal expectation that companies adopt some form of sustainable policies and actions to protect our future.



"Do not rely on visuals and packaging alone when it comes to making eco-conscious decisions"

As a distributor and wholesaler of some of the world's best-known brands in the eyewear market, Safilo aims to lead by example. It has introduced a range of sustainable eyewear collections across its portfolio, with frames, lenses, and packaging produced from recycled and bio-based materials.

Sara Al-Alami from Safilo Australia said the Polaroid brand has been "particularly focussed on sustainability, with all optical frames made entirely from sustainable materials, as well as the majority of sunglass offerings".

"On the product side, more than 25% of our new collections will be made from certified sustainable materials by 2025," she said.

At CR Labs, pushing sustainable boundaries is an essential part of its innovative core. Not only has CR Labs taken numerous steps to reduce its environmental footprint in its day-to-day processes and waste management, but it is also responsible for producing Australia's first groundbreaking biomass optical lens material, ECO6.

The eco-friendly lens is manufactured using biomass plant-based products and is designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 14% compared with conventional petroleum-based products.

BIO ACETATE

Bio acetate is an eco-friendly material derived from renewable resources like wood pulp, and cotton. Unlike traditional acetates, which rely heavily on harmful fossil fuel based plasticisers, bio acetate is made using natural alternatives.

In 2023 Eyes Right Optical, launched 'Project Green', a luxury eyewear collection featuring biodegradable demo lenses and packaging and more importantly, produced from high quality Mazzucchelli bio acetates. According to Mazzucchelli, the use of traditional petroleum derived plasticisers "has been replaced with a plasticising solution of vegetable origin", therefore resulting in an entirely plant-based material.

BIODEGRADABLE

Biodegradability is defined as the ability for a material to be broken down naturally by the organisms in an ecosystem. In the optical industry, this long-awaited term is now a reality, thanks to the high bio-based content of bio acetate, making it a declared biodegradable material. This does not mean, however, that bio acetate frames can be put straight into a home compost bin; it is biodegradable under industrial composting conditions in 115 days.

Numerous manufacturers and suppliers are making more responsible biodegradable choices in other areas too. VMD Eyewear as one example, now uses demo lenses for its Bill Bass, Dirty Dog, and Evoque optical ranges that are not only made from recycled materials but are also biodegradable.

ENVIRONMENTALLY / ECO-FRIENDLY

Environmentally friendly or eco-friendly are broad terms that in general mean a company is being more thoughtful towards its environmental impact. Take Bollé Safety as an example; in a statement this year Bollé Safety said it planned to introduce eco-friendly versions for 50% of top sellers by year-end, and 100% of new products. It is also seeking new material alternatives like recycled polycarbonate for lenses and recycled polyamide for frames with an aim to reduce CO₂ emissions.

ZEISS is also currently emphasising the importance of reducing its carbon footprint in ZEISS Sunlens polyamide production by improving manufacturing facilities and

using renewable resources for sustainable certified lenses.

Hoya's One Vision program aims for 100% renewable electricity by 2040, with a 60% target by 2030, highlighting its commitment to environmental responsibility.

GREENWASHING

More consumers are increasingly influenced by green marketing, using sustainability claims in their purchasing decisions, but there is a need to be wary of 'greenwashing'. The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) has found organisations can mislead consumers about their environmental friendliness. A March 2023 report by the ACCC, outlining the results of an internet sweep of environmental claims, found 57% of businesses made concerning claims.¹

Jocelyne Simpson, co-founder at Good Citizens Eyewear – an Australian company that takes discarded single-use plastic bottles

and turns them into sunglasses – explained that “there's a lot of greenwashing when it comes to products using recycled materials”.

“Some are very liberal with the truth, saying their product is recycled when it only contains a small percentage of recycled materials.

“At Good Citizens Eyewear we only use recycled plastic for our frames. Not 5% or even 50%; 100% rPET. Our entire range of frames is 100% recycled.”

To overcome 'greenwashing' it is important to do your research and read the fine print. Do not rely on visuals and packaging alone when it comes to making eco-conscious decisions.

