

# **DRAFT Single-use Items and Packaging Guide 2025**

A guide for users of council buildings and  
land to avoid single-use items and reduce  
unnecessary packaging and plastics

Edition 3 – DRAFT – MAY 2025



## Acknowledgement of Country

Surf Coast Shire Council Acknowledges the Wadawurrung People, and the Gulidjan and Gadubanud Peoples of the Eastern Maar, their Elders and leaders past, present and emerging as the Traditional Owners of the skies, land, waters and sea country across our municipality.

We acknowledge their care and custodianship for more than 60,000 years, which continues today.

We walk with them as we respectfully care for and tread lightly on these lands. We also extend that respect to all First Nations people who are part of the community.

*Surf Coast Shire Council is committed to working with Traditional Owners and other First Nations people in our community. We are inspired by the fundamental principles of keeping Country healthy by actively caring for Country and sustainably managing natural resources. This is set out in the Country Plans of the Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation's Meerreengeeye Ngakeepoorryeeyt (Our Country, Far Seeing) and Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation's Paleert Tjaara Dja (Let's Make Country Good Together).*

## Background and Introduction

Surf Coast Shire Council is committed to reducing single use items, packaging, and unnecessary plastics to help reduce waste and protect our natural environment from pollution.

Our Plastic Wise Policy was first introduced in 2016 focusing on events and markets. The latest Policy update has broadened the scope to now include all activities undertaken on council owned and managed sites.

Council is committed to reducing waste and driving action towards a circular economy as seen in the *Circular Economy Action Plan (CEAP) 2024-2027*. This plan outlines Council's priorities of avoiding waste and increasing resource recovery, maximising reuse and creating systems change.

We are dedicated to driving meaningful change in a community that takes pride in its strong commitment to sustainability. Together, we can lead the way in creating a more sustainable future for Surf Coast Shire.

This guide has been developed to provide tips and advice for reducing single use items and unnecessary plastics in Surf Coast Shire and to support the community to comply with our Policy.

## 1. Why avoid single-use items and packaging?

Surf Coast Shire is home to stunning beaches, diverse wildlife, and a thriving community that values sustainability. Single-use items – plastic or otherwise – threaten our natural environment as they create excessive waste, pollute the environment, and deplete natural resources. Most end up in landfill or as litter in oceans and waterways, harming wildlife and marine life, and contaminating our food supply. They also require significant energy and raw materials to produce, only to be discarded after one use.

While across Australia progress is being made with single-use bans being introduced and a growing number of councils developing plastic avoidance and reduction policies and guidelines, there is still room for improvement.

Did you know?

- Australians use approximately **3.4 million tonnes** of plastic annually, with **1 million tonnes** being single-use plastics<sup>1</sup>
- Globally **8 million** items of litter (primarily plastics) enter the marine environment every day, and this litter impacts over **600** species of animals worldwide, including 77 Australian species such as turtles, sea birds, and whales<sup>2</sup>
- Only about **15%** of all plastic waste generated in Australia over the last 20 years has been recovered through recycling, composting or energy recovery, leading to a substantial amount of plastic ending up in landfills<sup>3</sup>
- Single-use plastics account for about **one-third** of the litter in Victoria's streets and waterways, posing significant environmental challenges<sup>4</sup>
- Emissions from waste contributed to 3.8% of Victoria's total greenhouse gas emissions in 2022<sup>5</sup>

The good news is things are changing! Did you know that 80% of businesses surveyed in our 2024 Surf Coast Shire Council Business Survey indicated a desire to invest in sustainability actions for their business?

**Let's look at what we can do to reduce our reliance on single-use items and choose more sustainable options!**

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, 2021, [www.dcceew.gov.au/environment/protection/waste/publications/national-plastics-plan-summary](http://www.dcceew.gov.au/environment/protection/waste/publications/national-plastics-plan-summary)

<sup>2</sup> Tangaroa Blue, 2018, [www.tangaroablue.org/](http://www.tangaroablue.org/)

<sup>3</sup> The Australia Institute, 2024, [www.australiainstitute.org.au/report/plastic-waste-in-australia/](http://www.australiainstitute.org.au/report/plastic-waste-in-australia/)

<sup>4</sup> Environment Protection Authority Victoria, 2021, [www.epa.vic.gov.au/about-epa/our-programs-and-projects/single-use-plastics-ban](http://www.epa.vic.gov.au/about-epa/our-programs-and-projects/single-use-plastics-ban)

