

# How to create a plastic free event

## Plastics, their alternatives and waste management



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# What are single-use plastics?

More plastic has been produced in the last ten years than the 100 years prior. About 40 per cent of the plastics we consume as individuals are single-use. Plastic is made from fossil fuels like oil, natural gas and even coal. Therefore, the use of plastics is contributing to climate change.

Single-use plastics, or disposable plastics, are used only once before they are thrown away or recycled. These items are things like plastic bags, straws, coffee cups and lids, water bottles and food packaging.

## SINGLE-USE PLASTICS AND EVENTS

As an individual we can make changes to our daily habits, but as an event organiser we have the opportunity to create incredible changes at scale. If you alone switch to a reusable coffee cup you could save a coffee cup and lid from going to landfill each morning, but as an event organiser you could save hundreds of cups (or more depending on the size and scale of your event) in just one day.

It is often hard to imagine running events differently to 'how we've always done things' — this guide is designed to help you break old habits and form new sustainable ones.

## THE OPPORTUNITY TO CREATE CHANGE

By making the switch to sustainable materials at public events:

- You'll help to limit environmental degradation and species decline.
- You'll limit the amount of post-event litter needing to be cleaned up and sent to landfill.
- The carbon footprint of your event will significantly drop, as plastics are made from fossil fuels that contribute to greenhouse gas emissions.
- You will reduce the amount of waste your event sends to landfill, where plastics persist for hundreds of years.
- You'll help preserve our environment and community for future generations to enjoy.





# A quick guide — 10 easy steps to a plastic free event

1. Advertise and promote the event as plastic-free.
2. Investigating a company that supplies reusable foodware for stalls to use.
3. Require all vendors to supply only reusable or 100 per cent compostable food ware (Australian standard or equivalent) to their customers at the event (eg. plates, cups, utensils, containers etc.).
4. Do not allow balloons (including helium) to be used or released.
5. Provide a water station or water refill points on site for refillable bottles.
6. Provide recycling, food waste recycling (where applicable) and garbage bins on site.
7. Good and clear signage on/around bins is essential. Ideally provide bin monitors, waste warriors or waste fairies to explain how the system works.
8. Arrange for your waste service to transport collected materials to appropriate facilities and provide you with waste data. Please note that not all composting facilities accept compostable products.
9. Review data and management arrangements on the plastic-free outcomes and set new and improved requirements for future events.
10. Consider allocating a budget for an audit to benchmark and monitor ongoing single-use plastic quantities.





# Managing a plastic free event

## ELIMINATE COMMON PLASTICS IN THE WASTE STREAM

As a first step, focus on eliminating the six single-use plastic items that are most often littered and found in the waste stream. These are water bottles, coffee cups and lids, straws, food ware (cups, plates, cutlery etc.), takeaway containers and plastic bags.

Do not allow the release of helium-filled balloons. A practical way to avoid them would be to prohibit their use and recommend alternative decorative items or commemorative activities.

## FOODWARE

All food and drink vendors should be required to provide only reusable or 100 per cent compostable food ware (cutlery, plates, containers, cups etc.) to the public.

Include specific requirements in any contracts or arrangements with vendors. Vendors should be informed of policies and why they have been adopted. This should also apply to franchise vendors. Compostable food ware should meet Australian standards recommended by the Australian Packaging Covenant Organisation (APCO). These products are readily available from suppliers.

## WATER

Provide adequate and clearly signed water bubblers or portable water stations and encourage the use of refillable water bottles. These can avoid plastic water bottles being used. Consider accessibility by children and those with mobility aids.

Consider using refillable drinkware, where possible. A refillable system for alcohol and soft drinks involves the public purchasing (or providing a deposit) and keeping a cup for the event. No drinks can be served without a refillable cup. These can be replaced each time if desired. There are organisations that provide this service for events. Refillable cups could be branded and used repeatedly across your events.

Where refillables are not provided, events should provide drinks in aluminium cans, glass bottles or certified compostable containers (subject to local regulations for container use at events).





## PROMOTION

Promote the event as plastic-free. Educate staff, volunteers, vendors and suppliers about the plastic-free opportunities.

Promotional materials provided by event organisers, vendors and performers should be reusable, recyclable or compostable for consistency.

