

Phasing out Problematic Single-Use Plastics in Tasmania

Discussion Paper



Delivering a
sustainable Tasmania

In recognition of the deep history and culture of these islands, we acknowledge the traditional owners of this Country and recognise all Tasmanian Aboriginal people's continuing connection to Land, Sea, Waterways, Sky and Culture and pay our deepest respects to Elders past and present.



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Cover photograph - NRE Tas | *Plastic knives and forks, paper straws and wooden stirrers*

Inside cover photograph - NRE Tas | *Georges Bay from Dora Point*

Minister's Message



Tasmania is world renowned for its rich natural environment. Our natural ecosystems, native plants and animals, waterways, oceans, and beaches are important to the health of our environment and our community, and we all have a role to play in protecting this.

We know plastic is having a significant impact on our natural environment. To tackle this, the Tasmanian Government committed \$1 million over four years to address the impacts of problematic single-use plastics in our environment. This includes the scoping of a policy approach, development of legislation to achieve the phase out, as well as \$100,000 to support businesses through the transition away from using single-use plastic items.

The commitment will see the phase out of a range of plastic items identified as problematic or unnecessary, such as straws, single-use plates, bowls and cutlery and degradable, high polluting plastics by way of legislation, helping make Tasmania *a place where nothing is wasted*.

Acknowledging that this will have an impact across businesses, industry, and the community, the Government will support Tasmanians in navigating and understanding the new laws and lead the State in preparing to adjust to sourcing and using alternative items through education and awareness.

Encouraging sustainable behaviours provides an exciting opportunity to bring circular approaches to a wide range of sectors and policy areas in the State, and to address several economic, environmental, and social issues, such as the issues attributed to plastic pollution.

We can all make a difference, bring your reusable cup to the coffee shop, say no to single-use cutlery and bring your own, or take a container with you for lunch to your favourite takeaway spot. Over time we can all reduce our consumption of single-use items.

We know from other States and Territories already progressed in phasing out single-use plastics that accepting reusable cups and containers will reduce costs for businesses, specifically the small businesses that sell takeaway food and drinks, as well as reduce waste across our community.

I encourage you to read the following paper and respond to our survey. Hearing from as many Tasmanians as possible will help design a phase out tailored to the needs of everyone, specifically businesses and those who may still rely on single-use plastics for daily living. This is an opportunity for individuals, industry, and businesses to inform us of how a phase out on some single-use plastic items may impact you and what kind of support may be needed during this transition.

Hon Nick Duigan MP

Minister for Parks and Environment

Have your say

This initial consultation seeks community input to better understand how restricting access to some single-use plastic items will impact Tasmanians, and how items should be phased out over the next few years.

To achieve the best outcomes for Tasmania in phasing out certain single-use plastic items, this consultation invites you to provide feedback on the following:

- The impacts of a phase out for manufacturers, suppliers and businesses that sell and supply certain single-use plastics.
- The impacts of a phase out for the community, particularly those who rely on single-use plastic items as a part of daily life, such as those with certain disabilities and/or medical conditions.
- In what ways our community is already living more sustainably to reduce plastic waste.
- What support Tasmanians and businesses will need when phasing out single-use plastics.
- The alternative items or practices available to replace or avoid phased out single-use plastic items.

This paper is designed to provide information and context to this commitment to phasing out single-use plastics in Tasmania. More information about the phase out of single-use plastics is available at <https://nre.tas.gov.au/environment/problematic-single-use-plastics>.

For any enquiries, please email PlasticsPolicy@nre.tas.gov.au.

Why is the Government seeking feedback?

To ensure our response best suits the needs of all Tasmanians, the Government would like to hear from you about how to best reduce Tasmania's use of single-use plastics. Feedback will inform the development of legislation that will establish a statewide ban on the commercial sale and supply of specific single-use plastic items and materials.

The Tasmanian Government encourages you to consider the contents of this paper when preparing your response to this initial consultation.

To guide your response, please complete the following survey <https://nre.tas.gov.au/plastics-feedback>.

Alternatively, you can provide feedback in a written submission. Information on how to provide a written submission can be found at <https://nre.tas.gov.au/plastics-consultation>.



When this icon appears at the top of a page, the information may assist you with answering the survey.

Introduction

We are surrounded by plastic and plastic waste. Plastic is a popular material because it is cheap, lightweight, durable, and versatile. While plastic has necessary and beneficial applications across many industries, the unsustainable production, use and disposal of plastics places pressure on the world's resources. Manufacturing and the incorrect disposal of these plastics significantly adds to the emissions that contribute to climate change, pollutes ecosystems, and puts people's health at risk. Plastics can remain in the environment for up to 500 years¹; they break down into smaller pieces called microplastics, which accumulate in waterways and oceans, and even in the bodies of humans and wildlife.

Despite the acknowledged consequences of plastic, the global consumption of plastic items continues to rise. Every year, the world produces about 350 million tonnes of plastic waste with only 9 per cent recycled and half still ending up in landfills.² Additionally, up to 2 million tonnes of plastic waste enters our oceans annually³, posing a significant threat to our marine life and ecosystems.¹

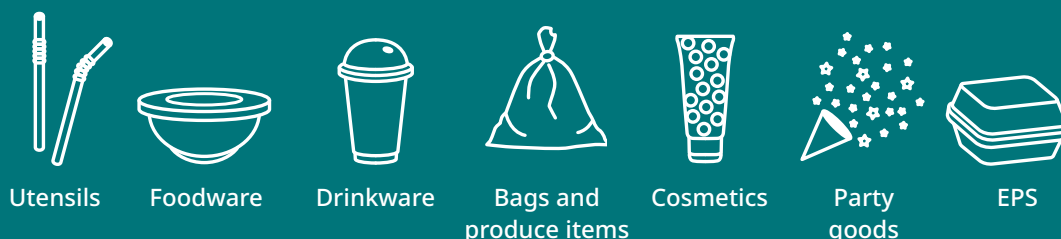
Tasmania is addressing the environmental, social, and economic issues associated with this increase in plastic production and use. Hearing from the community, businesses and industry sectors will help design a phase out tailored to the needs of Tasmanians.

The next steps following closure of this initial consultation:

-  Acknowledge and analyse all feedback received during this initial public consultation
-  Continue engaging with key stakeholders
-  Develop draft legislation detailing compliance, banned items and materials and timeframes for phase out
-  Public consultation on draft legislation, phase out roadmap and regulatory impact statement
-  Business support program and resources available to assist transition
-  Legislation considered by the Tasmanian Parliament
-  Stage one phase out commences
-  Future phase out action considered

Tasmania's plastic problem is a result of product and packaging design, littering and illegal dumping, limitations in recycling plastic and widespread dependence on single-use plastic items for convenience.

The Tasmanian Government is considering the impacts of phasing out a range of items across the following seven categories:



The phase out of single-use plastics in Tasmania is proposed to occur across two stages initially, with stage one commencing when the new laws first take effect. Future stages are anticipated to commence around two years after the initial phase out.