<sup>5</sup> Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action, 2022, Victorian Greenhouse Gas Emissions Report, [www.climatechange.vic.gov.au/greenhouse-gas-emissions](http://www.climatechange.vic.gov.au/greenhouse-gas-emissions)

## 2. Can't we just switch to using compostable products?

No – unfortunately not. These items cannot be accepted in Council FOGO bins (lime-green lid). Council FOGO bins can only accept food or garden scraps. Compostable and biodegradable packaging, as well as paper towels, tissues, and serviettes must all be disposed of in the landfill bin (bright red lid).

### **Compostable products \*(not accepted in Council FOGO bins)**

Compostable products are usually made from bamboo, paper or cardboard and often have a hidden plastic or waxed lining to provide non-stick capabilities and waterproofing. These are often used for take-away items such as coffee cups or food containers. They may or may not contain a certification symbol.

Initially compostable products were seen as a great alternative to traditional plastics, however this has changed. Compostable food containers and packaging, particularly those made of moulded plant fibres, may contain plastics and PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances or "forever chemicals") that can contaminate compost and potentially contaminate soil and crops, raising concerns for environmental and human health. Plastic contamination and PFAS are two of the main reasons that organic processing facilities no longer accept compostable packaging. The Victorian Government released guidance in their Service Standards outlining from 2027 that compostable items will not be accepted in FOGO bins and must go in landfill bins only.

**Note: Surf Coast Shire Council does not accept compostable or biodegradable packaging in the FOGO bin (lime-green lid). These items must go in the landfill bin (bright red lid). Any facilities or events using Council-supplied bins must avoid compostable and biodegradable products. This is likely to be the same if using external waste contract companies.**

What are the issues associated with compostable products?<sup>6</sup>:

- There are various compostable items and some with plastic linings or coatings. Sometimes there is confusion and "greenwashing" where products may claim that they are compostable when they may not be.
- A recent CSIRO report<sup>7</sup> showed that 85% of bioplastics are currently ending up in landfill with only about 15% being composted.
- A study by the University of Canterbury<sup>8</sup> found that items claimed as 'biodegradable' and 'compostable' were not breaking down adequately, leaving microplastics remaining in compost that will accumulate in soils overtime.
- Compostable products also do not significantly benefit organic waste processing because they break down into components with limited nutritional value for the soil.

**It is best to avoid 'biodegradable' and 'compostable' packaging, and where possible offer reusable items instead.**

<sup>6</sup> Note: Compostable packaging generally has lower embodied carbon than traditional plastic alternatives, particularly those made from renewable sources like PLA or bagasse. Council FOGO bins currently cannot accept compostable packaging, and compostables must be disposed of in landfill bin (bright red lid). Compostable items in landfill can release methane as they break down anaerobically, limiting their environmental benefit unless separate industrial composting access is arranged.

<sup>7</sup> State of Bioplastics in Australia report, 2024, <https://research.csiro.au/ending-plastic-waste/bioplastics-report/>

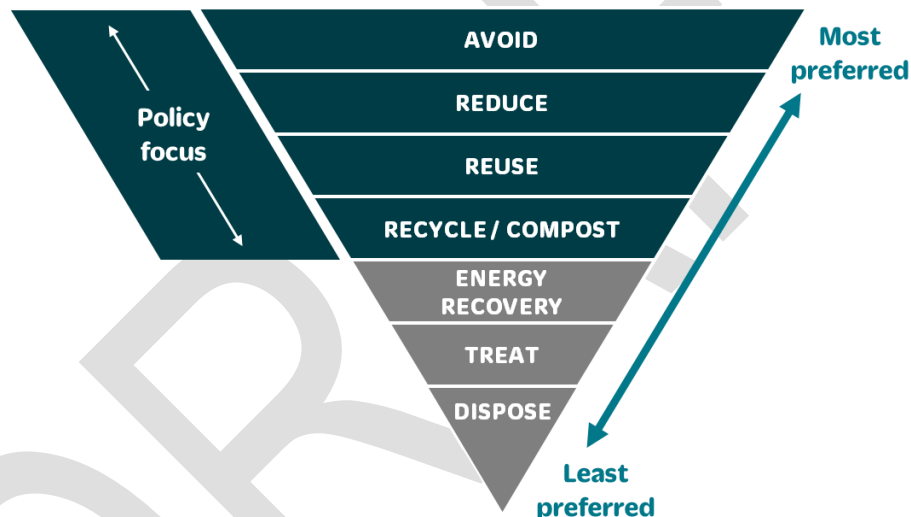
<sup>8</sup> Quantification of microplastics in biowastes including biosolids, compost, and vermicompost destined for land application, 2025, <http://dx.doi.org/10.20517/wecr.2024.65>