## WASTE COLLECTION

For more information and advice on waste collection services that may be available to you, contact Glen Eira City Council.

## EVENT ORGANISATION

Event organisers should ensure their office and back of house practices meet the above requirements and avoid the use of single-use plastics to the best of their ability. This should include any on-site facilities (eg. toilets) or crowd controls (eg. plastic film to cover fencing).

Where possible, engage an on-site waste manager. This is particularly important for larger events or where litter and waste management may be challenging.

Bin stations should focus on a three-bin system for compost, recycling and waste, subject to composting services being available.

Clear signage is essential and pictures are most useful. To ensure the correct use it is advisable to place volunteers at bin stations to help educate patrons on their correct usage and ensure effective and timely collection of full bins.

Data collection is essential to monitor performance and improve services. It is recommended that data is kept on quantities of materials sent for recycling, composting and garbage. Your waste collectors should be able to provide this data. Monitoring compliance by vendors is important too. Surveys of attendee understanding will also improve collection services, signage and public education programs.



# Alternatives to single-use plastic

## ENCOURAGE ATTENDEES TO BYO

A great way to avoid single-use plastic is to encourage your attendees to BYO their own cups, containers, cutlery, water bottles etc. — no matter the size of the event. This can be encouraged through your event communications and marketing.

## REUSABLE SYSTEMS

As the event organiser you can help facilitate the uptake of reusable systems such as:

- Instigate a program of reusable cups and have a 'no cup, no service' policy.
- Provide reusable cutlery and crockery free of charge for vendors to use, and a washing-up service. A local community group could be engaged and funded to provide clean up services and a washing station to wash and restock vendors.
- Provide a condiments station stocked with refillable sauces, dressings, salt and pepper etc.

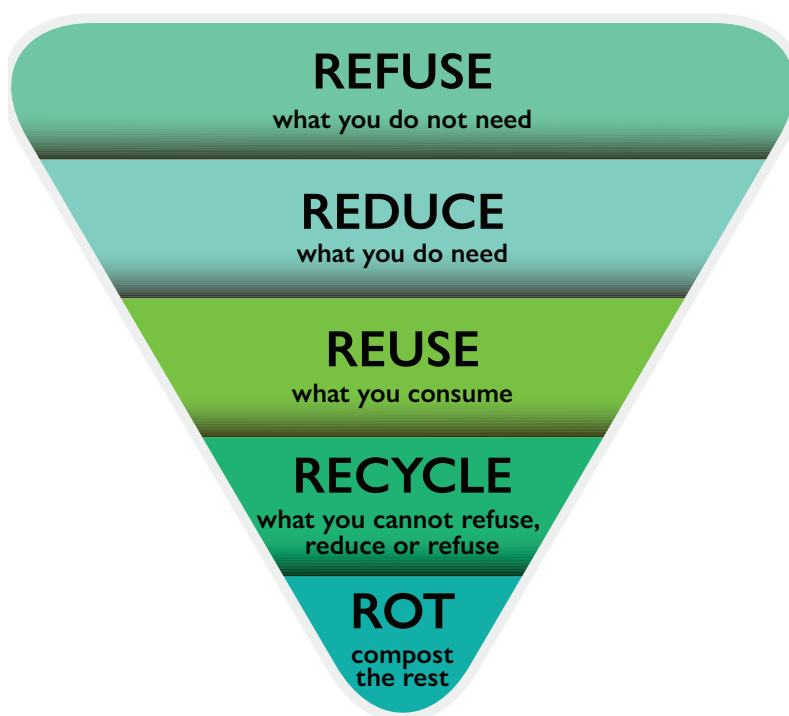
## COMPOSTABLE PACKAGING

Compostable packaging can be a more environmentally friendly solution to plastic single-use packaging — as long as it is deposited at a facility that accepts them. Some facilities process garden and food waste only — not compostable packaging. When composted correctly, the packaging decomposes entirely without leaving behind any toxic residue. The result is a nutrient rich compost that's good for our soil and for the planet.

To ensure your compostable packaging is up to standard, look for these symbols when purchasing products - they ensure the product has been certified under Australian composting standards.