Stage 1

- Drinking straws
- Beverage stirrers
- Single-use cutlery
- Single-use bowls (lidded and unlidded)
- Single-use plates
- Single-use food containers
- Single-use cups, lids and accessories
- EPS loose-fill packaging
- EPS moulded packaging
- Microbeads
- EPS fruit and vegetable trays
- Plastics shopping bags (>35 microns thickness)
- Barrier and produce bags
- Balloon sticks and ties
- Cotton buds
- Pizza saver
- Lollipop sticks
- Plastic confetti
- Plastic bread tags

Stage 2

- Plastic-lined noodle boxes
- Fruit stickers
- Plastic soy sauce packets
- Condiment sachet/packets
- Pre-packaged and attached items
- EPS multi-service gelato containers

Plastic Materials

The following materials applicable to items listed above are recommended for banning:

- Conventional plastic
- Degradable plastic (fragmentable or oxo-degradable)
- Biodegradable plastic made mostly from fossil fuels
- Expanded polystyrene (EPS)
- Expanded polyethylene
- Expanded bioplastics
- Non-certified AS 5810-2010 or AS 4736-2006 compostable packaging

Items made from the materials listed above have also been identified as a priority to phase out. The Tasmanian Government encourages you to consider these materials in addition to the list of plastic items above.

Why phase out single-use plastics?

Single-use plastics are plastic items designed to be used once and not to be reused or refilled, for example: coffee cups or plastic cutlery. Single-use plastic items may also be classed as problematic and unnecessary.

Problematic plastics:

- Are difficult to collect or recover through public bins or kerbside collection.
- Are difficult or expensive to recycle through commercially available recycling technologies.
- Contaminate waste streams meaning other materials or resources cannot be recovered, collected, or recycled.
- Are easily littered and leak from waste collection sites.
- Are manufactured with materials or chemicals that present a risk to human health and the environment.
- Are manufactured with additives that accelerate the breakdown of an item into polluting microplastics.

Unnecessary plastics can be avoided without compromising on consumer needs in most cases, for example: plastic beverage stirrers or pizza savers. These items can also be easily replaced or redesigned with sustainable alternatives.

The Government acknowledges that some single-use plastic items are currently needed for some purposes.

Single-use plastic straws and cutlery are necessary for those with certain disabilities and medical conditions, whether that is for health and safety, hygiene or accessibility reasons. While this discussion paper focuses on what is commonly referred to as 'unnecessary' and/or 'problematic' single-use plastic, we recognise that some of the items listed for consideration are important tools and aids for some communities and industries. It is also acknowledged that some single-use plastic items may not have safe or available alternatives across the current market.

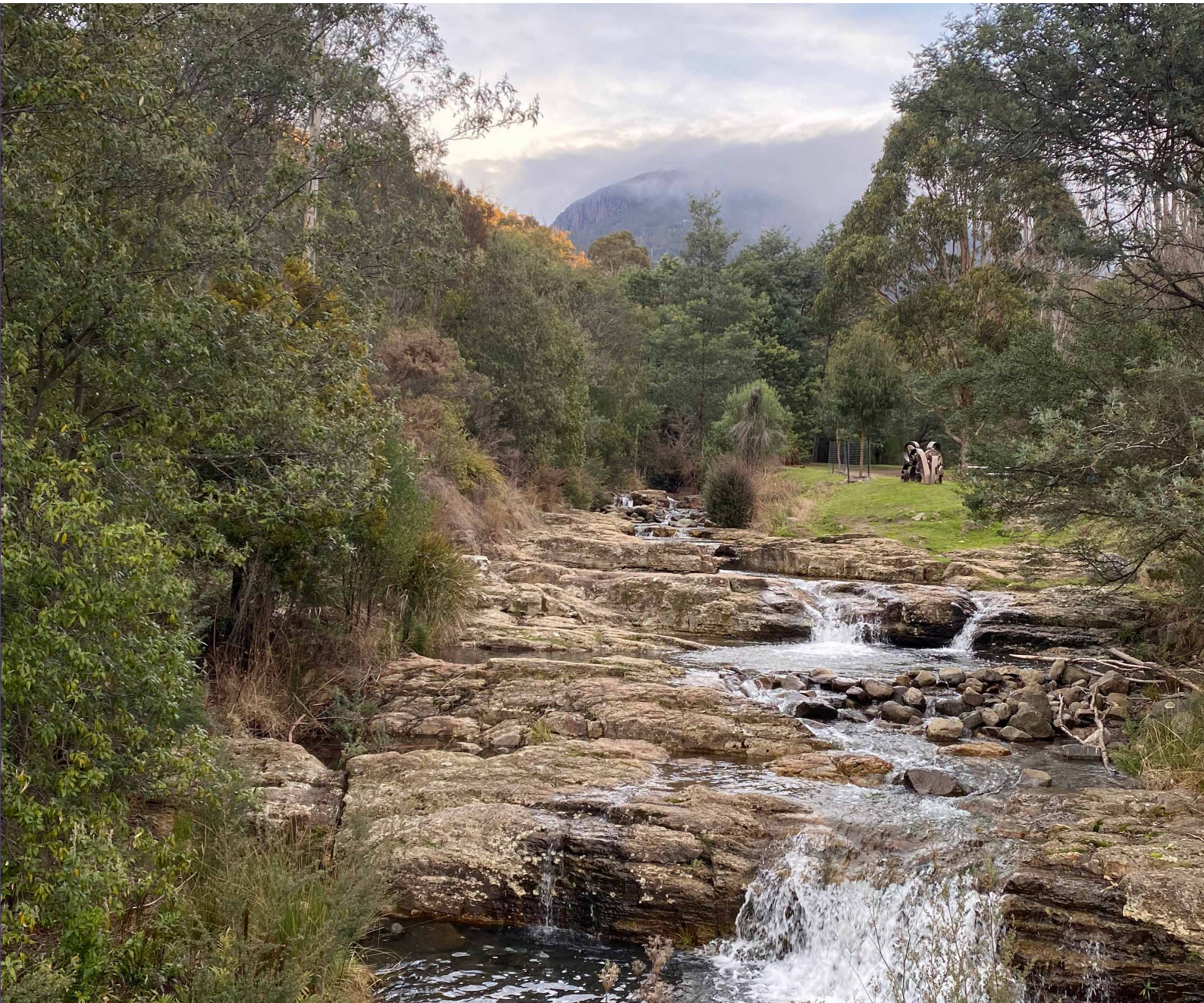
Page 24 explores about how the Tasmanian Government will support and accommodate those who cannot transition away from using certain single-use plastic items.

Why act now?

The *Tasmanian Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy 2023-2026* provides a vision and strategic framework for collaborative and focused effort for Tasmania to be a place where nothing is wasted.

Tasmania is ready to join global and national action in shifting behaviours around plastic manufacturing, use and disposal. A change in such behaviours will allow improved outcomes to eliminate single-use plastic pollution benefitting Tasmania environmentally, socially and economically.