### 3. Using The Waste Hierarchy to guide action

The Waste Hierarchy is a valuable tool for guiding actions to reduce plastics as it prioritises strategies that have the greatest environmental impact.

- **Avoid and reduce** – Do you need to provide the item e.g. bags? Could you avoid the item completely?
- **Reuse** – Are there reusable solutions that you could offer for customers to use and return, or purchase to keep? Compared to reusable systems, vendors can spend up to 30–40% more on single-use packaging.
- **Recycle** – Look for options that can be recycled, ideally through the Container Deposit Scheme (CDS) or packaging that is accepted in the recycling bin (yellow lid) e.g. plastics labelled type 1 (PET), 2 (HDPE) & 5 (PP).
- **Dispose** – If you cannot avoid or find a reuse solution, look at the “Swap This for That” table to understand the best options.

By following this hierarchy, we focus on actions that prevent waste, reduce single-use items and packaging usage, and support a circular economy.



#### Top Tips!

- **Provide items “On Request”:** Only provide items when patrons ask instead of automatically providing them, and keep items out of sight (e.g. straws, cutlery, cups, lids, condiments etc.).
- **Encourage BYO reusables:** Consider offering a small discount to incentivise customers to BYO items such as reusable coffee cups or take away food containers. The Victorian Food Act 1984 and the National Food Safety Standards do not prohibit a food business from serving food or drink in a container provided by a customer.
- **Could I rent or borrow this instead of buying?** This can often work out cheaper, as means items can continue to be reused instead of being used once and discarded or stuck in storage e.g. decorations for events or activities.

## If I can't use compostable packaging, what should I do?

Offering reusable packaging or crockery is the best option if labour and infrastructure allows (e.g. if there is a dishwasher on-site). Reusable items can reduce long-term costs by eliminating the need for repeated purchases of disposable items and minimise waste disposal expenses with less waste being generated. If reusables can't be used, read on for tips on what materials are the best to recycle, and additional considerations for food and drink packaging.

## 4. Which materials are the best to recycle?

When considering what type of product to choose, it can be helpful to consider how easy it is for that material to be recycled at end of life.

Recycling rates from most to least recyclable:



### Aluminium

Considered infinitely recyclable - meaning it can be recycled again and again without losing its properties or qualities. Because of this around 75% of all aluminium ever made is still in use today<sup>9</sup>.

### Glass

Highly recyclable, but recycling is limited by glass colour (clear is better) and also energy-intensive. Glass can degrade in quality over time.

### Paper/Cardboard

Able to be recycled multiple times but paper fibres shorten over time (reducing the quality) and coatings can reduce recyclability.

### Plastic

Limited recyclability, often downcycled; quality and recovery highly dependent on type and cleanliness *\*note plastics pose a far greater pollution risk to the environment*

## 5. Food and drinks packaging

**Cold beverages:** For refrigerated beverages, aluminium should be prioritised as it has the highest recycling outcomes, followed by glass<sup>10</sup>, and then plastic as it is the least recyclable material.

**Hot beverages:** For hot beverages (e.g. coffee), there is still a benefit to using compostable cups as these generally have a lower environmental impact and pose less of a pollution risk if they end up in the environment. All coffee cups must be disposed of in landfill, whether they are made from compostable or traditional materials<sup>11</sup>. Where a reusable cup is not possible, compostable cups are preferred (choose certified compostable, and ensure they are disposed of in landfill).

**Food packaging:** Once a product is soiled or has significant amount of food residue, even if it made of cardboard or paper, it must be disposed of in the landfill bin not the recycling bin. Cardboard, paper or plastic need to be clean and free from any food residue to be recycled. If there is food residue present (typically greater than 5% of the packaging) these must be disposed of in the landfill bin. Where reusable packaging is not possible, bamboo fibre<sup>12</sup> is the preferred product noting that this must be disposed of in landfill (even if labelled compostable).

