

Single-use Plastic Free Policy

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1. TITLE

Single-use Plastic Free Policy

2. OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this policy is to outline Council's commitment to eliminating and reducing single-use plastics at events run by Council, events held on Council owned land and within Council facilities and services.

The policy will promote more sustainable resource use, keep resources in circulation at their highest value for as long as possible, and address Council's concerns about the environmental impacts caused by single-use plastics.

Phasing out single-use plastics aims to:

- design Council services to support circular economy principles;
- keep materials in circulation at their highest value;
- reduce waste sent to landfill;
- lower waste-related emissions and contribute to climate emergency action;
- promote resource recovery and sustainable resource use;
- reduce litter and improve amenity;
- protect our local environment and biodiversity from plastic pollution; and
- help mitigate the broader ecological impacts of plastic waste.

Eliminating single-use plastic aligns with and implements key actions identified in *Our Climate Emergency Response Strategy 2021-25 | Dhumbali Wurrungi-biik Parbin-ata*

Single-use items are the epitome of a linear 'make-use-throw away' model of resource management. Many single-use plastic items are difficult and economically unviable to recycle due to their shape, size and plastic type (DELWP, 2021). This means that most single-use plastics are sent to landfill, and the materials, resources and energy that were used to produce them is lost.

Although greater recyclability of single-use items would help recover and conserve materials, it is still not the best option, as recycling is an energy-intensive process. By following the Waste Hierarchy (figure 1) and finding ways to avoid, reduce, reuse and then recycle, Council can help conserve resources and move towards a more circular economy.



Figure 1

Phasing out and eliminating single-use plastics to avoid and reduce waste is necessary to follow the Waste Hierarchy.

3. DEFINITIONS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Term	Meaning
Biodegradable	A generic term that indicates a polymer is biologically available for microbial decomposition, with no detail on breakdown products, time or extent of degradation or end environments (APCO, 2021).
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 commercially compostable.
Circular economy	The Ellen MacArthur foundation defines a circular economy with three principles: Eliminate waste and pollution; circulate products and materials at their highest value and keep regenerate natural systems. The environmental impacts of production and consumption are reduced in a circular economy through more sustainable and productive use of natural resources through good design and effective recovery of materials for reuse (DELWP, 2020).
Reusable	An item is reusable if it has been designed to be used multiple times for the same purpose within its lifecycle.
Single-use plastic	Single-use plastics, or disposable plastics, are items made partly or entirely from plastic and are used once before they are discarded. A full definition and scope of plastic types is included within the policy details.
Waste hierarchy	An order of preference for the management of waste, with avoidance being the most preferred option and disposal being the least.

4. POLICY

4.1 Scope

The policy applies to Council operations and to individuals (including staff, contractors or other representatives) or organisations planning events conducted on any land or venue owned or managed by Council. This includes the day-to-day operations of Council sites, facilities and services.

The policy includes, but is not limited to all civic, commercial or community events; small or large scale festivals, meetings, markets, information sessions, parties, functions, workshops, community forums and organised sport or recreational events.

Events held on Council land, not managed by Council staff and that do not require an event permit, hire agreement, lease or tenancy agreement are not within the scope of the policy. However, event planners are strongly encouraged to follow the policy, although it is not mandatory.

The policy includes single-use plastic items used in purchasing, packaging, sales, distribution, transportation, decoration or clean-up practices associated with events and in Council facilities and services.

4.2 Phasing out single-use plastic by material type

This policy will phase out the following material types:

- Plastics labelled oxo-degradable
- Plastics labelled degradable, biodegradable or compostable but are not certified compostable under the Australian standards AS 5810 or AS 4736.
- Petroleum-derived plastics including PET, HDPE, LDPE, PP, PS and PVC
- Recycled plastics including rPET

4.3 Use of bioplastics

Council will accept bioplastics as a last resort.