Photograph - NRE Tas | *New Town Rivulet*



Fast facts

Global Plastic Production

- Plastic production doubles every 11 years. Plastic production is rising exponentially and is set to increase before it decreases.⁴
- Between now and 2030, the world's annual total plastic production is expected to match the combined output since plastic's inception in 1950.⁵
- Plastics account for 4 per cent of the world's greenhouse gas emissions.⁶



Plastic in Oceans

- Most of the plastic in our oceans comes from land-based sources: by weight, 70 per cent to 80 per cent is plastic that is transported from land to the sea via rivers or coastlines. The other 20 per cent to 30 per cent comes from marine sources such as fishing nets, lines, ropes, and abandoned vessels.⁷
- Marine plastic debris ingestion occurs in over 1400 species. Half of all seabird species and all seven sea turtle species are known to have ingested plastic.⁸



Plastic Consumption in Australia

- In 2020-21, 61 per cent of plastic use in Australia was through imported items, while 39 per cent was locally manufactured items.⁹
- Plastic consumption has increased by 40 per cent over the last 10 years and is predicted to reach 9.7 million tonnes by 2049-50.¹⁰



Plastic Waste Management in Australia (2020-21)

- 2.63 million tonnes of plastic waste were captured in end-of-life management fates in Australia, this included 13 per cent being recovered through recycling or energy recovery. 87 per cent went to landfill.¹⁰
- Of the 371,300 tonnes of plastics reprocessed in 2020-21, 211,900 tonnes (57 per cent) were reprocessed in Australia and 159,400 tonnes (43 per cent) was exported for reprocessing. This was an increase in total processing of 44,700 tonnes from the 2019-20 recovery of 326,600 tonnes.¹⁰
- In Tasmania, approximately one tonne of waste per person is landfilled every year.¹¹



Single-Use Plastics

- Each year Australians use up to 70 billion pieces of food wrappers, 5 billion pieces of disposable food and drink ware, and 1.5 billion pieces of disposable packaging and containers.¹²
- Over 90 per cent of the plastic that pollutes the world's environment consists of single-use plastics, for example plastic cutlery and microplastics found in cosmetic items.¹³



Future Projections

- Under the current business-as-usual scenario, it is estimated that by 2050, global plastic pollution will escalate to 66.1 million metric tons per year when plastics in oceans are estimated to outweigh fish.¹⁴



The problems with plastics

Are plastics more environmentally friendly now?

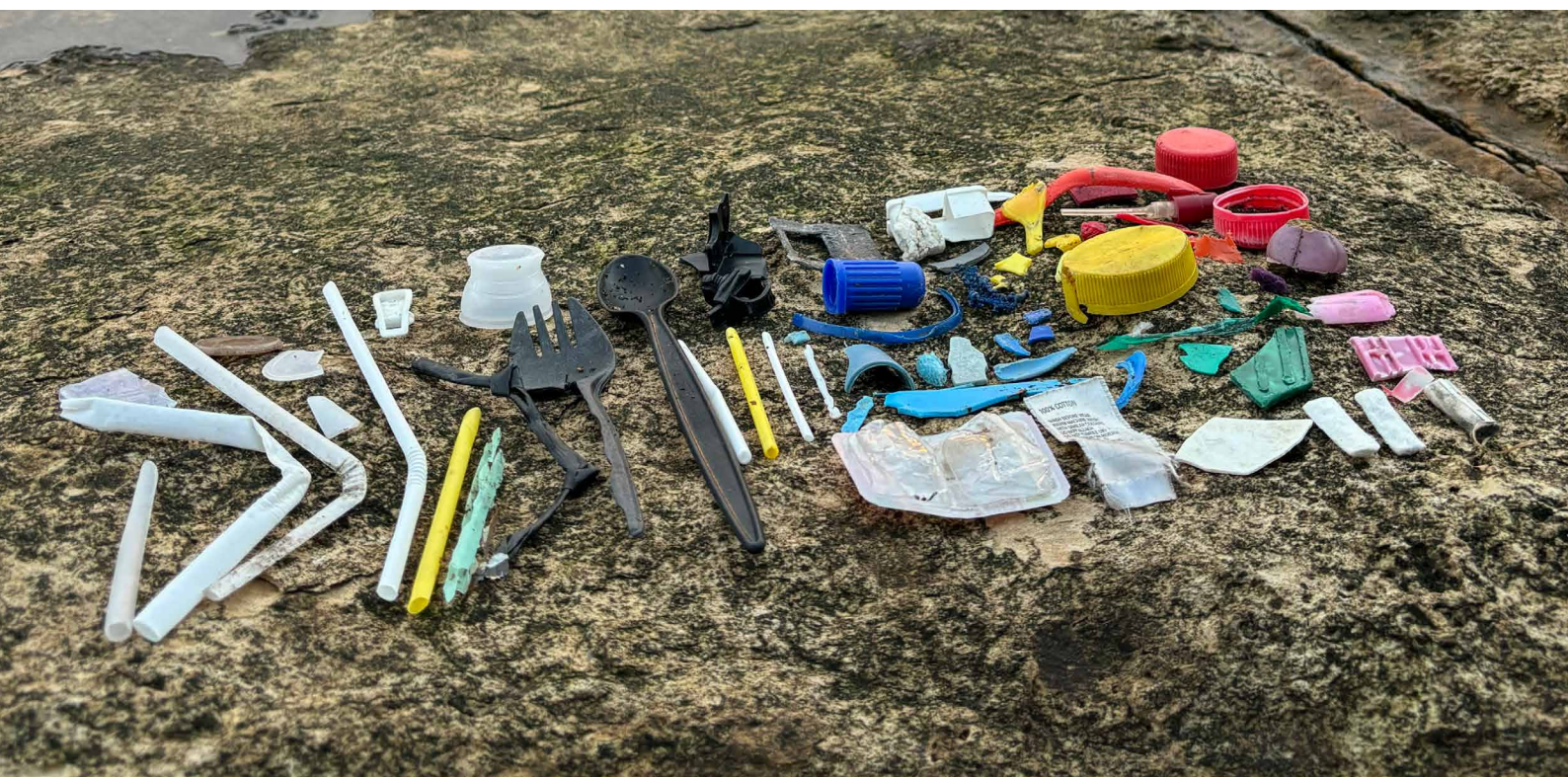
Plastics are usually synthetic materials made from non-renewable resources like petroleum (fossil-fuel based). However, some plastics can be made partially or fully from natural materials like sugarcane and vegetable starches (bio-based).¹⁵

Plastic packaging is often marketed as 'environmentally friendly', with additives that quicken their breakdown when exposed to heat or sunlight. This sounds like a good idea, however these oxo-degradable, degradable and fragmentable plastics never disappear entirely and create microplastics.

While some compostable plastics *may* also be biodegradable, they require specific conditions in a home or industrial composting system to breakdown within shorter timeframes, or at all. Biodegradable plastics can still take decades to breakdown entirely and, alongside most plastics, will still pollute the environment.

'Bioplastics' is a broad term for plastics that are bio-based, biodegradable, or both. Further, biodegradable plastics may originate from fossil fuels, and not all bio-based plastics are biodegradable. Despite this, both are often labelled as 'bioplastics.' This makes it challenging to understand the true meaning of 'bioplastic' on item labels.

Photograph - NRE Tas | *Plastics collected from beach*



What are the different plastic materials?

Understanding what kind of plastics are in the environment is a great first step to understanding how Tasmania can work towards a solution for managing harmful plastic waste.¹⁵

Fossil-fuel based (conventional) plastics

- Plastics made from non-renewable resources such as petroleum, coal and natural gas.
- May not have any degradable qualities.

Bio-based plastics

- Plastics are made from plant-based, renewable materials like vegetable oils and starches.
- Can be biodegradable.
- Can also be non-degradable and not breakdown like conventional plastic.

Degradable and fragmentable plastics

- Plastics advertised as degradable, oxo-degradable and fragmentable.
- Made from fossil-fuels.
- Manufactured with additives that accelerate fragmentation into microplastics by UV or heat exposure.

Biodegradable plastics

- Broken down by microorganisms in the environment into safe compounds in the presence of oxygen.
- Can break down into methane in anaerobic conditions.
- Can be made from fossil-fuel or bio-based materials.
- Can be compostable (bio-based only).

Compostable plastics

- Bio-based materials.
- May use plastic elements that can be processed entirely into compost .
- Require specific conditions (home or industrial composting) to break down if not biodegradable.
- Can also be biodegradable.

Non-degradable bio-based plastics and degradable fossil-fuel based plastics are considered unsuitable alternatives to conventional single-use plastic items. They can be difficult to recycle or recover, either ending up in landfill or polluting our environment.