<sup>9</sup> Australian Aluminium Council, 2024: <https://aluminium.org.au/sustainability-main/recycling/>

<sup>10</sup> Note: refer to Council's Local Law Part 4, Section 4.11 Glass Free Areas.

<sup>11</sup> Traditional coffee cups cannot be recycled as the paper cup has a plastic lining to make it watertight. Compostable cups can no longer be accepted in Council FOGO bins, and thus all coffee cups must be disposed of in the landfill bin.

<sup>12</sup> Bamboo typically has a lower environmental footprint compared to paper and lower chemical usage.

## 6. Swap this for that – Alternatives and Tips for Success

| ITEM                                                                                                                | ALTERNATIVES                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | OTHER OPTIONS                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | TIPS FOR SUCCESS                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Plastic bags</b>                                                                                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reusable bags (BYO bags, Boomerang Bags, or sell reusable bags)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>100% recycled paper bags or FSC certified bags</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Offer “On Request” only</li> <li>Consider charging small fee if customers request a bag</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Straws</b>                                                                                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No straw</li> <li>BYO straw</li> <li>Offer or sell reusable straws e.g. glass<sup>3</sup> / silicon / stainless steel</li> </ul>                                                                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Paper straw (<i>*must be disposed in landfill bin</i>)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Avoid straws wherever possible</li> <li>Offer “On Request” only and keep straws out of site</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Drink stirrers</b>                                                                                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reusable teaspoon or stirrer</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bamboo fibre stirrer (<i>*must be disposed in landfill bin</i>)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Offer “On Request” only</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Plates and cutlery</b>                                                                                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Avoid cutlery if not essential</li> <li>BYO plate / cutlery</li> <li>Provide reusables</li> </ul>                                                                                                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bamboo fibre plates / cutlery (<i>*must be disposed in landfill bin</i>)</li> <li>Banana leaf (<i>this is a great alternative as it is a plant material, it can go in the FOGO bin</i>)</li> <li>Serviette / square of cardboard (<i>*note must be disposed in landfill bin if there is food residue</i>)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Offer “On Request” only</li> <li>Ensure you have an appropriate wash station for reusables<sup>2</sup></li> <li>If using a compostable product<sup>1</sup> check there is no PFAS in the lining (<i>Note: if an item is certified compostable it should not contain PFAS</i>)</li> </ul>                                                                                  |
| <b>Coffee cups and lids</b><br>(e.g. paper, compostable, plastic)                                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>BYO reusable cup</li> <li>Offer reusable cups / mugs for use or for sale</li> <li>Use a cup exchange or cup library system</li> </ul>                                                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Certified compostable cups<sup>1</sup> (<i>*must be disposed in landfill bin</i>)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider offering a discount to customers who BYO reusable cup</li> <li>Offer lids “On Request” only</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Single-use bottled water</b>                                                                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide drinking water on site e.g. taps, portable water station, water barrels</li> <li>BYO bottles or hydration pack</li> <li>Edible hydration gels for sporting events</li> <li>Reusable cups</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recyclable aluminium cans or glass<sup>3</sup> bottles ideally captured and returned through the CDS</li> <li>Plastic bottles only if collected through the CDS or able be recycled (e.g. plastic types 1, 2 &amp; 5)</li> </ul>                                                                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide water fountains or bulk water supply, e.g. <a href="#">Barwon Water Hydration Station</a> or Council’s <a href="#">MEET PAT</a> water stations</li> <li>Offer water “On tap” or from a jug to reduce single-use packaging</li> <li>Consider collaborating with other businesses or stallholders at events for combined solutions and pricing discounts</li> </ul> |
| <b>Juice box with straw attached</b>                                                                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Juice from a large bottle poured into reusable cups</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>100% recyclable plastic bottle (e.g. plastic types 1, 2 &amp; 5)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Look for items that are 100% plastic that can be recycled or collected through the CDS</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Takeaway food containers</b>                                                                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage consumers to BYO containers</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide 100% recycled and recyclable takeaway containers (e.g. plastic types 1, 2 &amp; 5)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider offering a returnable / refillable container (e.g. where the consumer pays a fee that is refunded when they return the container)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Single-serve condiments and sachets</b><br>(e.g. salt, pepper, tomato and soy sauce, mayonnaise, pickled ginger) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Serve condiments from large containers (e.g. large sauce bottles)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use recyclable hard plastic containers (<i>instead of soft plastic sachets</i>)</li> <li>Consider a self-serve sauce station with reusable or recyclable containers where customers can self-serve and only take the condiments they need.</li> </ul>                                                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that large condiment containers are cleaned and sanitised before refilling<sup>2</sup></li> <li>Sachets often include both plastic and foil, so if using a disposable product, try to use a plastic-only vessel that is recyclable</li> </ul>                                                                                                                      |

