

Single-use plastics policy (2023)

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CEO Signature			Date 7/6/23
Responsible Officer and Unit	Bill Pemberton, Resource Recovery		
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Macedon Ranges Shire Council acknowledges the Dja Dja Wurrung, Taungurung and Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Peoples as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of this land and waterways. Council recognises their living cultures and ongoing connection to Country and pays respect to their Elders past, and present. Council also acknowledges local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander residents of Macedon Ranges for their ongoing contribution to the diverse culture of our community.

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Purpose

Macedon Ranges Shire Council acknowledges that single-use plastics is a major environmental litter source. Plastic does not decompose nor entirely disappear. It breaks down into smaller microplastics, which present permanent negative ecological and public health impacts. Plastics also have a large carbon footprint, as nearly all plastics are produced from chemicals derived from fossil fuels such as oil.

The Macedon Ranges Shire Council aims to contribute to our commitment to tackling climate change, improving environmental outcomes, resource efficiency, and reducing waste to landfill by eliminating single-use plastics from council operations. This action will be achieved following the Council Plan's core theme of Sustainability and its 'Protecting the Natural Environment' priority.

Objectives

Macedon Ranges Shire Council is committed to:

- Eliminating single-use plastics from Council operations, activities and events
- Eliminating single-use litter and waste from Council buildings, facilities and events
- Encouraging the community to eradicate single-use plastics

Background/Reasons for Policy

Over recent decades, plastic production has grown faster than any other material, with a substantial shift away from durable multi-use plastic to those used once. It is estimated that half of all plastic produced today is designed to be thrown away after only one use.

While recycling plastic is important, it is only part of the solution. The Australian recycling market's ability to cope with plastic waste is currently overwhelmed. In 2021, UN Environment Programme stated that the major problem is the low recycling rate of plastics, which is currently less than 10 per cent globally ⁽¹⁾.

Most of the plastics either end up in landfill or as litter in the environment. Our oceans currently have 75 to 199 million tons of plastics in them ⁽²⁾. Many single-use plastics, such as coffee cups, straws and plates, are hard to recycle and not accepted in recycling facilities.

A key way to avoid the permanent impact of single-use plastics is to avoid their use in the first instance, resulting in the production of single-use plastics ceasing.

The worldwide pandemic has seen a dramatic increase in single-use plastic production consumption and resultant disposal.

Preference should be given to reusable items when it is safe. The health advice supports reuse with appropriate cleaning.

Council undertook a full audit across its various functions to understand its use of single-use plastics. The audit findings provide a roadmap to phase out single-use plastics over the coming years.

Victorian State government ban of single-use plastics

On 1 November, 2019 the ban on lightweight plastic bags (plastic shopping bags with handles and 35 microns or less in thickness) came into legislation.

From 1 February, 2023 the following items will be banned from use and supply across Victoria:

- drinking straws
- cutlery, including knives, forks, spoons, chopsticks, splades, food picks and sporks
- plates
- drink stirrers and sticks
- cotton bud sticks
- expanded polystyrene food and drink service containers, including plates, cups, bowls, clam shells and any cover or lid

This policy guides council in meeting its responsibility to eliminate single-use plastics.

Definitions

Term	Definition
Activity	Any planned events with a gathering of people, including information sessions, education sessions, expos, workshops, meetings, parties, festivals, recreation or club activities
Certified Compostable	Certified to Australian Standard 4736 (commercially compostable) and Australian Standard 5810 (home compostable). A material that will completely biodegrade in the presence of oxygen and microorganisms, leaving no microplastics or toxic residues behind
Council	Macedon Ranges Shire Council
Council-owned or managed facility	Any building or land site owned or managed by Council
FOGO	Food Organics Garden Organics. Organic waste stream disposal and processing
Litter	Waste items that have been discarded incorrectly or left in an open space
Microplastics	Microplastics are fragments of any plastic less than 5 mm in length
Single-use plastics	Single-use plastic, also known as disposable plastic, is any plastic item or packaging designed to be used once or for a short period before being discarded. Common examples include plastic bottles, straws, disposable coffee cups, lids, cutlery, takeaway containers, plastic packaging, cling wrap, bubble wrap etc.