Regulation of the design, composition and qualities of plastics is highly complex and inconsistent, particularly single-use plastic used in packaging and food service-ware items. Explaining what common single-use plastic items are made from and how they behave in the environment is not straightforward. This has led to confusion where incorrect terms are used to describe products in order to meet environmental standards. This is known as 'greenwashing'.

Harmful chemicals in plastic

Per- and poly- fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are a group of chemicals used to coat food and beverage packaging to be leak proof and water/grease resistant, for example coffee cups and fibre based packaging (like compostable containers made from sugarcane).¹⁶ PFAS, referred to as 'forever chemicals', leak, leach and may be unintendedly released into our environment from wide reaching sources, including from plastic items. Most PFAS will not break down when composted, and those that do can transform into other harmful chemicals.¹⁷

The release of PFAS into the environment is an emerging concern globally because the substances are¹⁸:

- Highly soluble, leaching from soils and sediments into surface water and groundwater, where they can move long distances entering freshwater and marine ecosystems becoming part of the food chain and bioaccumulating.
- Linked to negative impacts in plants and animals impacting on reproductive, developmental, and other systems.
- Associated with an increased risk of neurodevelopmental disorders, infertility, cardiovascular disease, cancers or disrupted endocrine functions in humans.

Further information on PFAS in Australia can be found at: <https://www.pfas.gov.au/>.

Photograph - NRE Tas | *Composting facility*

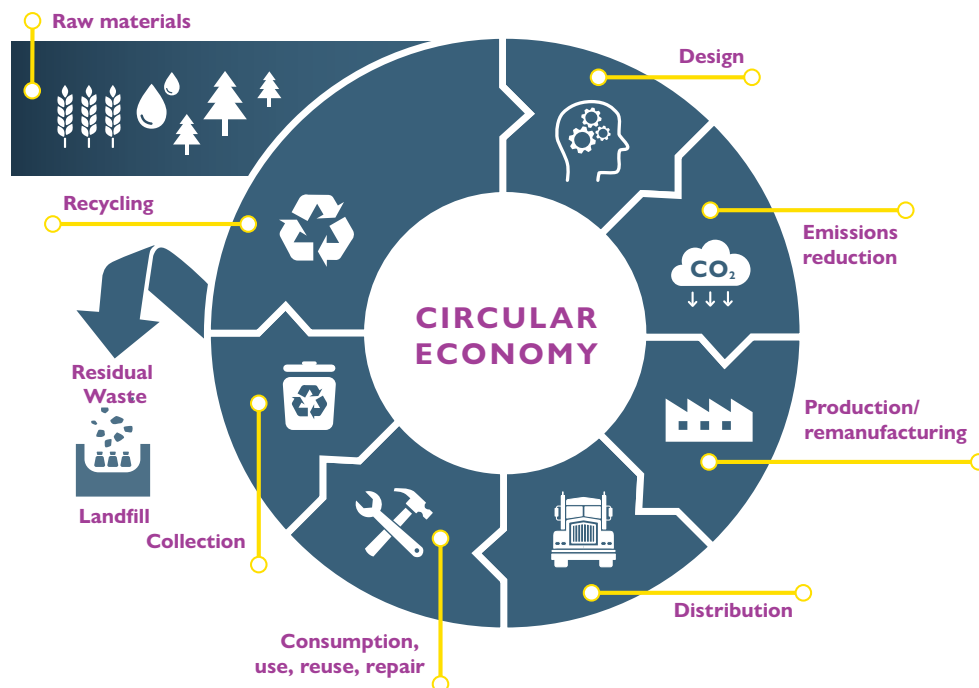


Managing plastic pollution

A 'circular economy' approach to plastics

Governments, industry groups, businesses and other organisations are already developing solutions to reduce Australia's use of single-use plastics. Their aims are to accelerate change in waste management behaviours, eliminate pollution and promote sustainable living to transition Australia to a 'circular economy.'

In a circular economy we design out plastic, keep products in use for as long as possible, then recover and regenerate products and materials at the end of their lifecycle. It is the opposite of our current traditional single-use economy. Rather than extracting resources, making products, and discarding single-use items, products are kept in use for as long as possible. This is achieved through reuse models.



Circular economy diagram

The full value of products and materials is gained through sustainable design, prioritising 'reuse, refurbishment and repair', and, where this is not possible, re-manufacturing or recycling and recovering for other purposes. This approach reduces the need for expenditure on new raw materials and promotes a more sustainable and regenerative system, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, growing our renewable energy capacity, and improving our economic strength, community wellbeing, and environmental resilience.¹¹

Reducing our reliance on single-use plastic items and materials is a major factor to achieving a circular economy and protects our environment and communities from further harm caused by plastic pollution and hazardous manufacturing.

What is Tasmania already doing?

- Retailers are prohibited in Tasmania from supplying lightweight plastic shopping bags (less than 35 micron thickness) for carrying goods sold by the retailer from the premises (*Plastic Shopping Bags Ban Act 2013*).
- Releasing balloons into the environment is classified as littering in Tasmania and can attract fines under the *Litter Act 2007*.
- In 2020, the City of Hobart banned single-use plastic takeaway food packaging. The by-law applies to food items within size limitations that are made on site and sold within the Hobart municipal area for immediate consumption. More information about the by-law can be found at: www.hobartcity.com.au/Business/Permits-licences-and-registrations/Food-and-beverage-businesses/Single-use-plastics-by-law-information.
- In 2022, the Tasmanian Government established the landfill levy, placing a fee on waste materials (per tonne) sent to landfill for disposal. The aim of this levy is to reduce the amount of waste going to landfill and ensure valuable resources from waste are reused and reinvested within the circular economy.
- The Tasmanian Waste and Resource Recovery Board plays a major role in advising the Tasmanian Government on the direction for waste management, resource recovery, and the circular economy in Tasmania. The Board, established under the *Waste and Resource Recovery Act 2022*, is a key part of the Government's policy to reduce waste going to landfill and increase resource recovery.
- In 2023, Tasmania released its first legislated waste strategy: the <https://wrr.tas.gov.au/planning-and-reporting/waste-strategy> with a vision for Tasmania *to be a place where nothing is wasted*.
- The Tasmanian Government will establish a Container Refund Scheme coined '*Recycle Rewards*', supporting the Government's vision of reducing litter and increasing recycling. Container refund schemes incentivise the return of used beverage containers for recycling in exchange for a refund. These schemes are an example of 'Extended Producer Responsibility' (often referred to as 'polluter pays') and are proven to reduce public littering and improve recycling outcomes. Find more information about Tasmania's scheme at: www.nre.tas.gov.au/environment/recycle-rewards.

National action

The *National Plastics Plan 2021* aims to increase plastic recycling, find alternatives to problematic plastics, and reduce the impact of plastic on the environment.

Supported by the Australian Government and industry, with targets set for overall waste reduction per-capita by 2030, the Plan includes the following targets for 2025¹⁹:

- 100 per cent of packaging being reusable, recyclable or compostable.
- 70 per cent of plastic packaging being recycled or composted.
- 50 per cent average recycled content included in packaging.
- The phase out of problematic and unnecessary single-use plastic packaging.

All other Australian States and Territories are well progressed in phasing out a range of single-use plastic items and materials, with some bans established since 2021 shown in [Appendix 1](#).

International action

The new Global Plastics Treaty seeks to forge an international legally binding agreement to 'End Plastic Pollution' by 2040 through negotiation by 175 United Nations Member States.

