



**MEDIA RELEASE**

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## **Folkal launches sustainable eyewear marketplace with world-first rating system**

Folkal Eyewear has launched with the first online marketplace dedicated to helping consumers make more sustainable sunglass choices, and a **world-first rating system** to define which frames are better for the planet. Re-framing the future of eyewear, Folkal's mission is to give consumers a brand-new way to find and compare eco-friendly frames and transform the industry into one of the most sustainable.

Folkal's launch collection features over 300 sunglasses from major brands including **Tommy Hilfiger, Hugo Boss, Smith Optics, Kate Spade, Levi's, Polaroid, rag & bone and Havaianas**. In an industry first, the consciously curated marketplace lists each brand's sustainability credentials alongside products giving customers complete visibility on how every frame ranks in terms of sustainability. This exclusive eco-friendly range only features products that meet Folkal's rigorous selection criteria.

Folkal's cutting-edge rating system is the first of its kind, focused on evaluating eyewear's sustainability credentials at a product level.

While most fashion industry rating systems focus on brands, the Folkal Eyewear Rating System works at an individual product level to provide greater clarity to the end consumer. This means for the first-time ever, consumers can compare the sustainability of each frame and lens, like for like.

"All the data we've seen says eco-friendly frames are set to become one of the biggest fashion trends in 2023. However, with no single, trusted place for shoppers to find and understand what makes eyewear sustainable, we saw an opportunity to offer much-needed transparency and education," commented Folkal Co-Founder, Richard Parker.

Sustainability has become one of the keys to retail and consumer behaviour with 90 per cent of shoppers\* in Australia and Asia saying they are willing to pay a premium. (\*Bain & Co's 2022 Report: Unpacking Asia-Pacific Consumers' New Love Affair with Sustainability)

Despite this trend, many people place buying sustainable products in the too hard basket - 35 per cent of people don't purchase due to a lack of information, a lack of sustainable alternatives or the time required to find them.

To help guide consumers, Folkal's sustainability system rates the type of materials used for the frame, lenses and cases, the manufacturing method, end of life process and packaging materials for environmental impact. By doing this, along with industry innovations, Folkal aims to make the planet a healthier place, one pair of glasses at a time.

The Folkal team initially developed the framework for their rating system in consultation with Edge Impact, who are one of the largest independent environmental consulting groups in Australia. These recommendations have been used by Folkal to create the product evaluation and scoring criteria and form the basis of Folkal's industry-leading rating system.

To make it easy for consumers, the Folkal Eyewear Rating System works at an individual product level, providing a sustainability rating of GOOD, BETTER or BEST for the product, case, process, and



transport. If the product doesn't meet the minimum criteria for the frame and lens, then it won't make it on the site," said Folkal Co-Founder, Fergus Stoddart.

The launch collection of Folkal's eco-friendly sunglasses is being supplied by internationally renowned eyewear manufacturer **Safilo Australia**, joint venture partners of the new marketplace.

"Safilo Australia was a natural fit to partner with for launch due to their impressive sustainability credentials and ability to help us scale quickly from a product viewpoint. Several of their sustainable products scored highly within our rating system from very desirable brands," added Stoddart.

Safilo's Senior Director for APAC, David Pearson explained, "Globally we've been taking action in our plants and offices throughout the world to reduce our footprint on the planet – to reduce consumption of water and chemical components in our manufacturing processes, to install more environmentally friendly lighting, to reduce packaging materials, and to use eco-friendly and recycled materials in the manufacturing of our frames and lenses."

Safilo, together with material innovation company Eastman, are producing frames under the Polaroid brand in sustainable resins. Tommy Hilfiger eyewear is being produced from Econyl, an innovative material obtained by regenerating synthetic (nylon) waste such as fishing nets, carpets and textiles; and bio-based plastic and recycled materials are being used to produce pouches and trade materials.

However, across the industry, despite changes in material sourcing many sunglasses globally are made from petroleum-based virgin plastics and up to 75 per cent of it is typically wasted by eyewear manufacturers when making new styles. These plastics can take upwards of 450 years to decompose.

"Every year there's over 14 million\* pairs of glasses purchased in Australia with little thought to what happens to them after use. With greater vertical integration and shorter value chains than most other sectors in fashion, eyewear could make significant strides in reducing environmental impact quite quickly if there was higher demand from consumers," said Pearson. (\*Euromonitor International's Report 2022 - Passport: Sunglasses in Australia)

When asked about the future of Folkal, Parker commented, "We're thrilled to be launching our marketplace with Safilo. However, we plan to significantly expand our range and are happy to receive interest from other brands. Our vision is to create the world's largest collection of planet-friendly eyewear, giving consumers as many choices as possible. Folkal Eyewear is more than just an ecommerce site, we see it as a movement."

To view Folkal's launch collection of earth-friendly eyewear, and see the sustainability rating system in practice, please visit [www.folkaleyewear.com](http://www.folkaleyewear.com). For every pair of sunglasses sold, Folkal will rescue one plastic bottle from the ocean through a 'give back' initiative set-up through Greenspark.

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#### **About Folkal**

Based in Sydney, Folkal Eyewear is the brainchild of creative, content and connection agency, Edge, and a joint venture partnership with eyewear giant Safilo. It's the first online marketplace that helps consumers to make more sustainable sunglass choices and features a ground-breaking rating system to assess sustainability at a product level. Looking ahead, Folkal's vision is to make mainstream eyewear one of the most sustainable industries. Learn more about Folkal at [www.folkaleyewear.com](http://www.folkaleyewear.com).