B CORP CERTIFICATION

B Corps are formally certified businesses that meet high standards of social and environmental performance, accountability, and transparency. OTIS Eyewear, available through ProOptics, is one of several B Corp certified companies and according

to ProOptic's Jacque Katsieris “from the front door mat to the coffee room, all aspects of Otis eyewear are eco-focussed and approved”.

One of OTIS Eyewear's initiatives is that it uses mineral glass lenses in all its sunglasses, since it is sourced from natural elements and is endlessly recyclable.

Take a look at the green eyewear and contact lens ranges on the following pages, to see what products are available to meet the demand from your patients to 'go green'.

April Petrusma is the CEO of Optical Dispensers Australia and a Senior Lecturer at the Australasian College of Optical Dispensing. She is a qualified optical dispenser, trainer, and business manager with a degree in Visual Communication.

Reference

1. Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, Greenwashing by businesses in Australia, March 2023, available at: [accc.gov.au/about-us/publications/greenwashing-by-businesses-in-australia-findings-of-acccs-internet-sweep](https://www.accc.gov.au/about-us/publications/greenwashing-by-businesses-in-australia-findings-of-acccs-internet-sweep) [accessed April 2024].

Sourcing Earth-Friendly Eyewear Options



AM Eyewear

From its early days, AM Eyewear always has had the ethos of quality over quantity and has held true to its values of sustainability and recycling.

Handcrafted using a combination of premium materials with a focus on sustainability, such as bio-based Italian acetates; AM Eyewear's sunglasses are fitted with co-branded sustainably produced bio-based Nylon Carl ZEISS lenses with Gold ET AR back coating.

One of the best ways to practise sustainability is to give the product the longest life possible, so AM Eyewear buys back its pre-owned frames from consumers, to be reworked and donated to underprivileged communities.

Visit: [ameyewear.com](https://www.ameyewear.com)

De Rigo

Sustainability has always influenced the way De Rigo operates, and the company has made the following commitments to demonstrate its eco credentials:

Materials: Introducing new eco-materials, and recycled and biodegradable packaging,

Environment: Optimising waste and scrap management during the production process and at the company level,

Energy: Improving power efficiency to reduce energy consumption and adding solar energy, and

Emissions: Reducing CO₂ emissions in transportation and during manufacture processes.

De Rigo was the winner of the Green Star – Sustainable Companies 2022 study.

Contact: De Rigo (AUS) 02 9428 1500



COLORMATIC® X

Now available
with Biometric
Intelligent
Glasses

FASTER & CLEARER

OUR FASTEST PHOTOCROMIC LENSES YET

ColorMatic® X fades from its maximum absorption to full clarity faster than any previous ColorMatic® generation - more specifically it is 54% faster than the previous generation. Whether commuting, working inside or doing free-time activities outside, our lenses provide protection, convenience and comfort - faster and clearer than ever before.

For more information, speak to your Rodenstock Account Manager.



COLORMATIC®
ENGINEERING PHOTOCROMIC PERFORMANCE

Woodys Eyewear

Committed to finding the smartest and most sustainable solutions to create products that are as respectful as possible to our planet, Woodys Eyewear aims to become a driver of positive change. Woodys endeavours to craft eyewear that embraces environmentally-friendly principles throughout its design, manufacturing, and end-of-life stages.

Currently 40% of the Woodys' collection consists of bio acetate, using natural pigments free of toxic chemicals and plastics.

Woodys reduces single-use plastics and replaces essential protectors with 100% biodegradable materials. Woodys cases are made from 70% recycled materials.

Contact: Frames Etcetera (AUS) 1800 708 771

Frank Seed

Frank Seed embodies the seamless blend of sustainability and style. Frames are handcrafted from cellulose acetate, a biomass material derived from systematically cultivated cotton seeds, wool, and wood pulp, and complemented with German metal hinges for durability and eco-consciousness.

As all frames are fully handcrafted, customers have the flexibility to personalise their own eyewear, from reusing lenses to make a new frame or customising temple colours/shapes for a new look with the same frame front.

