

Tackling plastic pollution

We're banning problematic single-use plastics in Victoria

Increases in population and consumption have increased our reliance on problematic single-use plastics. Single-use plastics can negatively impact the health of our communities, our environment and our wildlife when they are disposed of incorrectly.

The Victorian Government will work with businesses and communities to ban problematic single-use plastic items, including straws, cutlery, plates, drink-stirrers, expanded polystyrene food and drink containers and cotton bud sticks by February 2023.

The problem of plastic pollution

Plastic pollution causes environmental harm, is detrimental to human health and wildlife, and attracts significant clean-up costs.

Plastics are strong, lightweight, and inexpensive, they are widely used in packaging, transport, healthcare, textiles, construction and electronics. Plastics are cheap, versatile and have a range of benefits. In some instances, they can keep our food fresh for longer and help reduce food waste.

Plastics do, however, cause significant harm. Globally, at least eight million tonnes of plastic enter oceans each year — the equivalent of dumping a garbage truck of plastic into the ocean every minute. Without action, the volume of plastic litter could double by 2030, and quadruple by 2050. This is why governments, businesses and communities around the world are acting to reduce plastic pollution.

Many single-use plastic items are difficult and economically unviable to recycle. Often they end up in and contaminate recycling.

These items can usually be avoided or replaced with reusable products.

Actions to address plastic pollution

Single-use plastics ban

These single-use plastic items will be banned from sale or supply in Victoria:

- straws
- cutlery
- plates
- drink stirrers
- expanded polystyrene food and drink containers
- cotton bud sticks.

The phase out of single-use plastics starts now

The Victorian Government will lead by example, phasing out single-use plastic straws, cutlery, plates, drink-stirrers, expanded polystyrene food and drink containers, and cotton bud sticks from the Victorian public service by February 2022.

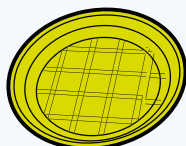
We're banning these single-use plastics by February 2023



Straws



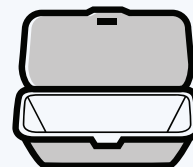
Cutlery



Plates



Drink stirrers



Expanded polystyrene food and drink containers



Cotton bud sticks

¹ World Economic Forum (2016). The New Plastics Economy: *Rethinking the future of plastics*, p.7, available at http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_The_New_Plastics_Economy.pdf

Ban single-use plastics by February 2023

Following a transitional period to give businesses and communities time to adjust, the Victorian Government will ban these single-use items by February 2023. The Victorian Government will consult with businesses and the broader Victorian community ahead of the ban coming into effect. This will include working with businesses to identify sustainable alternatives to the items included in the ban.

Plastics Pledge

The government will encourage and support Victorian businesses and organisations to reduce single-use plastics and join the Victorian Government in phasing them out.

Exemptions to the ban

The ban will not affect medical or scientific equipment, emergency management services, or people who require specific single-use plastic products for health and safety.

The government will work with the aged care and disability sectors to understand and develop exemptions for people who require straws or other single-use plastics.

Available alternatives

There are readily available alternatives to the single-use items being banned. In many cases these single-use plastics can be avoided.

Victorian businesses and community will be encouraged to consider:

- avoiding straws or choosing reusable ones made from bamboo, stainless steel or silicone
- avoiding drink stirrers or choosing reusable metal

teaspoons or swizzle sticks

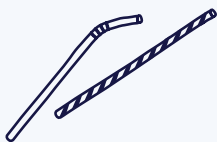
- choosing cotton buds without the sticks or with bamboo sticks
- choosing reusable:
 - cutlery made from stainless steel, heavy-weight plastic or bamboo
 - plates made from plastic or ceramic
 - glass, plastic or metal containers
 - silicone cotton buds

The government will work with businesses to identify sustainable alternatives to the items included in the ban.

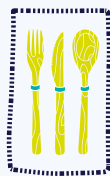
Next steps

- Engagement with industry and local government
- Public consultation on regulatory impact statement
- Regulations finalised
- Transition period for industry – mid 2022 to February 2023
- State-wide ban on single-use plastics commences – February 2023.

Alternatives to banned single-use plastic items



Metal, silicone or paper straw



Metal or reusable picnic cutlery



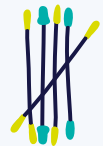
Reusable plates



Spoon or reusable drink stirrer



Reusable food container



Paper, bamboo or reusable silicone buds

Wash well and follow current coronavirus advice at www.vic.gov.au/coronavirus.

Transforming the use and management of plastics

Tackling plastic pollution is part of *Recycling Victoria – A new economy*, the once-in-a-generation plan to transform Victoria's waste and recycling system and build the state's circular economy. Through Recycling Victoria and investment of \$515 million, the Victorian government will meet ambitious targets for a cleaner, greener Victoria with less waste and pollution, improved and expanded recycling, more jobs and a stronger economy.

The ban of problematic single-use plastics builds on the Victorian Government's single-use plastic bag ban which came into effect on 1 November 2019, and a range of other Recycling Victoria initiatives that are transforming how we use and manage plastic throughout the Victorian economy, including:

- grants to encourage businesses to use plastic more productively through the Circular Economy Business Innovation Centre
- household recycling reforms for better quality and more plastic recycling
- the Recycling Markets Acceleration package and the Recycled First policy to ensure more recycled plastic is used in construction of public infrastructure.

The Victorian Government will continue to work with industry to phase out problematic single-use plastics and shift the way plastics are recovered, recycled, and reused – creating new jobs and industries for Victoria.

You can learn more about *Recycling Victoria* at www.vic.gov.au/recycling.



Case study: Reducing single-use plastic with BetterCup

BetterCup is a Melbourne-based business that minimises single-use waste at events and venues such as music festivals, sports stadiums and universities by providing Australian-made reusable and durable plastic cups that are washed and reused. BetterCup offers services including on-site or off-site washing solutions and reuse communication strategies. At the end of their life cycle, cups are recycled locally into products such as wheelie bins and flowerpots.

BetterCup has worked with organisations all over Australia to provide reusable cups including at the Brunswick Music Festival in Moreland, Melbourne Fashion Week and Monash University. BetterCup's reusable products and systems have, to date, diverted almost one million single-use cups from landfill.