| ITEM                                                          | ALTERNATIVES                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | OTHER OPTIONS                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | TIPS FOR SUCCESS                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Individually packaged sweets</b>                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Bulk packaged sweets</li> <li>– Homemade items</li> <li>– Chocolate / slices or fudge that can be cut into pieces</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Fruit or other sweet alternatives that are not packaged</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Look for items that can be purchased in bulk with less packaging</li> <li>– To replace individually packaged sweets, consider shelf stable hard candy</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Balloons, decorations and glitter</b>                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Reusable paper lanterns, bunting, flags or banners</li> <li>– Living flowers or pot plants (<i>instead of cut flowers that will die</i>)</li> <li>– Dried flowers / petals</li> <li>– Coloured sand</li> <li>– Garden spinners / pinwheels</li> <li>– Ribbon sticks</li> <li>– Kites</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Cut flowers</li> <li>– Colourful streamers (paper not plastic)</li> <li>– Water-soluble confetti (e.g. confetti made from natural materials such as glutinous rice)</li> <li>– Eco glitter (biodegradable / cellulose glitter)</li> <li>– Natural sparkles (synthetic mica / borosilicates)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Rent reusable decorations (e.g. festoon lighting, paper lanterns, etc.)</li> <li>– Decorative living flowers or plants (e.g. pot plants that could be rented or bought and reused for future events)</li> <li>– If single use decorations are used ensure these are recyclable or compostable (e.g. cut flowers)</li> </ul> |
| <b>Water ballons</b>                                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Refillable water ballons / wet sponge throwing game</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Reusable water guns</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– If you have a toy library near you check if they have any items like these that you could borrow</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Soft plastic packaging</b><br>(cling wrap / zip lock bags) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Avoid packaging</li> <li>– Offer or accept reusable containers</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Reusable silicon food covers / lids</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Consider options that avoid the need for packaging or for groups or clubs consider whether you could collect a stockpile of reusable containers</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Kitchen supplies</b>                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Reusable compostable<sup>1</sup> dish cloths (e.g. “Swedish” dish cloths), coconut fibre scourers, bamboo / wooden scrubbing brush with natural fibre bristles</li> <li>– Plastic free soaps / detergents (e.g. solid soap block, dishwasher sheets or tablets)</li> </ul>                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Refillable soap / detergents with bulk refill options</li> <li>– Scourers / scrubbers made from recyclable materials</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Look for plastic-free options made from natural materials</li> <li>– Check the external packaging (e.g. dishwasher tablets in a cardboard box instead of thick plastic container)<br/><i>(*Remember any compostable items must be disposed in landfill bin)</i></li> </ul>                                                  |
| <b>Merchandise and promotional items</b>                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Quality reusable items (stainless steel cups or drink bottles as opposed to plastic drink bottles, even if they are designed to be reused)</li> <li>– For clothing prioritise natural materials (cotton) over synthetic (nylon / polyester)</li> </ul>                                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– If providing people with event-specific items consider removing any reference to the calendar year, so these can continue to be used in future years / seasons.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Choose high quality, plastic free reusable products that last longer over lower quality items, even if they are reusable</li> <li>– Offer merchandise “On Request” only</li> <li>– Consider ‘pre-order’ where people opt-in for merchandise to reduce wastage and over-ordering</li> </ul>                                  |
| <b>Promotional bags</b>                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Avoid promotional bags (particularly flimsy bags made of plastic / nylon / polyester) even if these are designed to be reused</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– If packaging or bags are required, prioritise recyclable materials (e.g. paper bag or envelope)</li> <li>– High quality natural materials designed to be reused (e.g. jute / hessian / cotton / calico)</li> </ul>                                                                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Consider paper bags first</li> <li>– Natural fibres (e.g. cotton or calico) are preferable to plastic, but there is high water consumption in the production process meaning they need to be used many times to offset the water and environmental impact</li> </ul>                                                        |