If compostable materials adhering to the Australian Standard certification cannot be sourced, look instead for the below international standards. If choosing products certified under international standards, ensure that your composting facility will accept them before committing to purchase as some composters will only accept Australian Standards.



European Standard  
EN 13432



United States Standard  
ASTM D6400

Be wary of products labelled as 'eco' or 'biodegradable'. These do NOT mean the same thing as compostable and may be a plastic product. Please ensure that all products you purchase are certified compostable.

When choosing a packaging supplier, it is worth asking them whether they carry packaging brands who offer certified compostable products. As suppliers may also stock other non-compostable products, including plastics, it is strongly recommended to check relevant certifications for each product before purchasing.



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# What alternatives to plastic can be used?

	REDUCE and REUSABLE OPTIONS	COMPOSTABLE OPTIONS
<b>Straws</b> 	<p><b>Reusable alternatives</b> Stainless steel or glass (for internal events with wash up facilities). Or simply do not provide straws at all.</p> <p><b>Reduce by</b> Removing straws from sight and only providing upon request. Put up signage saying that you are reducing straws to encourage customer participation.</p> <p>You can download a sign <a href="#">here</a>.</p>	<p><b>Compostable alternatives</b> Paper (first choice). PLA (distant second choice).</p> <p><b>Look for</b> 100 per cent compostable straws. If paper — FSC certified.</p> <p><b>Avoid</b> oxo-degradable/biodegradable straws, they are plastic (and NOT compostable). They are cleverly marketed and pushed by suppliers.</p> <p><b>Ordering notes</b> Paper straws vary in quality — if you find one brand unsuitable, it is worth trying another. For a good quality straw, expect to pay three times more for paper than plastic.</p>
<b>Cutlery</b> 	<p><b>Reusable alternatives</b> Stainless steel or other reusable materials (for events with wash up facilities).</p> <p><b>Reduce by</b> Encouraging attendees to BYO cutlery in your marketing and communications streams.</p>	<p><b>Compostable alternatives</b></p> <p><b>Look for</b> 100 per cent compostable cutlery. If wooden — FSC certified.</p> <p>If PLA — ensure it is 100 per cent bioplastic.</p> <p><b>Avoid</b> any mixed material products, such as cutlery made from a percentage of bioplastic.</p> <p><b>Ordering notes</b> Some wooden cutlery now comes with a non-toxic plant based wax that gives them a more pleasant texture than traditional wooden cutlery.</p>



	REDUCE and REUSABLE OPTIONS	COMPOSTABLE OPTIONS
<b>Stirrer sticks</b> 	<p><b>Reusable alternatives</b> Stainless steel teaspoons (for events with wash up facilities).</p> <p><b>Reduce by</b> Removing stirrers from sight and only providing them upon request.</p>	<p><b>Compostable alternatives</b></p> <p><b>Look for</b> 100 per cent compostable stirrers. If wooden — FSC certified.</p> <p><b>Avoid</b> any mixed material products, such as wooden stirrers coated in plastic.</p>
<b>Plates and Bowls</b> 	<p><b>Reusable alternatives</b> Provide reusable cutlery and crockery free of charge for vendors to use, and a washing-up service.</p>	<p><b>Compostable alternatives</b> Serviettes, paper plates, bio-plates/ bowls, bamboo plates, banana leaf.</p> <p><b>Look for</b> 100 per cent home compostable first. If home compostable isn't suitable look for industrial composting certifications.</p> <p><b>Avoid</b> paper plates coated in plastic film.</p> <p><b>Ordering notes</b> PLA products are designed for cold food. If you want to serve hot food look for CPLA instead.</p>
<b>Takeaway containers</b> 	<p><b>Reusable alternatives</b> Encourage attendees to BYO containers.</p>	<p><b>Compostable alternatives</b> Serviettes, bio-containers, PLA bowls with lids.</p> <p><b>Look for</b> 100per cent home compostable first. If home compostable isn't suitable look for industrial composting certifications.</p> <p><b>Ordering notes</b> PLA products are designed for cold food. If you want to serve hot food look for CPLA instead.</p>



## REDUCE and REUSABLE OPTIONS

## COMPOSTABLE OPTIONS

### Cold cups



#### Reusable alternatives

Provide reusable cutlery and crockery free of charge for vendors to use, and a washing-up service.