The treaty goal is to end plastic pollution by 2040 through:

- Limiting the use and manufacture of plastic to levels that are sustainable.
- Fostering a circular economy for plastics where plastic items are either reused, recycled, or re-manufactured when they are no longer needed or suitable for their original functions.
- Addressing eco-friendly ways of recycling discarded plastic.
- Tackling plastic pollution at its source, from production to waste management, with a focus on preventing waste and promoting a circular economy.

Australia recently joined the other nations to end plastic pollution showing that the Australian Government is also committed to end plastic pollution around the world by 2040 under this new plastic pollution treaty.²⁰ More information about the Global Plastics Treaty can be found at: <https://www.unep.org/inc-plastic-pollution>.

Phasing out single-use plastics

What should Tasmania phase out?

The Government is investigating a range of single-use plastics identified as problematic and/or unnecessary for consideration as part of a statewide phase out. Items in the categories explained in the following pages have been identified as a priority to phase out in Tasmania. These include:

- Items committed to a national phase out from 2025.
- Commonly littered items within Tasmania.
- Items that significantly impact our waste management systems.
- Items considered unnecessary where adapting to their absence is manageable.
- Items already banned in most other States and Territories.

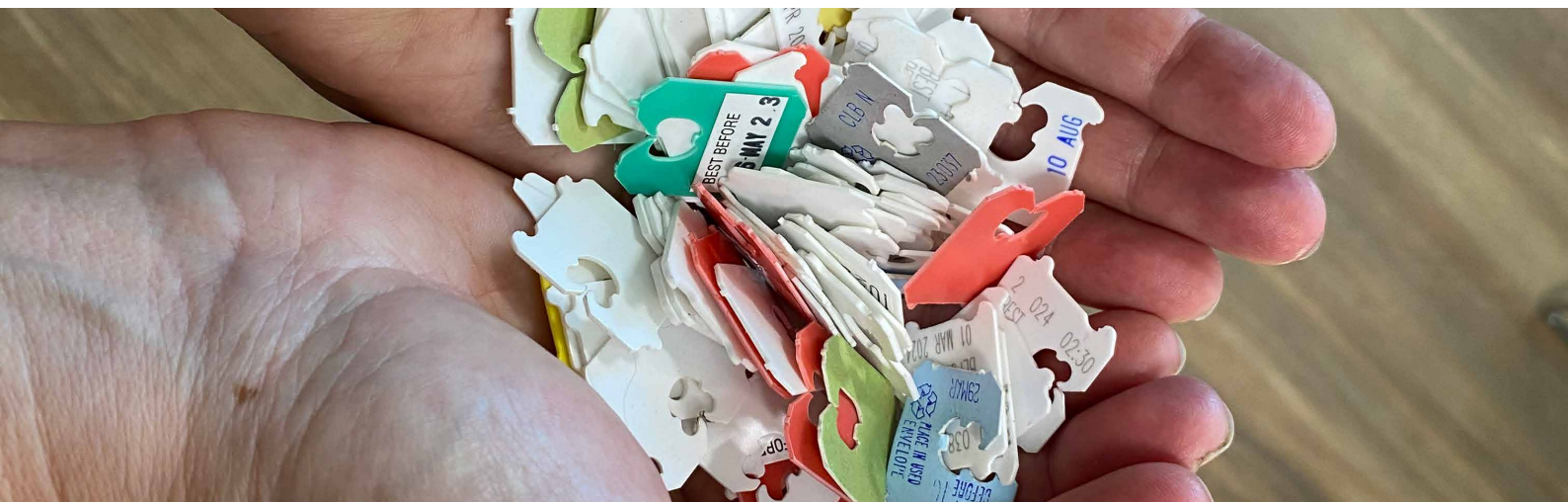
Feedback from this initial consultation and further consultation with stakeholders will inform which of these items and materials will be included in the first statewide phase out of single-use plastics in Tasmania.

Please consider your use of the single-use plastic items described over the following pages and provide a response via our online survey available at <https://nre.tas.gov.au/plastics-feedback>.

Alternatively, information on how to make a written submission is available at: <https://nre.tas.gov.au/plastics-consultation>.

Please note the items and materials listed below and in the survey are not final.

Photograph - NRE Tas | Plastic bread tags





Utensils

Stage 1

Drinking straws - Beverage stirrers - Single-use cutlery



Single-use plastic utensils are commonly littered throughout our environment either by human use or leaking from waste collection sites. They can be difficult to recover and recycle due to their small and complex design slipping through sorting facilities, as well as contaminate valuable waste streams for recycling with food waste. Alternative options are already well established.

Tasmanians with certain disabilities or medical conditions may still require these utensils daily, see page 25.

Available alternatives

- Stainless steel/paper/bamboo straws
- Reusable/alternative utensil
- Stainless steel/wooden/bamboo/fibre-base certified compostable cutlery
- Not using a straw

Photograph - NRE Tas | *Stainless steel cutlery and straw*





Foodware

Stage 1

Single-use bowls (lidded and unlidded) - Single-use plates
- Single-use food containers

Stage 2

Plastic lined noodle boxes



Single-use plastic foodware items are often too light to be correctly sorted with larger plastics and therefore are difficult to recycle. Food residue on single-use plastic foodware hinders the successful recycling of the item due to contamination. Also, plastic lined foodware, for example noodle boxes, can release microplastics into the environment.

Available alternatives

- Reusable items (ceramic, steel, reusable plastic, glass, silicone)
- Paperboard bowls that are certified compostable to Australian Standards
- Fibre-based items made from bagasse (sugarcane mulch), wood, bamboo
- Reusable stretch lids made from silicone

Photograph - NRE Tas | *Paper bowl*





Drinkware



Stage 1

Single-use hot cups and lids (e.g. coffee or soup)

- Single-use cold cups and lids (e.g. iced coffee or bubble-tea)

Australians enjoy the convenience of takeaway drinks. The staggering consumption of approximately 910 million cold beverage cups in 2019-20 – has significant environmental consequences.²¹

Paper or fibre-based single-use cups are often lined with plastic (such as polyethylene, or bio-based plastic like polylactic acid) which makes them problematic to process or compost due to the risk of PFAS accumulation.

Other cups, made from fossil fuel or bio-based materials are a high use item with minimal recovery options being contaminated with food/drink. Therefore these cups accumulate in landfill or our environment as they either:

- Degrade very slowly or not at all
- Cannot be processed unless under certain composting conditions

Available alternatives

- Reusable cups
- Cups certified compostable to Australian Standards
- Dine in instead of takeaway

Photograph - NRE Tas | *Reusable cup*





Bags and produce items

Stage 1

Plastic shopping bags greater than 35 microns thickness

- Plastic barrier and produce bags (e.g. for fruit, nuts and vegetables)
- Plastic bread-tags



Stage 2

Stickers on fruit and vegetables

- Single-serve condiment packages



Many Tasmanian retailers have started supplying thicker plastic bags following the ban on lightweight plastic bags in 2013. There are currently not widespread recycling options for these thicker bags.

While there are small scale collection programs for plastic bread-tags, they are not recyclable as they are made from a problematic material: polystyrene.

While it is acknowledged produce stickers serve to assist many purposes including price look up codes, produce names and branding information, they contaminate waste streams for composting facilities. It is noted alternative options are currently limited. Other Australian States and Territories are currently investigating sticker phase outs.