| ITEM                                   | ALTERNATIVES                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | OTHER OPTIONS                                                                                                                                                                                                            | TIPS FOR SUCCESS                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Single use event infrastructure</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Signage without dates that can be reused for future events</li> <li>- Reusable decorations (<i>see Balloons and Decorations</i>)</li> <li>- Reusable course markings</li> <li>- Avoid zip ties (<i>consider metal sign holders you can slide a sign into and reuse</i>)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Single-use recyclable options</li> <li>- Non-toxic materials or course markings that will not pollute the environment if unintentionally lost / unable to be removed</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- If single use signage is required, aim for materials that are recyclable</li> <li>- Consider whether digital signage could be utilised to reduce single use waste</li> <li>- If zip ties are used make every effort to ensure these are removed and securely disposed of so they do not end up in the environment</li> </ul> |

<sup>1</sup> Compostables products cannot be accepted in Council FOGO bins (lime-green lid) and these must be disposed of in the landfill bin (bright red lid). If organising your own organics waste contractor be sure to confirm whether they can accept compostable products as many cannot. Remember compostable products are not recyclable.

<sup>2</sup> See FAQs for information on cleaning and sanitising surfaces and utensils to comply with the Food Standards Code.

<sup>3</sup> Note: also refer to Council's Local Law Part 4, Section 4.11 Glass Free Areas.

## 7. Frequently asked questions

|                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Can food and drink be served in containers provided by customers?                       | Yes, businesses can accept customer-provided containers. <a href="#">The Victorian Food Act 1984</a> and the <a href="#">Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ)</a> Food Standards Code does not prohibit businesses or vendors from letting customers use their own containers. Council supports businesses right to accept clean containers, and <a href="#">Sustainability Victoria</a> also acknowledges this approach.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| How do I wash reusable cups, plates and cutlery to comply with the Food Standards Code? | Refer to Appendix 6, p173-181 of <a href="#">A Guide to the Food Safety Standards</a> , 3rd edition, November 2016 ( <a href="http://www.foodstandards.gov.au">www.foodstandards.gov.au</a> ). Council's Environmental Health Officers can also provide advice.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Is it more expensive to switch to reusables?                                            | Not necessarily. The initial cost may be slightly higher, but in the long run, it can lead to financial savings to use durable reusable items that can be used multiple times. Second-hand stores and op-shops are often a great place to find more affordable reusable kitchen crockery and utensils. Vendors can end up spending more on single-use packaging compared to reusable systems, especially when buying compostable or branded items in small quantities.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Are takeaway coffee cups and lids recyclable?                                           | <p>Coffee cups are in most cases not recyclable. This is because traditionally coffee cups were made of a paper cup with a waterproof wax or plastic lining to make the paper watertight. The combination of materials complicates the recycling process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Paper cup – No.</b> Because they contain a waterproof (plastic or wax) lining they must be put in the landfill bin (bright red lid).</li><li>• <b>Plastic lid – Yes and No...</b> Typically, takeaway coffee cup lids are made from polystyrene (6) or polypropylene (5) a petroleum-based plastic that is difficult to recycle. Black plastics are also harder to recycle as they are harder to sort and have a lower market value. <b><u>Only plastic types 1 (PET), 2 (HDPE) &amp; 5 (PP) can go in the yellow-lid recycling bin.</u></b></li><li>• <b>Compostable cup and lid – No.</b> If using Council-supplied bins they need to be disposed of in the landfill bin (bright red lid).</li></ul> |
| What is the best type of coffee cup?                                                    | <p>The best coffee cups are ones that are reusable! Compostable products cannot be accepted in Council FOGO bins (lime-green lid) and many organics contractors cannot accept these products. With our current system, coffee cups must go to landfill bin (bright red lid) after use unless there is a proven compostable processing arrangement with your waste contractor.</p> <p>If you require a single-use disposable coffee cup, paper or plant based certified compostable cups with a plant based non-PFAS waterproof barrier are preferred.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Are there any exemptions to the Policy?                                                 | There are blanket exemptions (for health and safety, accessibility and public safety requirements), and conditional exemptions (where alternatives may be limited, where existing agreements are in place or where established collection and recycling programs exist). Refer to the Single-use Items and Packaging Policy for more information.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |

### What is the difference between compostable and biodegradable?

#### Compostable products \*(not accepted in Council FOGO bins):

Compostable products are a subset of biodegradable products. They are designed to break down into organic matter within a given timeframe. Originally it was thought that these products would break down sufficiently and leave no visual residue and not impact the worms or micro-organisms, however [a recent study](#) showed these items are not breaking down adequately and contaminating compost.