Hire a reusable cupware provider to set up a refillable system.

#### Reduce by

Encouraging attendees to BYO cups in your marketing and communications streams.

#### Compostable alternatives

PLA cold cups.

**Look for** 100 per cent Australian certified compostable.

#### Ordering notes

PLA cold cups are not suitable for home composting and can only be commercially composted.

### Coffee cups



#### Reusable alternatives

If possible, use washable reusable coffee cups.

Hire a reusable foodware provider that specialises in cups, glasses and coffee cups at events.

#### Reduce by

Encouraging attendees to BYO coffee cups.

#### Compostable alternatives

PLA lined cups, Bagasse Coffee Lids and CPLA Lids.

**Look for** 100 per cent Australian certified compostable.

**Avoid** plastic lined cups and polystyrene lids. They are easily confused with compostable options.

#### Ordering notes

All compostable coffee cups and CPLA lids currently require commercial composting facilities and cannot be composted at home. Bagasse coffee cup lids can be composted both at home or at some commercial composting facilities.

### Plastic carry bags



#### Reusable alternatives

Partner with an organisation like Boomerang Bags, or source your own reusable sustainably made bags. These can be sold at the event.

#### Reduce by

Encouraging attendees to BYO bags.

#### Compostable alternatives

FSC certified paper bags.

**Avoid** paper bags without FSC certification, as they could be sourced from unsustainable forestry practices.

#### Ordering notes

Ensure you get a paper bags suitable for the purposes you require them for, eg. do you require reinforced bags for heavy items etc.



## REDUCE and REUSABLE OPTIONS

## COMPOSTABLE OPTIONS

### Water bottles



#### Reusable alternatives

Set up water refill stations throughout your event for attendees to easily refill their own bottles. Water stations can include bubblers, walk up tanks etc.

South East Water and commercial companies provide refillable water stations for hire.

Provide reusable cups and create a policy that single-use water bottles are not permitted.

#### Reduce by

Encouraging attendees to BYO water bottles.

#### Compostable alternatives

Currently there are no certified Australian compostable water bottle alternatives.

#### Other alternatives

If you absolutely require single-use water at your event, look for canned water options. However, be aware that they are not plastic free, they are coated inside and out with a plastic film. Aluminium cans can be infinitely recycled, unlike plastic which has limited recycling opportunities.

### Condiments



#### Reusable alternatives

Provide a condiments station stocked with refillable sauces, dressings, salt and pepper etc.

#### Reduce by

Choosing to provide or sell food that doesn't require condiments.

#### Compostable alternatives

Use 100 per cent Australian certified compostable sauce cups and lids.

#### Ordering notes

Many compostable packaging manufacturers provide home compostable sauce cup options, but often they still come with a plastic lid. If you require a lid for the sauce cup only look for brands that have matching PLA lids.

### Balloons and other plastic decorations



#### Reusable alternatives

**Bunting** made from fabric or paper for decorations. Upcycle old clothing.

**Solar lights** or solar fairy lights or create light shows on walls.

#### Reduce by

Hold your event in a naturally beautiful location or hire a children's entertainer that can teach skills like juggling etc.