Available alternatives

- Reusable bags made from cloth or other sustainable materials
- Paper bags
- Cardboard boxes
- Recyclable cardboard bread-tags
- Fruit ink stamps
- Compostable paper produce stickers
- Available refillable condiment bottles
- Sustainable condiment containers prepped in-store

Photograph - NRE Tas | *Cardboard box and padding*





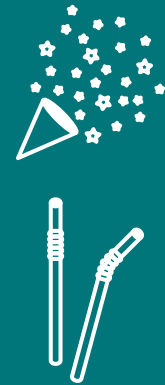
Party goods and confectionary

Stage 1

Pizza savers - Plastic confetti - Lollipop sticks
- Balloon sticks and ties

Stage 2

Pre-packaged and attached products
(e.g. plastic straws on fruit boxes)



A pizza saver is a plastic device designed to stop the centre of a food packaging (for example a pizza box or cake box) from caving in and contacting the food inside. Plastic pizza savers can become a source of contamination in organics recycling streams if pizza boxes are discarded in a green organics bin.

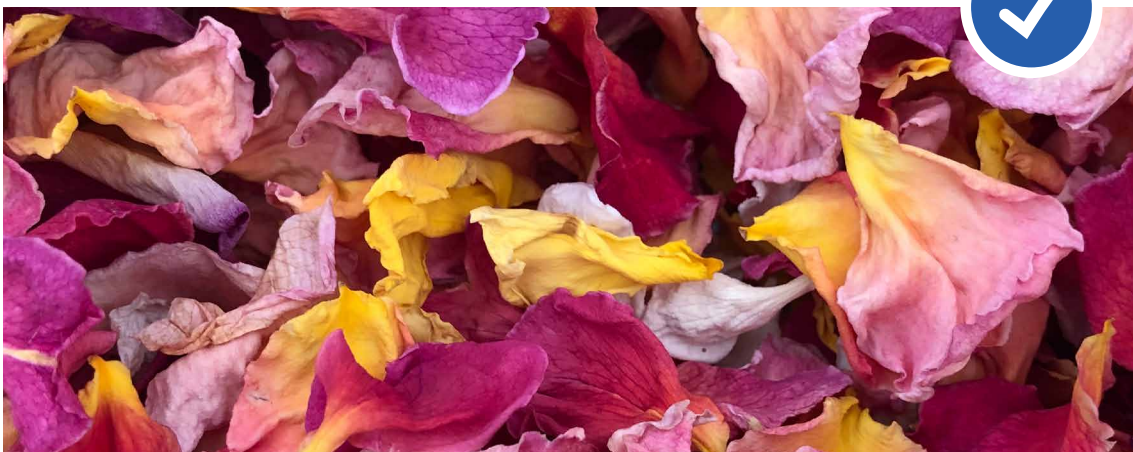
Plastic confetti are made from plastics like polyethylene terephthalate. This type of confetti is non-degradable, small, and lightweight. It accumulates and degrades into even smaller microplastics, meaning a momentary celebration at sporting events or weddings has a long-lasting impact on the environment.

Single-use plastic lollipop and balloon sticks can remain in the environment for centuries due to their inability to break down. Given their common littering and long-term environmental impact it is crucial to explore sustainable alternatives.

Available alternatives

- Rice paper confetti, rose petals, dried native gum leaves
- Cardboard balloon holders
- Wood or bamboo sticks or paper, seed-infused lollipop sticks
- Pizza saver made as same material as pizza box or nothing at all

Photograph - NRE Tas | *Rose petals*





Expanded polystyrene packaging



Stage 1

Expanded polystyrene loose-fill packaging - Expanded polystyrene moulded packaging - Expanded polystyrene fruit and vegetable trays - Expanded polystyrene food service containers

Stage 2

Expanded polystyrene multi-service gelato containers

Single-use expanded polystyrene (EPS) is used in packaging, such as loose-fill, moulded and produce trays. EPS is a lightweight plastic material susceptible to be carried by wind and water currents when improperly discarded. The environmental impact of EPS packaging is significant as it disintegrates into smaller fragments posing a substantial risk to wildlife if ingested. EPS packaging is unsuitable for kerbside recycling due to its tendency to fragment. Examples of single-use EPS include:

- Loose fill consumer packaging used in consumer item protection in freight (e.g. 'packing peanuts')
- Moulded consumer packaging used for protective packaging for white goods and electronics
- Produce trays commonly used by supermarkets and grocers for fruit and vegetables
- Food ware containers (e.g. 'clamshells')
- Multi-service gelato containers

States and Territories agreed to phase out EPS consumer food containers and consumer goods packaging by 2025, with the National Packaging Targets setting a voluntary industry target of 100 per cent of packaging to be reusable, recyclable, or compostable by 2025.¹⁹

The Australian Packaging Covenant Organisation developed a roadmap to phasing out various EPS packaging types. Loose-fill packaging and food and beverage containers are identified for immediate phase out, while moulded EPS packaging require different approaches based on certain criteria. Moulded EPS used for packing small to medium sized electrical items may see a longer phase out period, and stewardship schemes will be sought where moulded EPS is used for large and heavy, fragile, or precision items over 45kg (e.g. white goods) due to safety/transport requirements.²²

Western Australia is the only jurisdiction currently with an active moulded EPS packaging phase out program.

Moulded EPS packaging is used for a variety of food hygiene and health and safety purposes. This consultation refers to moulded EPS which may be unnecessary or easily replaced by a more sustainable item.



Available alternatives

- Cardboard
- Paper
- Fungi-based packaging from mycelium-based bio composite materials combined with fibre based materials
- Wool waste
- Clear recyclable plastic trays (polyethylene terephthalate)

Cosmetics

Stage 1

Microbeads in personal healthcare items - Plastic-stemmed cotton buds



Microbeads, synthetic polymer particles smaller than 5mm, are found in various personal care items such as sunscreens and facial cleansers, cosmetics, and cleaning items. These particles are resistant to degradation and enter wastewater systems and flow into waterways and potentially our drinking water supply.

Action led by industry and the Australian Government has led to significant declines in the use of plastic microbeads by manufacturers across personal healthcare items already.

Plastic-stemmed cotton buds made from polypropylene can enter marine environments and leach toxic biological and chemical contaminants. Marine animals are found to mistakenly consume plastic-stemmed cotton buds and other small plastics, filling their stomachs with no urge to feed, leading to poor nutrition, starvation and eventual death.

Available alternatives

- Bamboo, sugarcane, and wood cotton buds
- Reusable cotton buds that can be washed and reused
- Plant-based exfoliant textures in cosmetic items

Photograph - NRE Tas | *Non plastic cotton buds*





Phased out single-use plastic items made from the following materials



Conventional plastic made from fossil-fuels - Plastic with degradable qualities (fragmentable or oxo-degradable)

- **Bio-degradable plastic made mostly from fossil-fuels**
- **Expanded polystyrene - Expanded polyethylene - Expanded bio-based plastics - Bio-based plastics not certified to Australian Standards**

Consider how you may be impacted by the phase out of items listed from pages 16 to 22 made from the materials listed above.

While the design of a single-use item may contribute to its problematic or unnecessary nature, the material of an item can also be a significant problem.

Single-use plastic material made from fossil-fuels, or material with degradable qualities that promote pathways for microplastics and toxic residue to persist in the environment are highly problematic. Plastics made from fossil fuels with degradable qualities may be misleadingly advertised as being a more environmentally conscious purchase when these products remain problematic as they never truly degrade entirely.

Any biodegradable materials not certified under Australian Standards 5810-2010 (home composting) or 4736-2006 (industrial composting) do not meet the industry standards or benchmarks used to ensure plastic material is safe for compost and the surrounding environment.