#### Bioplastics \*(not accepted in Council FOGO bins):

Bioplastics are either bio-based, biodegradable or both:

- **Bio-based plastics:** made from natural materials such as potato starch, sugar cane, wheat.
- **Bio-degradable plastics:** has the potential to break down over time under specific conditions. \*Compostable products are biodegradable meaning they can break down over time but are not always bio-based.

*Plastics labelled as 'degradable' might sound like a good idea, but this is a general term given to any product that breaks up into smaller pieces via natural processes (e.g. exposure to light or high temperatures). Often the conditions needed for this are not possible in landfill as the items are buried and preserved. Over time these products may break down into smaller particles and remain in the environment as microplastics, instead of breaking down into organic, non-toxic materials.*

### What is the difference between commercial and home compostable?

There are two Australian Standard (AS) certifications, **AS 4736-2006 – Commercial Composting** and **AS 5810-2010 – Home Composting**.

Many products currently available (sometimes just labelled compostable) are generally only suitable for commercial composting facilities that can sustain temperatures of over 55°C for extended periods of time. (See Section 2. *Can't we just switch to using compostable products?*).

**Remember: Compostable products cannot be accepted in Council FOGO bins and these must be disposed of in the landfill bin.**

#### Australian Standard Compostable Certifications

|                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <br>Compostable<br>AS 4736<br>ABAX 9999 | <b>Commercial Compostable</b><br>The seedling logo is a symbol that the product's claims of biodegradability and compostability as per AS4736 has been verified. | <br>Home Compostable<br>AS 5810<br>ABAX 9999 | <b>Home Compostable</b><br>The Home Compostable Verification logo is a symbol that the product's claims of biodegradability and compostability as per AS 5810-2010 has been verified. |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

*\*Note these certifications are voluntary. They are not currently regulated.*

### Can compostable packaging go in the home compost?

Only put compostables in your home compost system if they are **certified home compostable AS 5810**, otherwise it is unlikely that it will break down sufficiently and may impact the worms and micro-organisms in your compost.

Ensure you use a dedicated home compost bin to prevent contamination of the recycling bins (yellow lid) and FOGO bins (lime-green lid). If in doubt, dispose of in the landfill bin (bright red lid).

|                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Are paper bags and reusable bags actually better for the environment?</p>     | <p>Yes they are. While all products require resources to produce (e.g. water, energy, raw materials) paper bags will generally decompose after 1 year and leave behind natural components that are not harmful to the natural environment. Plastic bags can take between 20 - 100 years to decompose, polluting the environment and harming wildlife in the process.</p> <p>Additionally paper bags, if sourced from sustainably managed forest (e.g. FSC) are made from a <b>renewal resource</b> (wood pulp) whereas plastic bags are made from petroleum, a <b>non-renewable</b> (finite) resource. Look for FSC certified or 100% recycled content paper bags.</p> <p><i>Reusable bags (e.g. cotton or synthetic materials such as polypropylene) also have an environmental impact associated with them, so it is important to consider firstly if a bag is required at all, and secondly if they are a high enough quality to encourage reuse over many years. In recent years tote bags have become increasingly popular, but there is a limit to how many tote bags the average human actually needs! An Australian study found that the environmental benefits of reusable bags are realised after 52 uses – so get in the habit!</i></p> |
| <p>Does Council supply signage to tell people what items can go in each bin?</p> | <p>The list of items accepted in bins can vary. For Council bins – check SCRRAApp or the Council website. For commercial businesses or events, check with your waste provider.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <p>Does the Policy and this Guide only apply to users of Council sites?</p>      | <p>Yes, however we encourage anyone who is keen to reduce single use waste and plastic to use the Policy and guidelines to help reduce their environmental footprint.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <p>Are there grants or incentives for businesses reducing single-use items?</p>  | <p>There may be local, state, or federal grants and incentives available to businesses that adopt more sustainable practices. Check with your local council or relevant government bodies for more information.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |

## Seeking more information?

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