Bioplastics are made from renewable resources such as corn starch, rather than non-renewable fossil fuels. As producing bioplastics instead of petroleum-derived plastics has environmental benefits, bioplastics are included in the policy to substitute single-use plastic items that do not have any other accessible alternative.

Accepted single-use materials include:

- Bioplastics made from plant starch or other organic matter, such as PLA and CPLA that are certified compostable under the Australian standards.
- Certified home compostable bioplastics (AS 5810)
- Certified commercially compostable bioplastics (AS 4736)

Council acknowledges that there are currently very limited Victorian facilities that accept commercially compostable food and beverage packaging at a municipal level. This means that most bioplastics are being sent to landfill and not composted. Accordingly, bioplastics are accepted as a last resort when non-plastic or non-reusable items are not accessible or feasible.

4.4 Phasing out single-use plastics by product type

Single-use plastic items will be categorised by using an adapted version of the Australian Packaging Covenant's definition of single-use plastic packaging. Council's definition has been expanded to include packaging and other single-use items.

An item is single-use plastic if:

1. it is partially or fully manufactured using plastic
2. it is routinely disposed of after a single use or after its contents have been used or unpackaged, and typically not refilled; and
3. it is not durable, washable or routinely used for its original purpose multiple times before disposal.

Examples of single-use plastic items that will be phased out under the policy include, but are not limited to:

- plastic straws
- plastic cutlery

- plastic plates and bowls
- plastic drink stirrers
- expanded polystyrene food and drink containers
- plastic takeaway containers
- single-use plastic bottled drinks
- balloons and other plastic decorations
- single-use disposable cups and lids including plastic lined paper cups
- single-serve plastic condiments
- cling wrap
- plastic bags and snack bags
- soft plastics
- bubble wrap
- plastic cotton bud sticks.

This is not a complete list, as each context will be assessed to identify what single-use plastic items are in use.

4.5 Exemptions

Where there is a requirement for specific single-use plastic products due to public health and safety, legislation, or disability and accessibility, are exempt from the Policy.

Other exemptions to this policy may be provided where there is no other practical alternative available. This is further outlined in 4.6 and Appendix 1.

The Victorian Government guidance presently considers reusable items as COVIDsafe. Reusable cups, containers, bags, cutlery, crockery and glassware are safe for the community to use across retail, hospitality and industry services by following good hygiene practices (Department of Health and Human Services, 2020).

4.6 Transition and Implementation stages

4.6.1 Different facilities and event types may require have tailored *Implementation Plans* that address the specific challenges and opportunities within each context. Ensuring the implementation of the policy is tailored to each context will support the transition to more sustainable alternatives that are functional and fit-for-purpose.

Different contexts that may require tailored implementation plans include:

- Council buildings and offices
- GESAC
- Events run by Council
- Events held on Council owned land but not run by Council
- Sport clubs
- Glen Eira libraries
- Function spaces and meeting rooms

4.6.2 Different types of single-use products will be phased out in stages.

Table 1: Stages of phase out single-use plastic items from Council events and services or events held on Council land.

Stage	Description
Stage one: Implementation Plan collaboration and development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with relevant departments and stakeholders to develop an Implementation Plan that is specific and based on the practical use of single-use products in each facility, service or event type. • Assess single-use plastic items that are currently in use and identify plastic-free alternatives and methods for implementation. • Assess if the single-use item has an accessible alternative and determining if it will be phased out in stage two or stage three (Appendix 1). • Set feasible timelines to phase out each single-use plastic item.
Stage two: Implement accessible plastic-free alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement plastic-free alternatives as identified in each context specific Implementation Plan. • The items that have an accessible alternative at the time of the Implementation Plan development will aim to be implemented by February 2023 to align with the State Government’s single-use plastics ban. • Trial pilots or initiatives to reduce disposables of any material and increase reusable item use.
Stage three: Explore ways to phase out plastic items that were not found to have an accessible alternative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research, develop and implement required support, programs or infrastructure to phase out and reduce the negative impacts of single-use plastic items that were not found to have an accessible alternative during the Implementation development.