Certified materials and items will include these logos to reflect compliance with Australian Standards:



Available alternatives

- Stainless steel/paper/bamboo
- Cardboard
- Woven material
- Certified compostable plastic



How will Tasmanians be impacted?

Phasing out single-use plastics will affect businesses, charities, government facilities, industry groups and community members who use, supply or depend on these items. The Tasmanian Government acknowledges that individuals and organisations, such as those in the healthcare, disability, aged-care, correctional services and scientific sectors rely on single-use plastic items like straws, cutlery, cups and containers daily. These individuals and organisations will need assistance because there may be no safe or reliable alternatives available to them. When certain single-use plastic items are phased out, the Government will ensure that our community receives support to adapt to the changes brought about by a phase out of single-use plastics and ensure there is lead time for Tasmanians to prepare and adjust to this reform.

Health and safety

Aged care, health, charities and correctional facilities rely on the material properties of single-use plastic items to operate services for health, hygiene, and safety purposes.

Disabilities and medical conditions

The alternative options for replacing single-use plastic utensils and food and drink containers may not be suitable for those Tasmanians with certain disabilities or medical conditions.

Businesses and the supply-chain

Using alternate items may incur higher costs, pose supply challenges for businesses, and potential health risks to customers and staff. Distributors may need to work with new suppliers, assess whether their existing suppliers can meet their needs, change their inventory management and communicate options with their customers. Suppliers or manufacturers may need to shift their production to provide their customers with alternative items while navigating new legal requirements.

However, suppliers have an opportunity to collaborate with manufacturers and researchers to develop innovative and sustainable alternatives and explore reusable item options and systems.

Rural access and other needs

The Tasmanian Government acknowledges the diverse needs of Tasmanians in obtaining crucial information and support during this statewide phase out. The Government is committed to providing the necessary information. Prioritising access to easy-to-understand information, distributed across all municipal areas and in multiple languages is a priority for the Government. This will ensure Tasmanians are supported to make informed decisions about their use of single-use plastics.

Tasmania's rural communities may have limited access to waste collection infrastructure such as kerbside services for waste, recycling and food and organics, making it difficult to safely dispose of more sustainable single-use alternatives such as certified compostable items.



Will there be exemptions for some items?

The legislation will provide for exemptions for those who still require access to any restricted items. General exemptions will be informed by significant consultation with impacted sectors, and specific exemptions on a case-by-case basis will also be factored into how the phase out is implemented across Tasmania.

What do you need from the Government to transition to a phase out of single-use plastics?

This phase out of certain single-use plastic items and materials will be mandatory. It will target the commercial sale and supply of single-use plastic items in Tasmania. Information on *what* items and materials will be phased out and *when* will be made available through a Roadmap published by the Tasmanian Government at the **next stage of public consultation** when draft legislation is prepared.

The Government recognises Tasmanians need time, support, and resources during the phase out and is interested in your thoughts on how you could benefit from the proposed options.

More time to prepare in advance

- The phase out will be enacted through law.
- The legislation may include a transition period before penalties apply for non-compliance.
- The additional time to adapt to the phase out will help suppliers, agencies and vendors manage procurement of alternative options and existing stock levels of single-use plastics.

Funding support

- Such as for food serviceware items, it is widely acknowledged that reusable items and systems are the most sustainable alternative to single-use items.
- Impacted businesses and organisations may find that transitioning to using reusable options more regularly is costly in the short-term.
- The Tasmanian Government is committed to ensuring businesses are supported through the transition and are able to make the best choices to benefit Tasmania.

Educational resources and programs

- Not everybody has the time or resources to be an expert in sustainability.
- The Government acknowledges those impacted by a phase out will need information to make choices about their businesses and actions.
- This might include information about the most sustainable alternative options to replace single-use plastics, the costs involved in adopting different options and the potential issues associated with some alternative items and materials.



On-the-ground engagement

- Having the opportunity to talk directly with experts about the concerns you may face as a result of this phase out can be highly beneficial.
- These opportunities may provide information on ways you specifically can adopt the most sustainable options following this phase out and become a leader in your community.

Local government

- Information from local council about the phase out may be more accessible for the community.
- The Government wants to ensure everybody has access to the information they need to navigate this phase out of single-use plastics in Tasmania.

Government-Industry partnership opportunities

- Manufacturers and suppliers of restricted single-use items and materials will be impacted through the phase out.
- Events and festivals in venues, stadiums or campuses may require significant changes at an operational level to adopt reuse systems and models.
- The Government seeks input on potential collaborations to aid industry during this transition.

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We particularly pay thanks to all officers across other State and Territory governments who have expertly and passionately provided their insights and learnings to Tasmania while leading the way nationally as part of Australia's goal to mitigating the impacts caused by single-use plastics.

Survey questions

The following online survey questions can be found at <https://nre.tas.gov.au/plastics-feedback>. We encourage you to fill out the online survey as your responses will help us design the approach to phasing out single-use plastic items in Tasmania.

To view which questions require mandatory responses, refer to the survey available at: <https://nre.tas.gov.au/plastics-feedback>.

Single-use plastics phase out in Tasmania

1. Do you support reducing the use of single-use plastics in Tasmania?
2. Which single-use plastic items are important to be phased out?
 - Drinking straws
 - Beverage stirrers
 - Single-use cutlery
 - Single-use bowls without lids
 - Single-use bowls with lids
 - Single-use plates
 - Single-use food containers
 - Plastic lined noodle boxes
 - Single-use hot cups without lids
 - Single-use hot cups with lids
 - Single-use cold cups without lids
 - Single-use cold cups with lids
 - Plastic shopping bags greater than 35 microns thickness (e.g. thick plastic shopping bags)
 - Plastic barrier and produce bags (e.g. for fruit, nuts and vegetables)
 - Plastic bread-tags
 - Stickers on fruit and vegetables
 - Single-serve condiment packages
 - Plastic soy sauce fish packets
 - Microbeads in personal healthcare items
 - Plastic-stemmed cotton buds
 - Pizza savers
 - Plastic confetti
 - Lollipop sticks
 - Balloon sticks and ties
 - Pre-packaged and attached products (e.g. plastic straws on fruit boxes)
 - Expanded polystyrene loose-fill packaging (e.g. packing peanuts)
 - Expanded polystyrene moulded packaging (e.g. appliance packaging)

- Expanded polystyrene fruit and vegetable trays
 - Expanded polystyrene food service containers (e.g. clamshells)
 - Expanded polystyrene multi-service gelato containers
3. How might a phase out of any of the items listed above affect you as an individual?
 4. Please tell us more if you believe there are single-use plastic items listed above that are essential or where you believe suitable alternatives do not exist.

Plastic use in Tasmania

5. What do you currently do to manage your use of single-use plastics?
(tick box options in survey)
6. What prevents you from using alternative items/practices to reduce your use of single-use plastics? *(tick box options in survey)*
7. What information do you think you and your community need when phasing out single-use plastics? *(tick box options in survey)*

Tasmanian Organisations or Businesses

8. Do you operate a Tasmanian organisation or business that sells, supplies, disposes of or uses single-use plastics?

The following questions only apply if you answered yes to question 8.

9. What type of business or organisation do you operate?
10. Which of the following would help you prepare for the phase out?
(tick box options in survey)
11. What information do you think you as a business operator need to feel supported when phasing out single-use plastics? *(tick box options in survey)*
12. What are the impacts to your business or organisation that need to be considered as part of this discussion?
13. Organisation or business name.

