

SCS-008 Single-Use Items and Packaging Policy

TRIM Reference:	D24/211787	Due for Review:	2029
Responsible Officer:	Manager Environment and Sustainability		

1. Purpose

This policy outlines Surf Coast Shire Council's (Council) commitment to phasing out single-use items and unnecessary and avoidable packaging. Further guidance supporting this policy can be found in the *Single-Use Items and Packaging Guide*.

Through avoiding single-use items and unnecessary packaging, this policy aims to avoid waste, increase the use of reusable alternatives, reduce litter and protect the environment from pollution.

2. Policy Principles

In line with the waste hierarchy, this policy is underpinned by the following principles:

AVOID

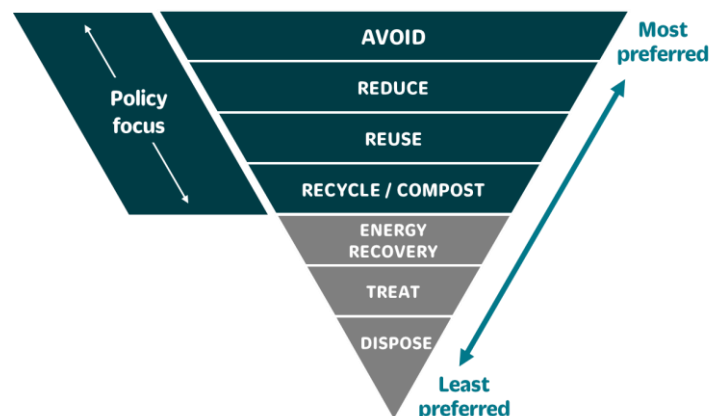
Phase out single-use items and unnecessary packaging and provide clear guidance on transitioning to sustainable alternatives.

REDUCE, REUSE & RECYCLE

Prioritise reusable, repairable, and recyclable materials and embed circular economy principles in procurement and sourcing guidelines.

RECOVER & DISPOSE

Ensure disposal options are clearly understood and communicated to minimise confusion for consumers and reduce contamination in waste streams.



3. Legislative and Strategic Context

Local: Surf Coast Shire Council Plan and Circular Economy Action Plan

This policy supports the Council Plan 2025-2029 strategic direction of 'Climate and Environmental Leadership' and the associated strategic objectives; *local natural ecosystems are thriving and biodiversity is protected, and circular economy principles are being applied to reduce waste*. This policy also supports the *Circular Economy Action Plan (CEAP) 2024-2027* priorities of *avoiding waste and maximising reuse* will assist in achieving two of the circular economy 2030 targets; *reducing waste to landfill by 50% and achieving 82% recovery of waste*.

State: Victorian Government and Environment Protection Agency (EPA) Bans

- As of 1 July 2021 – Releasing balloons into the environment is illegal under the *Environment Protection Act 2017*.
- As of 1 February 2023 – Victorian Government Single-Use Plastics Ban came into effect for: plastic drinking straws, plates, drink-stirrers and sticks, cotton bud sticks, cutlery and expanded polystyrene food service items and drink containers (*note this ban includes conventional, degradable and biodegradable plastics*).
- As of 1 November 2024 – Plastic-lined plates ban came into effect.
- From January 2026 – Integrated items such as plastic straws attached to juice boxes to be phased out.

National: Australia's Circular Economy Framework and National Waste Policy Action Plan

Australia's Circular Economy Framework 2024 outlines the national blueprint to transition the country to a circular economy and double our circularity by 2035. Underpinning this goal is three targets; *shrink our per capita material footprint by 10%, lift our material productivity by 30% and safely recover 80% of our resources*. Relevant targets within the *National Waste Policy Action Plan 2024* include *reduce total waste generated by 10% per person by 2030, and continued phase out of problematic and unnecessary plastics*. This policy will assist in achieving these targets by discouraging the use of single-use plastics and driving action towards more circular packaging and products.

4. Scope

This policy applies to:

- all council business and operations;
- events run by Council;
- all events, markets and organised sporting activities held at Council owned and managed sites (including all civic, commercial and community events such as markets, festivals, ceremonies, exhibitions, expos, meetings, functions, workshops, information sessions, conferences, parties, competitive sporting events, and other organised sporting and recreational activities); and
- events that receive grants, funding, or sponsorship from Council.

This policy applies to all staff, contractors, and other representatives, including individuals, groups, businesses, or organisations involved in organising and managing businesses, activities, and events on Council sites that require approval (e.g. event permits, hire agreements, leases, tenancy agreements, and bookings).

For community use of Council sites where approval is not required (e.g. using parks, visiting a library) compliance with this policy is encouraged, but not mandatory. Commercial businesses within the Surf Coast Shire looking to reduce their environmental impact are also encouraged to consider this policy and the supporting *Single-Use Items and Packaging Guide*.

