Need to know:

Environmental Product Declarations (EPDs)

What is an EPD?

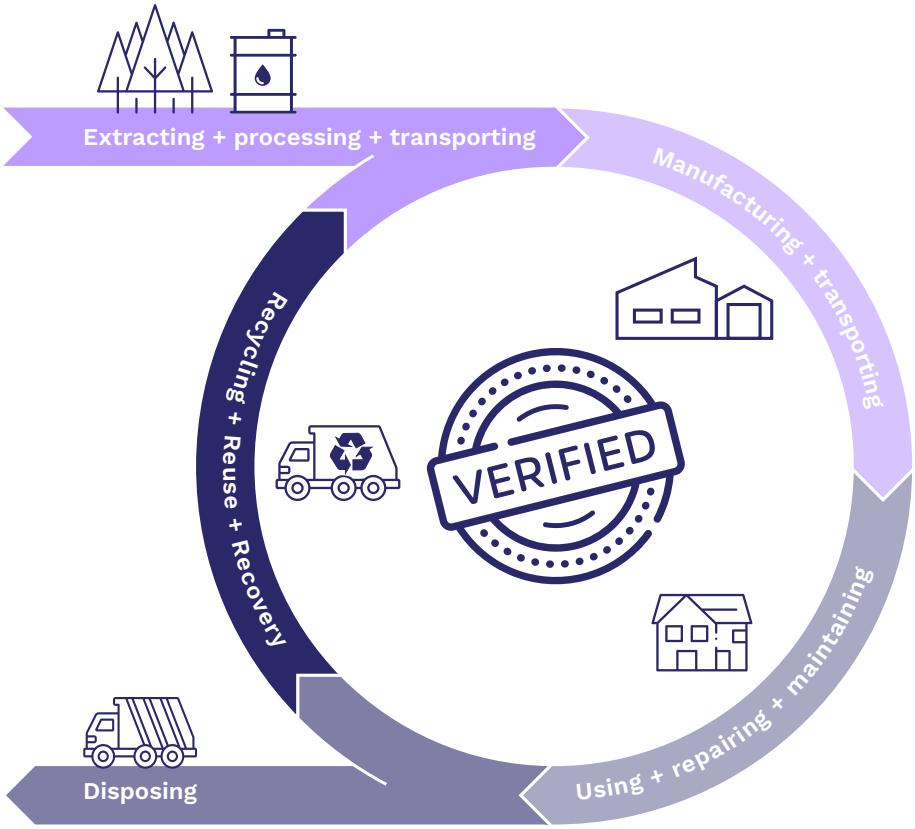
An EPD tells the environmental story of a product over its life cycle in a clear, simple format that can be understood by a wide audience. It is science-based, independently verified and publicly available. EPDs are often compared to the nutrition labels on food products.

Sustainability tools and concepts can seem daunting, we know.

We're here to help, with our suite of thinkstep-anz *Need to Know* guides. They are short, they sum up what you need to know (and leave out what you don't), and we've written them in plain English.

Every EPD is based on data from a detailed environmental study called a Life Cycle Assessment (LCA).

Each EPD documents its scope clearly, showing what is in and what is out. It also lists the standards and rules that it complies with, the name of the LCA practitioner involved and the name and contact details of the relevant independent verifier.



Depending on its scope, an EPD may document the impacts involved:

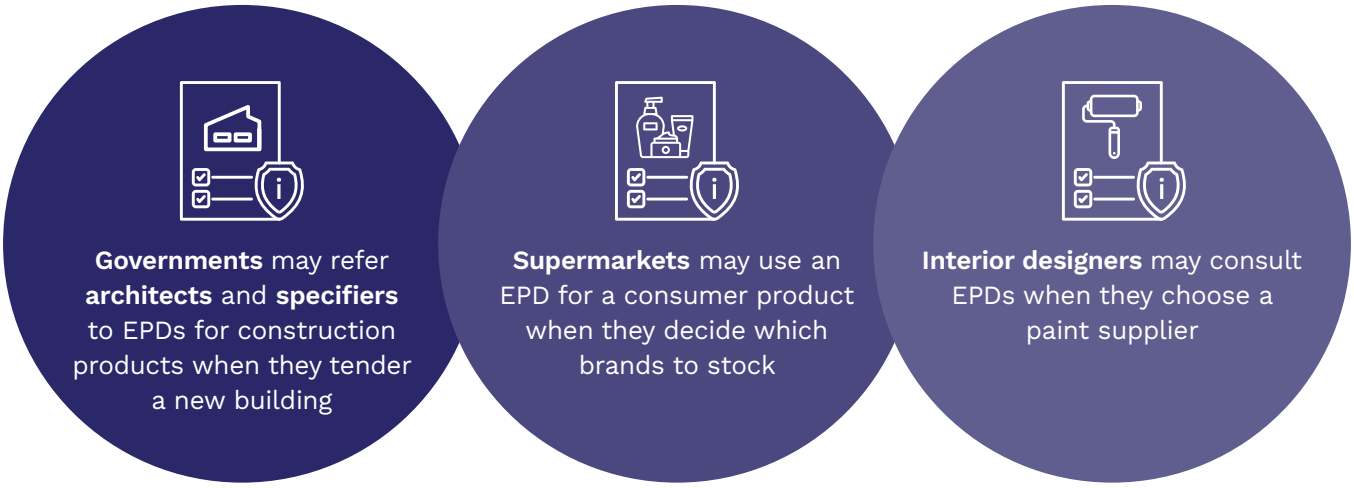
- → in making the product (e.g. extracting the raw materials, manufacturing the product, transporting the product to market)
- → when customers use and dispose of or recycle the product.