About you

14. Name
15. Email
16. What is your residential postcode?
17. Would you like to receive updates and resources via email on Tasmania's phase out of single-use plastics?
18. What is your age?
19. Do you have a disability or medical condition, or care for somebody who does, which requires the use of any of the listed single-use plastic items?
20. Is English your main language spoken at home? If not, please specify.

Glossary

ACT	Australian Capital Territory
NSW	New South Wales
NT	Northern Territory
QLD	Queensland
SA	South Australia
VIC	Victoria
WA	Western Australia
EPS	Expanded polystyrene
FOGO	Food organics and garden organics
PFAS	Per- and poly- fluoroalkyl substances
AS 4736-2006	The Australian Standard of biodegradable plastics suitable for composting and other microbial treatment (industrial composting).
AS 5810-2010	The Australian Standard of biodegradable plastics suitable for home composting.
Bio-accumulate	The gradual accumulation of substances, such as chemicals in an organism, through consumption or absorption.
Bio-based plastic	Plastics made from plant-based, renewable materials like vegetable oils and starches reduce consumption of fossil fuels and can be biodegradable. However, these materials may be non-degradable and exhibit similar behaviour to conventional plastics, persisting for hundreds of years in the environment.
Biodegradable	Biodegradable materials can be broken down by microorganisms in the environment into safe compounds within the presence of oxygen. However, without oxygen these materials breakdown into potent greenhouse gases, for example methane. Biodegradable plastics may also be made from either fossil fuels or bio-based materials.
Circular economy	Reducing our reliance on single-use plastic items and materials is a major factor to achieving a circular economy and protects our environment and communities from further harm caused by plastic pollution and hazardous manufacturing.
Compostable plastic	Made from bio-based materials, may use plastic elements that can be processed entirely into compost. Compostable items cannot breakdown entirely in the environment and require specific conditions, especially items requiring commercial processing. Biodegradable plastics may also be compostable.

Glossary continued

Degradable plastic	Made from fossil fuels that fragment and degrade into microplastics when in the environment.
Fossil-fuel based plastic	Plastics made from non-renewable resources such as petroleum, coal, and natural gas.
Fragmentable plastic	Made from fossil fuels that fragment and degrade into microplastics when in the environment.
Greenwashing	False signalling or advertising that a plastic item has elevated environmental standards.
High-density polyethylene	High-density polyethylene (HDPE) is a commonly used petroleum thermoplastic and the most used of the three types of polyethylene.
Low-density polyethylene	Low-density polyethylene (LDPE) is a thermoplastic made from the monomer ethylene. It was the first grade of polyethylene, produced in 1933.
Microplastics	Refers to plastic particles less than five millimetres diameter, including nano-sized particles.
Oxo-degradable plastic	Items containing a pro-oxidant that induces breakdown of the plastic item into smaller pieces under favourable conditions (e.g. heat, UV-light and mechanical stress).
Polyethylene terephthalate	The most common thermoplastic polymer resin of the polyester family it is used in fibres for clothing, containers for liquids and foods, and in combination with glass fibre for engineering resins.
Polystyrene	Lightweight cellular plastic material made from hydrocarbon.
Problematic single-use plastic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • difficult to collect or recover through public bins or your kerbside council collection service. • contaminate waste streams meaning other materials or resources cannot be recovered, collected, or recycled. • contaminate waste streams meaning other materials or resources cannot be recovered, collected, or recycled. • easily littered. • manufactured with materials or chemicals that present a risk to human health and the environment. • manufactured with additives that accelerate the breakdown of an item into polluting microplastics.
Product stewardship	Product stewardship schemes support the environmentally sound management of products and materials over their life, utilising a shared responsibility principle to reduce the harmful impacts of certain products. This can include involvement from parties involved across the design, manufacturing, importation, sale, use and disposal of products. More information can be found at: https://www.dccew.gov.au/environment/protection/waste/product-stewardship .
Unnecessary single-use plastic	Can be substituted with fit-for purpose alternatives or even eliminated entirely without causing significant disruption to consumer needs.

Appendix 1: Single-use plastic phase outs across Australia

The table below shows the status of action in other states and territories (as at May 2024) against each of the items proposed to be phased out in Tasmania.

	ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	VIC	WA
Drinking straws	Jul 2022	Nov 2022	2025	Sept 2021	Mar 2021	Feb 2023	Jul 2022
Beverage stirrers	Jul 2022	Nov 2022	2025	Sept 2021	Mar 2021	Feb 2023	Jul 2022
Single-use cutlery	Jul 2021	Nov 2022	2025	Sept 2021	Mar 2021	Feb 2023	Jul 2022
Pre-packaged attached products	Exempt	Exempt	-	-	Sept 2025	Exempt	-
Single-use bowls (unlidded)	Jul 2023	Nov 2022	2025	Sept 2021	Sept 2023	-	Jul 2022
Single-use bowls (lidded)	Exempt	Planned	-	-	Sept 2024	-	Sept 2024
Single-use plates	Jul 2023	Nov 2022	2025	Sept 2021	Sept 2023	Feb 2023	Jul 2022
Single-use food containers	-	Planned	-	-	Sept 2024	-	Sept 2024
Plastic lined noodle boxes	-	-	-	-	Sept 2024	-	Sept 2024
Single serve condiment packages	-	Planned	-	-	Sept 2025	-	-
Plastic soy sauce fish	-	Planned	-	-	Sept 2025	-	-
Single-use hot cups and lids	-	Planned	-	-	Sept 2024	-	Mar 2024
Single-use cold cups and lids	-	Planned	-	-	Sept 2024	-	Oct 2022
Plastic shopping bags greater than 35 microns thickness	Jan 2024	Planned	-	Sept 2023 (reusable standard)	Sept 2024	-	Jul 2022
Plastic barrier and produce bags	-	Planned	-	-	Sept 2024	-	Sept 2024
Plastic bread-tags	-	Planned	-	-	Sept 2024	-	-

Appendix 1: Single-use plastic phase outs across Australia as at May 2024 continued

	ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	VIC	WA
Stickers on fruit and vegetables	-	Planned	-	-	Sept 2025 ⋮	-	-
Microbeads in healthcare items	Jul 2023 	Nov 2022 	2025 ⋮	Sept 2023 	-	-	Sept 2023
Plastic-stemmed cotton buds	Jul 2022 	Nov 2022 	-	Sept 2023 	Sept 2023 	Feb 2023 	Sept 2023
Pizza saver	-	Planned	-	-	Sept 2023 	-	-
Plastic confetti	-	-	-	-	Sept 2024 ⋮	-	-
Lollipop sticks	-	Planned	-	-	-	-	-
Balloon sticks and ties	-	Planned	-	-	Sept 2024 ⋮	-	-
Expanded polystyrene loose-fill packaging	Jul 2023 	-	2025 ⋮	Sept 2023 	-	-	Sept 2023
Expanded polystyrene moulded packaging	-	-	2025 ⋮	-	-	-	July 2025 ⋮
Expanded polystyrene fruit and vegetable trays	Jul 2023 	Planned	2025 ⋮	-	Sept 2024 ⋮	Exempt	Jul 2022/ Sept 2023
Expanded polystyrene food service containers	Jul 2022 	Nov 2022 	2025 ⋮	Sept 2021 	Mar 2022 clamshells Sept 2024 other EPS containers 	Feb 2023 	July 2022
Expanded polystyrene multi-service gelato containers	Exempt	Exempt	2025 ⋮	Sept 2021 	Sept 2024 ⋮	Exempt	Jul 2022

Key  Future ban  Ban already in place  No ban in place or proposed at this stage/exempt

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