Moreover, leftover acetates are repurposed into eyewear-shaped necklaces, adding an eco-chic touch to your wardrobe. Pictured is Brica in a shiny tortoiseshell.

Contact: Green Infinity Eyewear (AUS) 0433 737 328

Marchon

The Eyes on Tomorrow program by Marchon is a long-term, global program that commits the company to sustainability in frame, lens, and packaging solutions; supply chain activities; and workforces.

Dedicated to leaving a positive eco-footprint, Marchon continues to leverage more

Woodys



sustainable materials and processes in the production of its premium eyewear whenever possible and available. Brands including Nike, Longchamp, Skaga, Dragon (pictured), and Nautica have expanded their sustainable offerings with a variety of sun and optical styles for adults and children.

Many of the frames are designed utilising sustainable materials, such as plant-based resin, upcycled plastic, recycled stainless steel, and Eastman's Acetate Renew, Tritan Renew, and Tenite Renew.

Visit: marchoneyewear.com.au/eyes-on-tomorrow

Revo

Revo's bio acetate frames are crafted from completely organic, plant-based materials. These frames are not only stylish but also environmentally sustainable. Made with a commitment to eco-conscious practices,

they are 100% biodegradable, ensuring minimal impact on the planet. Embracing the principles of sustainability, Revo's bio acetate frames offer a compelling choice for those who prioritise both fashion and the environment.

Visit: acmemerch.com.au

Revo



Frank Seed



Marchon



LONGCHAMP
P A R I S

MARCHON

www.marchoneyewear.com.au
AU: 1800 251 025 • NZ: 0800 141 444
CS.Aus@marchon.com

Safilo

SEE THE WORLD AT ITS BEST

Safilo

Safilo's DNA principle of "looking ahead" also guides the company's initiatives on sustainability. Safilo's life cycle assessment (LCA) maps the environmental impact of all operations from material sourcing and manufacturing to end-product.

Such initiatives include adopting the use of renewable electric energy across its global facilities, with Safilo Australia being 100% energy neutral, as well as the use of recycled and bio-based materials for frames, lenses, and packaging across the portfolio. Safilo was the first player to adopt Econyl and all Eastman Renew materials in the mass production of eyewear, showcasing the company's commitment to innovation in sustainability.

Contact: Safilo (AUS) 1800 252 016



Ugly Fish

Ugly Fish

Millions of discarded fishing nets are clogging up our oceans, posing a threat to marine wildlife through entanglement or suffocation.

To help reduce plastic pollution in our waterways, Ugly Fish has launched the Green Series with five RXable frame options made from 100% recycled fishing net. These sustainable sunglasses are tough, lightweight, and built for active lifestyles.

Ugly Fish frame and lens packages are available to order through lab partners Rodenstock, Essilor, Hoya, and OSA.

Contact: Piranha Eyewear (AUS) 1300 369 574



VMD Eyewear

VMD Eyewear has a greener vision for the optical industry. Recognising the environmental impact of conventional practices, VMD Eyewear has integrated biodegradable and compostable demo lenses, crafted from recycled materials, into all of its house brand optical frames.

This initiative directly addresses the pervasive issue of lens waste at the point of sale, significantly reducing the company's ecological footprint. The commitment extends to packaging solutions – all zip lock bags, foam inserts, and plastic sleeves are biodegradable, ensuring every aspect of the product journey champions sustainability. Proudly leading by example, VMD Eyewear is dedicated to crafting a clearer, cleaner future for our planet.

Contact: VMD Eyewear (AUS) 1800 449 845 or (NZ) 09 525 6601

Coral Eyewear

Coral Eyewear offers a scalable solution to market trends of increased corrective eyewear prescriptions and consumers considering a sustainable approach by providing high-quality glasses created with recycled plastic and other innovative materials.

Coral's Earth Collection frames are made from 40% recycled plastic, which consists of waste plastic cups and bottle caps.

The other 60% is cellulose acetate, a bio acetate which is made without crude oil, from wheat or barley.