These environmental impacts take many forms. For example, at one or more stages of its life cycle, the product may emit carbon, create emissions that pollute air and waterways, and deplete natural resources like water and land.

Why should I produce an EPD for my product?

EPDs help manufacturers translate complex sustainability information about their product's environmental footprint into simpler information that governments, companies, industry associations and end consumers can trust to make decisions.

For example:



An EPD adds business value

As a manufacturer, developing and using an EPD to provide reputable, globally-recognised information about your products can lead to business opportunities that create value.

Business opportunities

- → Improve your product
- → Communicate your product's environmental strengths
- → Gain a competitive edge in your tenders
- → Identify risks
- → Benchmark against competitors

Business results

- = Stronger market share
- = Stronger supply partnerships
- = Stronger brand reputation
- = Lower costs and risks

Many audiences may be interested in the results of your EPD

They include your specifiers, designers, architects, wholesale customers, retail customers, investors, regulators, suppliers, community, and employees.

EPDs help them find product information they can trust.

Why can EPDs be trusted?



EPDs are based on international standards and are independently verified

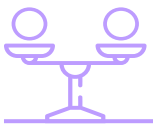
A qualified third-party must review and approve the data in an EPD before it is published. These rules and checks ensure that EPDs are reputable, trusted sources of information. Industries, companies and governments recognise them and often specify that they should be used (e.g. in tender documents and contracts).



EPDs are registered in a central system and publicly available

A credible EPD system is based on ISO 14025 (and EN 15804 for building products) which governs environmental labels and declarations. Some of the EPD systems we work with include EPD Australasia (affiliated with the International EPD System), UL Environment in the United States, PEP in France and IBU in Germany.

The information in these registers is publicly available, meaning anyone can consult it.



EPDs for the same product follow common rules for data

Product Category Rules (PCRs) define how product manufacturers must collect the data they communicate in their EPDs. Thanks to these common rules, EPD users can compare EPDs for the same product across different manufacturers.

EPDs cover many different products

If you can define a product, you can review the impact it has on the environment from the start of its life to the end. There are EPDs for construction products, food, furniture, fabric...

Click on the links to explore a few of the many EPDs our thinkstep-anz team has developed.



Paint: Dulux®UltraAir



Seafood: New Zealand King Salmon Ltd



Timber: Forest and Wood Products Australia Ltd



Hand towels: Tork® Hand Towels



Trains: Sydney Growth Trains

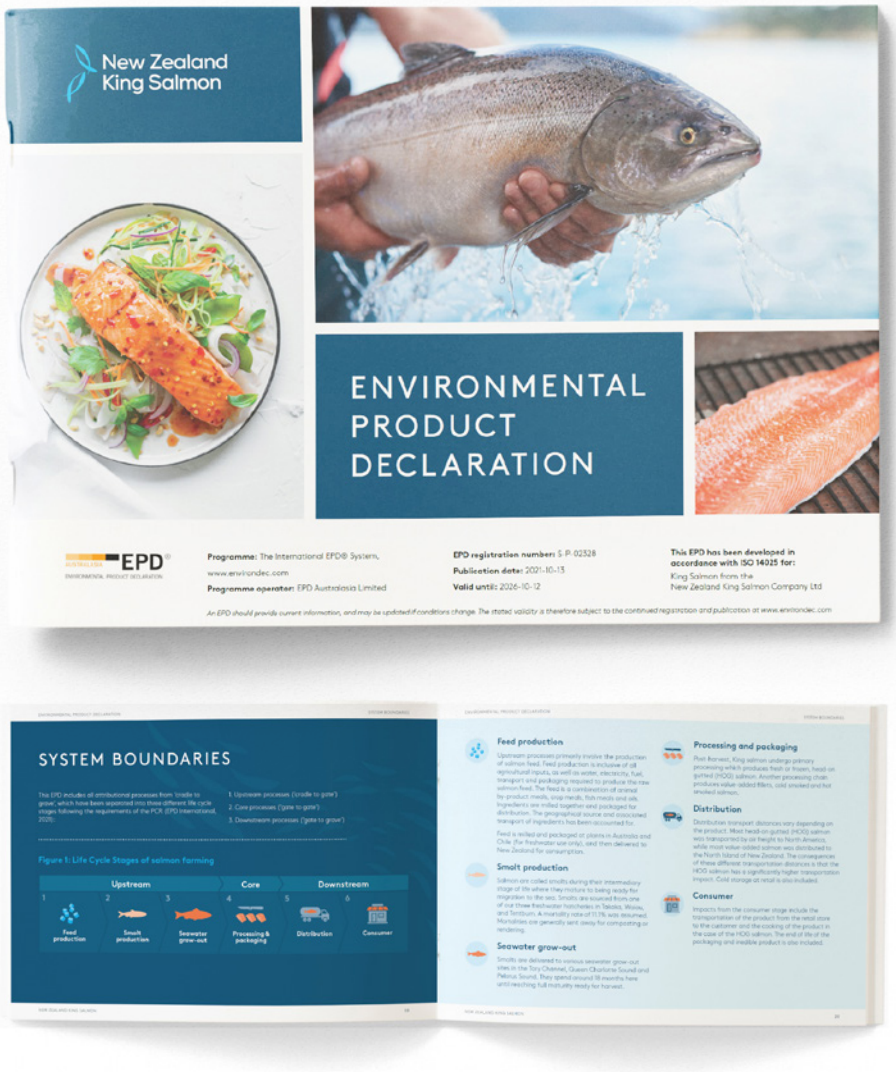
What information does an EPD provide?