5. Policy

This policy aligns with the existing Victorian Government Single-Use Plastics and EPA balloon release bans (**Category 1: State Bans**) and specifies the items to be phased out within the Surf Coast Shire (**Category 2: Local Bans**) as well as encouraging further action to address other challenging single-use items and packaging (**Category 3: Reduce Your Use**).

This policy is designed to capture a broad range of single-use and unnecessary plastic items. Council acknowledges that it may not be possible to phase out all **Category 2** items within the implementation period. **Category 3** items are encouraged but not mandatory, as this includes items that are harder to phase out. Noting this, those in scope of the policy must demonstrate an attempt to phase out **Category 2** items to continue to undertake activities on Council sites.

Category 1: State Bans	
Plastic bags 1 November 2019	• Lightweight plastic shopping bags under 35 micrometres in thickness.
Single-use plastic items 1 February 2023 <i>Note: This ban applies to all businesses and organisations and includes conventional, degradable and compostable plastics.</i>	• Drinking straws. • Cutlery including knives, forks, spoons, chopsticks, splades, food picks and sporks. • Plastic plates, including paper or cardboard plates lined with plastic (as of 1 November 2024). • Drink stirrers or sticks. • Expanded polystyrene (EPS) food service items (including plates, cups, bowls, clam shells and any other cover or lid). • Expanded polystyrene (EPS) drink containers (including any cover or lid). • Cotton bud sticks. • Additionally, integrated items such as a straw attached to a juice box will be banned from 1 January 2026.
Balloons 1 July 2021	• Releasing balloons into the environment is against the law. The EPA discourages the use of balloons outdoors.

Category 2: Local Bans	
Plastic bags	All plastic bags including heavier weight disposable or limited bags (e.g. supermarket style bags, and single-use plastic promotional or event participant bags).
Straws and drink stirrers (any material)	All straws made from plastic, bioplastic, paper, bamboo or any other material described as compostable or biodegradable.
Plates, bowls and cutlery (any material)	Plates and cutlery made of plastic, bioplastic, paper, bamboo or any other material described as compostable or biodegradable.
Drink containers and lids (any material)	All cups (including lids) made from plastic, bioplastic, paper, bamboo or any other material described as compostable or biodegradable.
Coffee cups and lids	All single-use coffee cups and lids (including those described as compostable or biodegradable) (e.g. takeaway coffee cups).
Bottled water	Plastic bottled water not to be served where refill taps, fountains or other access is able to be provided. <i>Note: refer to Council's Local Law Part 4, Section 4.11 Glass Free Areas.</i>
Takeaway food containers	Non-recyclable single-use containers. Recyclable takeaway containers (plastic types 1, 2 and 5) are permitted.
Single-serve condiments and sachets	Single-serve plastic condiments and sachets (e.g. salt, pepper, sugar, tomato sauce, soy sauce, spreads etc.).
Individually packaged confectionery	Individually packaged sweets and lollies (e.g. mints, chocolates, lollipops etc.).
Balloons	Balloons (helium or non-helium and water balloons) in any application (indoors or outdoors).
Single-use decorations and glitter	Glitter, confetti, tinsel, party poppers, streamers, glow sticks or other decorative items, particularly if made of plastic and not designed for reuse.

Category 3: Reduce Your Use	
Soft plastic packaging	Cling wrap, bubble wrap, wrappers, zip loc bags and similar.
Kitchen supplies	Synthetic chux cloths / microfibre cloths / scourer sponges made from synthetic materials and plastic scrubbing brushes.
Merchandise and promotional items	- Single-use and / or reusable items and plastic packaging used for promotional items, giveaways and merchandise (e.g. hats, key rings, poor quality reusable drink bottles, flimsy or synthetic clothing or promotional bags - even if designed for reuse). - Merchandise or uniforms with design features required to be updated annually - where previous designs become redundant and cannot be reused or passed down.
Single-use event infrastructure	Single-use or limited use plastic items used in event infrastructure and promotion, including event signage (e.g. paper, cardboard, corflute or laminated paper signage), cable ties (where alternatives exist), placards, course markings, decorations and giveaways.

6. Additional notes

Reusable plastics

This policy does not exclude the use of reusable, recyclable plastic items. Based on the Victorian Government definition, reusable items are manufactured to be used for the same purpose on multiple occasions, and come with a warranty, or other written representation from the manufacturer, that they are designed to last for at least one year.

Choosing clear or white coloured materials to improve recycling

If using reusable or recyclable plastics, clear or white coloured plastics are preferred. Similarly clear glass is also preferred. Black and coloured materials are less desirable in recycling as the colour output once mixed is often dark or murky, limiting reuse options and reducing market value. In addition, black plastics can be harder to distinguish in optical sorting processes, which can increase the risk of these items ending up in landfill instead of being recycled.