5. HUMAN RIGHTS CHARTER COMPATIBILITY

This Policy has been assessed as being compatible with the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* (Vic).

6. ASSOCIATED INTERNAL DOCUMENTS

- *Our Climate Emergency Response Strategy 2021-25 | Dhumbali Wurrungi-biik Parbin-ata*
- *Draft Glen Eira Circular Economy Plan 2022-26*

7. EXTERNAL REFERENCES/RESOURCES

- APCO (2021) *Action Plan for problematic and unnecessary single-use plastic packaging*. Available at <https://documents.packagingcovenant.org.au/public-documents/Action%20Plan%20for%20Problematic%20and%20Unnecessary%20Single-Use%20Plastic%20Packaging>
- APCO (2018) *Biodegradable and compostable packaging: working group 2018*. Available at <https://documents.packagingcovenant.org.au/public-documents/Biodegradeable%20and%20Compostable%202018%20Working%20Group>
- Clean up Australia (2020) *Rubbish Report 2020*. Available at <https://www.cleanup.org.au/rubbish-report>
- Department of Agriculture, Water and Environment [DAWE] (2021) *National Plastics Plan 2021*. Available at <https://www.environment.gov.au/system/files/resources/a327406c-79f5-47f1-b71b-7388407c35a0/files/national-plastics-plan-2021.pdf>
- Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning [DEWLP] (2020) *Recycling Victoria: a new economy*. Available at <https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-02/Recycling%20Victoria%20A%20new%20economy.pdf>
- Department of Health and Human Services (2020) *How to safely use and clean cutlery, crockery and miscellaneous item*. Available at <https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/preventing-infection-workplace#cleaning-and-disinfection>
- Port Phillip Ecocentre (2020) *Clean Bay Blueprint: Microplastics in Melbourne*. Available at [https://ecocentre.com/sites/default/files/images/Documents/Programs/Baykeeper/EcoCentre_CleanBayBlueprint_FinalEdits%20\(2\).pdf](https://ecocentre.com/sites/default/files/images/Documents/Programs/Baykeeper/EcoCentre_CleanBayBlueprint_FinalEdits%20(2).pdf)

Appendix 1: Assessing if a single-use plastic item has an accessible alternative

Questionnaire to assess whether a single-use plastic item has an accessible alternative for a specific context.

Adapted from the APCO model for identifying unnecessary plastic packaging (APCO, 2020). If all questions are answered with 'Yes' the plastic item will be categorised as unnecessary and included in stage two. If there is a question that is answered 'No' this may mean the plastic item will be categorised as not having an accessible alternative and will be addressed in stage three.

Question	Answer
<p>Health and safety Can the plastic item be avoided or substituted without compromising the ability to meet standards for human health, OHS, or food safety or any other government regulations?</p>	Yes/No
<p>Cost Can the plastic item be reduced, avoided or substituted without causing any significant financial risk or loss of revenue?</p> <p><i>This is specifically relevant for sports clubs or other organisations that run events on council land.</i></p>	Yes/No
<p>Behaviour change Can the plastic item be avoided or substituted with fit-for-purpose alternatives that do not require broad behaviour change of patrons or users.</p> <p><i>For example, switching to a paper straw does not require behaviour change from an event attendee. Whereas changing to an entirely BYO reusable cup service at a sports club does require behaviour change of attendees.</i></p>	Yes/No
<p>Infrastructure, resource and systems change Can the plastic item be avoided or substituted without causing a need to install additional infrastructure, a need for additional human resources or a significant change to the system used by the organiser.</p> <p><i>For example, implementing reusable cutlery and plates at a sports club would require additional cleaning and storage compared to disposable kitchenware. This would require additional human resources or added infrastructure such as a dishwasher.</i></p>	Yes/No