EPDs contain information about environment impacts, including:

Energy: The amount of energy used (e.g. Cumulative Energy Demand (CED))

Carbon: The amount of carbon emitted (i.e. carbon footprint)

Impacts of emissions: The impact of emitted substances such as gases, liquids and particles (e.g. in depleting ozone, acidifying waterways, corroding buildings, and causing algae in waterways)



The EPD also includes:

- → The scope of study (what it covers and what it leaves out)
- → The standards and rules it complies with
- → The name of the Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) practitioner who completed the original LCA
- → The name and contact details of the EPD's independent verifier.

Many manufacturers include some company marketing information in their EPDs too

EPDs can help manufacturers build their brands. Here's an example from our client New Zealand King Salmon. Their EPD is a professionally designed document which carries the company's logo. It includes information about the company's vision, values, and sustainability programme, as well as information about their product's environmental impact.

To maintain users' trust, there are strict rules about the 'extra' sustainability information that may be included.

How do I produce an EPD for my product?



Choose a credible EPD programme that is relevant to your market.

If you sell in Australia, New Zealand, Europe or most other markets, use EPD Australasia. If you export to the United States, consider UL Environment or another programme.



Find the Product Category Rules (PCR) for your product.

They are available from the EPD programme.



Following the PCR, gather data from your manufacturing and/or suppliers.

This takes time. A specialist can help, check your data and provide extra background data.



Work with a specialist to undertake a Life Cycle Assessment (LCA).

You can learn more about LCA here.



Collect your LCA results and supporting information in an EPD.



Have both the LCA report and EPD independently verified.



Register and publish your EPD with your EPD programme.

How do I use an EPD to understand a product's environmental impact?



Use an EPD to understand the environmental footprint of a product you're considering

For example, if you're working to gain credits in a sustainability rating with (say) the Infrastructure Sustainability Council, Green Building Council of Australia or New Zealand Green Building Council, you'll need to understand how the products you use affect the environmental footprint of your project.



Use an EPD to compare the environmental footprints of alternative products

For example, if you're specifying the materials to use in a building, you may want to compare EPDs for different building products within a category (e.g. different sources of concrete).

By comparing EPDs within a recognised product category, you can be confident you're making a fair comparison backed by common standards and rules.



An EPD provides data. It's not a judgment or recommendation

An EPD does not judge products or imply that a 'declared' product is environmentally better than another product. Context is important, and people using an EPD (e.g. a specifier) will need to take this into account when they assess the data an EPD presents.

About thinkstep-anz

We're an independent sustainability firm with offices in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand.

Our team works with you to put sustainability at the heart of your business, to set you up to succeed and inspire you to keep achieving more.

We focus on what matters and use data to understand organisations and their impact. We provide practical resources and ideas that move you ahead.

It's what we've been doing for over 16 years – bringing our technical expertise and business know-how to create value for organisations like yours and help you tell your story.

Succeed sustainably

Let's work together to put sustainability at the heart of your business: your strategy, products and services, your processes, technology and relationships. We can also build your in-house skills and tell your sustainability story.

Product | **Carbon** | **Strategy** | **Reporting** | **Communication** | **Software**

We don't just talk about sustainability – we practise it too:

Keen to learn more?

Please contact us. Our specialists would love to talk with you.

meet@thinkstep-anz.com

Check out the other guides in our growing *Need to Know* series:

- → Task Force on Climate-Related Financial Disclosures
- → Life Cycle Assessment

Found this useful? Please pass it on!

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SCIENCE BASED TARGETS
DRIVING AMBITIOUS CORPORATE CLIMATE ACTION

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