‘Onsite consumption’ versus ‘retail and pre-packaged products’

This policy is directed at reducing single-use items used to for ‘onsite consumption’ of food and beverages. The policy is not directed at ‘pre-packaged retail products’ such as packaged goods (e.g. pantry items, muesli, butchered meat, spreads and preserves, frozen meals, or bulk items) or other products that have been pre-packaged with the intent to be taken offsite / away from the place of sale and consumed at home. Where feasible plastic-free or reusable packaging for pre-packaged retail products exists, Council still encourages these to be considered.

7. Exemptions

Blanket and conditional exemptions are permitted in the circumstances described below. If you require or wish to discuss any exemptions please reach out to the Circular Economy team on 5261 0600 or lodge an online request at: www.surfcoast.vic.gov.au/About-us/Contact-Us. Conditional exemptions should also be noted in any forms, applications or event briefs for consideration.

Blanket exemptions - No approval required

- **Health and safety:** When required for medical, hygiene, food safety or occupational health and safety requirements.
- **Accessibility:** When required to meet the access needs of people with disability or health conditions.
- **Emergencies and public safety:** When required for emergency response or disaster relief (e.g. *heatwave or other emergency events*).

Conditional exemptions - Approval required

- **Lack of alternatives:** When no viable or commercially available alternative exists. *Example: single-use items used at a large event/festival with a closed loop composting or recycling service, or the use of packaging in situations where there is no refrigeration or dishwashing facilities.*
- **Existing agreements:** When existing lease agreements, permit conditions, or contracts cannot be immediately amended (note future revisions or renewals must align with this policy).
- **Established collection and recycling programs:** When items can be collected and recycled or processed through product stewardship initiatives such as Victoria’s Container Deposit Scheme (CDS), and separate collection bins are able to be accessed on site.

8. Policy Implementation

Implementation will take place in two key stages. General users will have two years (January 2026 – December 2027) to achieve compliance with this policy. Those involved in local markets, canteens or takeaway food service will have the opportunity to receive additional support over a three-year period. This will include a two-year testing and co-design phase between 2026 – 2027. During this time feedback will be captured on the type of single-use items in use and potential alternatives and solutions, taking into consideration feasibility and affordability. All participants in this process will have the opportunity to contribute to the development of an agreed implementation plan with the goal of completing implementation for this group by the end of 2028.

Implementation Timeline

Category	Timeline	Implementation approach
General users	2026 – 2027	All Category 2: Local Bans items will be phased out across a two-year period. Consideration of Category 3: Reduce Your Use items is encouraged, but not mandatory.
Local markets, canteens and takeaway food service providers	2026 – 2027 Testing and co-design 2028 Implementation	Testing and co-design with local markets, canteen or takeaway food service providers to understand the scope of single-use items in use and feasible alternatives. Once a plan is agreed, implementation will commence with the aim of achieving compliance by the end of 2028.

Further guidance and tips can be found in the *Single-Use Items and Packaging Guide* (see Section 11. Related Procedures / Documents).

9. Applicable Local Government Act 2020 Principles

Principles	Applicable to policy	If yes, provide details
Governance Principles (Consideration of the Governance Principles under s.9 of LGA 2020)	Yes	This policy relates to Section 9(2)(c) 'the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the municipal district is to be promoted'.
Community Engagement (Consideration of Community Engagement Principles under s.56 LGA 2020)	Yes	Development of this policy in 2016 and the review in 2018 involved collaboration (IAP2) with local event and plastic wise community groups. Minimal community engagement occurred in the 2021 review due to the limitations on in-person events due to COVID-19. The policy review in 2025 involved consultation (IAP2) with community via a survey, and targeted engagement with markets, events, businesses and sporting clubs.
Public Transparency (Consideration of Public Transparency Principles under s.58 of LGA 2020)	Yes	This policy is easily accessible to the community and clearly referenced in Council's event application and venue hire processes.
Strategies and Plans (Consideration of Strategic Planning Principles under s.89 of LGA 2020)	Yes	This policy links to strategies in the <i>Council Plan 2025-2029</i> , the <i>Circular Economy Action Plan 2024-2027</i> , and aligns with Council's ongoing aspiration of environmental leadership and reducing waste to landfill.
Financial Management (Consideration of Financial Management Principles under s.101 of LGA 2020)	No	
Service Performance (Consideration of Service Performance Principles under s.106 of LGA 2020)	Yes	This policy contributes to enhanced enjoyment of activities on council sites, and reduced pressure on waste management system and landfill.