#### Other Alternatives

**Bubbles** — source non-toxic bubble mixtures.

**Plants and flowers** — can be used to decorate your space with pot plants or cut flowers

**Paper Decorations** — make your own paper chains or pom poms.

**Face Painting** — engage a face painter and ensure you request no glitter is used.



	REDUCE and REUSABLE OPTIONS	COMPOSTABLE OPTIONS
Cling wrap	<p><b>Reusable alternatives</b> Use reusable plate covers such as beeswax wraps, silicon wraps or store/transport food in reusable plastic containers.</p> <p><b>Reduce by</b> Planning your food storage ahead of time to ensure you don't require the use of cling wrap.</p>	<p><b>Compostable alternatives</b> Currently there are no certified Australian compostable cling wrap alternatives.</p>
Signage	<p><b>Reusable alternatives</b> Where possible design all signage to be reusable for future events. Chalkboards can be a stylish and easy alternative.</p> <p><b>Reduce by</b> If your signage cannot be reused for future events only use paper or cardboard options.</p>	<p><b>Compostable alternatives</b> Standard paper can be composted, however avoid toxic inks. If you're unsure about the inks, please recycle paper and cardboard signs at the end of their use.</p> <p><b>Avoid</b> Corflute, which cannot be recycled. A more sustainable option is a material called Promeg Digital. It is durable, made from some recycled materials and is 100 per cent recyclable</p>
Branded promotional giveaways	<p><b>Reusable alternatives</b> Only give out high-quality branded material that is likely to be reused and encourages good behaviour change in attendees. Examples include branded reusable coffee cups and stainless steel straws.</p> <p><b>Reduce by</b> Question whether your event really needs branded promotional giveaways.</p>	<p><b>Compostable alternatives</b> Use 100 per cent home compostable food packaging to package an edible treat.</p> <p><b>Avoid</b> Reusable products that are not likely to be used again, like obviously cheap or poorly made reusable coffee cups etc.</p>



## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

### **Certified compostable**

Certified capable of biodegrading at elevated temperatures under specified conditions and time scales, without leaving toxic residues. Different standards apply for both home compostable and industrial compostable.

### **PLA**

Certified compostable PLA bioplastic is made from renewable plant starch such as tapioca and corn, it will completely biodegrade within 120 days in a commercial compost facility. PLA is only suitable for items up to 40°C.

### **CPLA**

Where more heat resistance is needed, such as for cutlery, or lids for coffee or soup, PLA is crystallised with added chalk to withstand heat to 90°C. Certified compostable CPLA will completely biodegrade within 120 days in a commercial compost facility.

### **Oxo-degradable/ biodegradable**

Oxo-degradable is when plastics have an added pro-oxidant chemical to help induce degradation. Complete breakdown of the plastic polymers and biodegradation have not yet been proven.

### **FSC**

FSC stands for Forest Stewardship Council and is an international not-for-profit organisation that certifies forests all over the world based on their environmental and social responsibility. When you see a FSC logo, you can be confident that buying it won't mean harming the world's forests.

### **Bioplastic**

A type of biodegradable plastic derived from biological substances like cornstarch, rather than petroleum.

### **Bagasse**

Bagasse is made from sugarcane fibres and is a by-product of the sugar industry. It is suitable for home or industrial compost facilities.



# Waste management tips

Waste management needs vary greatly depending on the size and location of your event.

Often events generate significant volumes of waste, but by implementing reduction and reusable options outlined in this guide you can significantly reduce the amount of waste your event creates. For example, asking your event attendees to bring their own coffee cup or picnic set encourages good environmental behaviours, reduces your food vendors' overheads and also reduces the waste you have to dispose of when the event finishes.

## WASTE WARRIORS

Assign employees or volunteers as 'waste warriors' to monitor waste stations and educate attendees on which bin to use. This can significantly reduce contamination.





# What goes in each bin?

## Food and garden waste



Fruit and vegetable scraps



Meat scraps and bones (including seafood)



Bread, pasta, cereal and rice



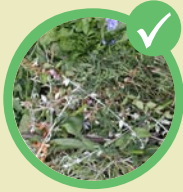
Dairy leftovers and egg shells



Coffee grounds and loose leaf tea



Used paper towel and tissues



Weeds, flowers, grass, leaves and garden prunings



### NO PLASTIC BAGS

Our green waste processing facility doesn't accept any plastic bags — including compostable and biodegradable. They do not break down in the in-vessel composting system and contaminate the compost.

## Recycling



Cardboard, paper, newspaper and envelopes



Plastic cutlery, paper plates and coffee cup lids



Cartons



Empty glass bottles and jars (with lids separated), cans and aerosols



Plastic bottles and containers (empty and lids separated)



Plastic pots (less than 10cm in diameter)

## Soft plastic

Recycle soft plastics at a nearby Coles or Woolworths supermarket.

Do the scrunch test — if it can be scrunched into a ball, it's a soft plastic.



Plastic bags



Food scraps



Fabric



Batteries

## Garbage



Ceramics, crockery and glassware



Nappies (wrapped)



All coffee cups (lids can be recycled)



Tea bags



Styrofoam