Scope

This policy applies to:

- **Council business and operations**, which includes Councillors, staff, contractors, volunteers and other representatives of Council, leases and contracts where single-use plastics may be used, including purchases, packaging or merchandise.
- **Council-sponsored activities** and all individuals, groups, or organisations planning to use, hire, lease or licence Council-owned and/or managed facilities that require Council's approval, formal notification or a permit to conduct an activity. This includes, but is not limited to, all events requiring an event notification form.
- **Individuals, organisations or other groups of people**, planning, organising, promoting, running and/or approving an activity that uses Council funding or seeks Council endorsement.

Events and activities conducted on Council land but are not endorsed or funded by Council that do not require a Council event permit, hire agreement, lease or tenancy agreement are excluded from this policy. These events and activities are encouraged to support plastic-free practices.

Policy

Council will set an example for the community by ceasing the use of single-use plastics in its operations.

This Policy prohibits the procurement, use, distribution or sale of single-use plastic:

- At Council-owned buildings, venues, sites
- During Council funded or Council endorsed activities
- As part of Council's operations, business or service delivery
- In the promotion, planning, delivery and pack-down of any of the above.

For this policy, single-use plastic items include, but are not limited to:

- Polystyrene packaging
- Single-use water bottles*
- Cutlery, cups, plates, bowls, stirrers*
- Plastic merchandise and giveaways
- Soft plastic wrappers, including snack wrappers and sachets
- Balloons
- Glitter
- Confetti
- Glow sticks
- Straws*
- Bubble Wrap
- Cling film
- Plastic packaging
- Plastic bags

*See **Exemptions**

The following applies to all Council operations, business and activities:

1. Single-use plastic items will not be used, procured, sold or distributed.
2. Reusable alternatives must be found and used where possible.
3. Where a reusable alternative is unavailable, or washing and sanitising is not an option:
 - certified compostable items can be disposed of through the FOGO waste stream, or
 - plastic-free single-use recyclable alternatives (paper, cardboard, metal or glass) may be used.
4. Council's commitment to not using and procuring single-use plastics must be communicated to and adhered to by suppliers and service providers.
5. Activity organisers must educate their staff and patrons on single-use plastic-free practices.
6. Those included in this policy must arrange for the collection and disposal of any exempted single-use plastic items.

Exemptions

- Single-use plastic items, such as plastic straws, health-related products and personal protective equipment – where required to meet accessibility needs, and health and safety standards
- Single-use plastic water bottles - where required to meet the duty of care requirements and refillable options are not viable, for example, in disaster and emergency situations or activities.
- Where all options have been explored and no single-use plastic-free option is available or viable until an alternative is found.

Transition period

This policy will take effect immediately the day after adoption. All parties must commence phase out of single-use plastics within six months from the date of adoption or in line with state government single-use plastic product bans for specific items, whichever comes first.

Any new item that might be phased out within six months will be presented to the Executive with details as to the reasons and when it might be phased out.

References

- > (1) *United Nations Environment Programme (2021). From Pollution to Solution: A global assessment of marine litter and plastic pollution.*
<https://www.unep.org/interactive/pollution-to-solution/?lang=EN>
- > Peng, Y., Wu, P., Schartup, A. T., & Zhang, Y. (2021). *Plastic waste release caused by COVID-19 and its fate in the global ocean. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 118(47), e2111530118.*
- > (2) *Jun22, 2022 World Economic Forum – Plastic and the Environment Top 25 recycling facts and statistics for 2022*

Related Policies

- > Council Plan (2021-2031)
- > Waste and Resource Recovery Management Strategy (2021-2026)
- > Procurement Policy (2022)
- > Environment Strategy (Refreshed 2021)

Related Legislation

- > *Environment Protection Act (2017)*
- > *Victorian Plastic Bag Ban (2019)*
- > *Victorian Single-use Plastic Ban (Commencing 1 February 2023)*
- > *Recycling Victoria: A new economy (2020) – a 10-year policy and action plan)*

Gender Impact Assessment

Under the Gender Equality Act 2020, a Gender Impact Assessment (GIA) has been undertaken related to the subject matter of this report as the policy can affect external public groups.