10. Definitions

Council sites	Land, parks, buildings, venues, roads or any other location owned or managed by Council.
User	Any staff, contractor, individual, group or organisation that undertakes activities on any land, buildings, venues, roads or any other location owned or managed by Council (see 4. Scope).
Single-use items	Any item or packaging designed to be used once and then discarded. This may include plastic and non-plastic items (e.g. paper plates, wood or bamboo disposable cutlery etc.). For the purposes of this policy single-use packaging refers to both primary and secondary packaging. <i>Note: The Australian Packaging Covenant Organisation (APCO) defines primary packaging as the container directly containing the product and secondary packaging includes the materials used to contain single or multiple primary packed products. For example, a bulk 24 pack of 600ml water bottles, the plastic water bottle is the primary packaging, and the shrink-wrapped soft plastic holding the water bottles together is the secondary packaging.</i>
Plastic	A synthetic material made from a wide range of polymers such as polyethylene terephthalate (PET), or polypropylene (PP), that can be moulded into shape while soft, and then set into a rigid or slightly elastic form. Plastic can be made from non-renewable sources such as petroleum or natural gas, or renewable plant-based materials like corn starch, sugarcane, or wood pulp.
Bioplastic, biodegradable and compostable products	A term that can describe either <i>bio-based</i> or <i>biodegradable</i> plastic, including plastic made with or without the use of petrochemical compounds. Bio-based plastic is made from natural materials such as rice, potato starch, sugar cane, wheat or corn. Some bio-based products are designed to behave like traditional plastics and do not biodegrade. Biodegradable plastic has the potential to break down over time under specific conditions. These products can be made from natural and/or fossil fuel-based materials. Biodegradable materials may take many years to decompose and can sometimes release harmful substances during the process. Compostable products are biodegradable - meaning they can break down over time but are not always bio-based.
Single-use plastic bag	A type of bag or pouch made from thin, flexible, plastic film that is used for containing or transporting goods, designed to be used only once or for a short period of time before being discarded. For the purpose of this policy, this definition includes both thin (35 microns) and heavier weight disposable or limited use plastic bags.
Soft plastics	Plastic products that can be easily crunched up into a ball. These cannot be recycled through Council's kerbside recycling bin (yellow lid). These include but are not limited to plastic bags (including shopping bags, freezer bags and garbage bags), cling wrap, lolly wrappers, chip packets, shrink wrap, bubble wrap and other similar packaging.
Reusable items	Reusable items are manufactured to be used for the same purpose on multiple occasions, and come with a warranty, or other written representation from the manufacturer, that they are designed to last for at least one year.
Recyclable plastic	Recyclable plastic refers to the plastics that are accepted in Surf Coast Shire Council kerbside recycling bins (yellow lid). This is plastics labelled 1, 2 or 5. Generally this label is found on the bottom of an item in a triangle (see below).    PETE or PET Polyethylene Terephthalate HDPE or PE-HD High-Density Polyethylene PP Polypropylene

11. Related Procedures / Documents

- Single-Use Items and Packaging Guide available at www.surfcoast.vic.gov.au/SingleUsePolicy
- Event Brief – submitted for events organised by Council staff
- Event Application – submitted for events organised external to Council
- SCS-019 Procurement Policy
- SCS-022 Events Policy
- SCS-024 Election Advertising Signage on Council Land Policy
- SCS-033 Use of Council Facilities Policy
- SCS-034 Property Use Agreements
- SCS-055 Sustainable Design Policy
- SCS-056 Grants Program Policy

12. References

APCO 2025 apco.org.au/the-australian-packaging-covenant

Australia's Circular Economy Framework 2024

www.dcceew.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/australias-circular-economy-framework.pdf

Community Amenity Local Law 2021 www.surfcoast.vic.gov.au/files/assets/public/v/1/01-about-us/council/laws-and-regulations/community-amenity-local-law-2021_1.pdf

Environment Protection Authority and balloon releases 2021 www.vic.gov.au/balloon-releases-and-law-victoria

National Waste Policy Action Plan 2024

www.dcceew.gov.au/environment/protection/waste/publications/national-waste-policy-action-plan

Surf Coast Shire Circular Economy Action Plan 2024-2027

www.surfcoast.vic.gov.au/Environment/Circular-Economy/Circular-Economy-Action-Plan

Surf Coast Shire Council Plan 2025-2029 <https://www.surfcoast.vic.gov.au/About-us/Council/Policies-plans-strategies-and-reports/Council-Plan>

Victorian Government single-use plastics ban 2023 www.vic.gov.au/single-use-plastics

Victorian Government single-use plastics ban – Frequently asked questions – How are single use plastics defined? <https://www.vic.gov.au/single-use-plastics#frequently-asked-questions>

Victorian Government plastic bag ban 2022 www.epa.vic.gov.au/about-epa/our-programs-and-projects/single-use-plastics-ban/comply-with-plastic-bag-ban

13. Document History

Version	Document History	Approved by – Date
1	Adopted	Council Resolution – 26 April 2016
2	Amended	Council Resolution – 23 October 2018
3	Amended	Council Resolution – 23 November 2021
4	Amended	Council Resolution – 25 November 2025