Coral Eyewear is also packaged sustainably, with each glasses case made from recycled craft paper or recycled fishing nets.

Contact: OphthamoPro (AUS) 1300 578 288



Coral Eyewear

revo

CAPTAIN PETE CONRAD, APOLLO 12
THIRD MAN ON THE MOON

THE BEST LENS
~~ON EARTH~~
IN OZ

**Contact us to learn why you should be stocking Revo,
and have a chance to become an exclusive
Revo Platinum Partner**

P: +61 2 9311 8500 | E: revo@acmegroup.com.au



Zeal Optics

Zeal Optics' mission is to create premium polarised sunglasses that enhance your patients' time outdoors while working to protect the world around us. Zeal uses renewable and recycled materials in the manufacturing of all its sunglasses. The Z-Resin and Z-Lite frames contain a minimum of 45% plant-based bio resin while the See Grass frames (pictured) include a minimum of 10% recycled plastics and 30% agricultural waste grasses. Zeal Optics is also a proud member of the 1% for the Planet family and donates 1% of gross sales to environmentally focussed nonprofits in Australia and around the globe.

Contact: Zeal Optics (AUS) 1800 010 244

ECO6

The ECO6 lens is revolutionising the eyewear industry by swapping out traditional petrochemicals for sustainable biomass plant-based materials. This innovative lens is both sustainable and eco-friendly. It is designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by up to 14% compared with conventional petroleum-based products.

Compared with previous materials with inconsistent tinting issues, ECO6 boasts unwavering tinting capabilities. It can absorb up to 85% tint density in any colour, thanks

to its cutting-edge substrate technology. It also maintains tint integrity and is less likely to fade over time as the biomass material is consistent in colour and density.

ECO6 is comprised of a 1.6 index material and available in all grind products, a variety colours and densities. It is lightweight and suitable for rimless and nylon/ inline fitting. It is the only lens material certified and recognised as a biomass product by the Japan Organics Recycling Association (JORA) and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Contact: CR Surfacing Laboratories (AUS) 1800 334 867



Alcon

Alcon is working to reduce the environmental impact of its products while balancing its responsibility as a medical device company to provide safe products.



Since many of its products must be single use to protect patient safety, Alcon focusses its efforts on aspects of the production process and material use such as reducing energy use, packaging, and post-consumer waste as well as increasing the number of recycled materials incorporated into its products.

By 2030, Alcon will become carbon neutral across global operations (Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions) and will divert 100% of non-hazardous waste generated at manufacturing sites and distribution centres from landfill.

To offset the plastic used in Total, Precision, and Systane brands, and also UltraSert and AutoMe systems in the surgical division, Alcon has partnered with Plastic Bank to collect the same amount of ocean-bound plastic in vulnerable coastal communities.

Visit: alcon.com/about-us/social-impact-and-sustainability

CooperVision

The CooperVision range of contact lenses distributed in Australia and New Zealand is plastic neutral.^{1,2}

This initiative is made possible through a global partnership with Plastic Bank, a social enterprise that builds ethical recycling ecosystems in coastal communities.

For every box of CooperVision contact lenses distributed in ANZ, CooperVision purchases credits that fund the collection and recycling of ocean-bound plastic, that is equal to the weight of the plastic used in its one-day contact lenses, the blister and the outer carton packaging.²

Contact: CooperVision Account Manager mi

References

1. Range defined as all one day, two-weekly and monthly replacement contact lens brands and segments: sphere, toric, and multifocal sold and distributed by CooperVision in Australia and New Zealand.
2. Plastic neutrality is established by purchasing credits from Plastic Bank. A credit represents the collection and conversion of 1 kg of plastic that may reach or be destined for waterways. CooperVision purchases credits equal to the weight of plastic in one-day, two-weekly and monthly replacement contact lens orders in a specified time period. Contact lens plastic is determined by the weight of plastic in the blister, the lens, and the secondary (outer carton) package, including laminates, adhesives, and auxiliary inputs (e.g. ink).

