

## Maribyrnong Single-use Plastic Policy

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**Policy Author:** Environmental Services

**Policy owner:**

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### REVISION RECORD

Date	Version	Revision Description
21/06/20	1	Draft in development
18/08/21	2	Final

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# Introduction

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Maribyrnong City Council is committed to the elimination of single-use plastic in its offices, buildings, venues, events and sites.

Council recognises that single-use plastic emits greenhouse gas at every stage of its life cycle. It is a key source of litter in Australia; it pollutes our waterways, oceans, land and air, and creates harmful microplastic which wildlife ingest and becomes part of the human food chain. Council acknowledges that plastic never fully degrades, that single-use plastic is often used momentarily then disposed of and that there are a variety of reusable alternatives to its use.

This Policy outlines Council's commitment and process for identifying and eliminating single-use plastic across its operations, and embeds the waste hierarchy principle of waste avoidance first. Eliminating single-use plastic aligns with and addresses key strategic priorities identified in Council's Climate Emergency Strategy and Towards Zero Waste Strategy. This policy also considers the Victorian Government's legislation on single-use plastic bags and current commitment to phase out other key single-use plastic items by February 2023.

## COVID-19

As the world has responded to the global Covid-19 pandemic, there has been a resurgence in the use of some single-use plastic items.

It is important to recognise that single-use plastic can play a part in medical and emergency responses, however to protect our environment and public health, careful consideration must be given to the impact of reusable items vs single-use plastic items. Reusable items must be given preference where safe to do so.

For example, although single-use plastic items such as masks and gloves have been a key part of the COVID-19 health response, advice to wash hands in preference to gloves, and reusable masks should be used by Council in the first instance where safe and appropriate to do so.

Similarly, with regard to the increased use of single-use coffee cups during the COVID-19 pandemic, there is no regulation anywhere in Australia that businesses must use single-use foodware in order to fulfil COVID-safe regulations, with the Victorian Government stating "there is no evidence to suggest there is any benefit in switching to disposables"<sup>1</sup>. Provided basic hygiene rules are followed, such as washing with detergent and hot water, reusable cups can continue to be used by individuals, and Council should adopt this approach in the first instance where safe and appropriate to do so.

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<sup>1</sup> Victorian Government. (2020). *COVID-19 advice and FAQs Information for EHOs and food businesses*, State of Victoria [6a1af1\\_ecbc9e07c2e24a2983dd65853aa53183.pdf](https://files.vic.gov.au/files/6a1af1_ecbc9e07c2e24a2983dd65853aa53183.pdf) ([filesusr.com](https://files.vic.gov.au/files/6a1af1_ecbc9e07c2e24a2983dd65853aa53183.pdf))

As we adapt to life in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important we take an informed approach to eliminate single-use plastic, so that we can protect our health, environment and climate now and for future generations.

### **State Government single-use plastic action**

These items are addressed by the State Government, so are taken into consideration in this Policy.

On 1 November 2019, the State Government passed legislation banning single-use light weight plastic bags of 35 microns or less thickness.

By February 2023, these single-use plastic items will be banned from sale or supply across Victoria:

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

## Purpose

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The purpose of this Policy is to set out Council's commitment and approach to:

- Eliminate single-use plastic and balloons from Council owned buildings and sites; at Council funded or endorsed events or in the course of operation of Council business
- Establish the principles and priorities of the waste hierarchy which must be followed when determining how to replace single-use plastic items. These priorities are as follows:
  - Avoid: Review and consider if the item or related service using single-use plastic is necessary in the first instance
  - Reuse: Replace single-use plastic with reusable materials in the second instance
  - Recycle: Replace single-use plastic with recyclable materials if no reusable materials are available
  - Exempt: Establish the terms for those single-use plastic items which are exempt from the Policy (eg: for medical, health, safety reasons)
- Adopt the State Government Ban on single-use plastic bags, and pending ban on other single-use plastic items
- Educate and discourage our communities from using single-use plastic and balloons.

## Scope

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The Policy applies to:

- Council's business as a whole - including Councillors, Council staff, contractors, volunteers and/or other representatives as part of their Council related functions or roles;
- Individuals, organisations or other groups of people organising an event of some form or operating within a Council owned building, at a Council owned site or Council owned venue;
- Council staff planning, organising, promoting, running, and/or approving events on behalf of Council;
- Individuals, organisations or other groups of people, planning, organising, promoting, running and/or approving an event which uses Council funding or seeks Council endorsement or uses a Council site/venue or building.

The above includes, but is not limited to: Council endorsed community or civic events, official functions, festivals, meetings, workshops, expos, parties, information sessions, training events and organised/formal sporting or recreation events, activities, parties, forums, conferences, consultations, deliberations, focus groups, education activities, meetings and briefings of Council etc.

Events and activities which occur on Council land, but are not endorsed or funded by Council, and which do not require a Council event permit, hire agreement, lease or tenancy agreement are not included in the mandatory scope of this policy. These types of events, however, are encouraged by Council to voluntarily comply.

Staff and visitors to Council sites will also be encouraged to avoid bringing single-use plastic on site for personal use while attending or working within Council sites, buildings or venues.

## Definitions

Term	Definition
<b>Civic event</b>	A formal event organised by Council staff for the community.
<b>Council event</b>	A Council event includes functions, workshops, festivals, celebrations, ceremonies, exhibitions, expos, meetings, markets, information sessions, conferences, competitive sporting events, community engagement, consultations, focus groups, network breakfasts, meals/dinners, street parties, deliberative democracy, organised sporting, recreation or leisure activities, Council meetings or briefings, education sessions or other activity organised by Council. It will usually be hosted by Council or take place at a Council owned or managed site or venue, however partnership events may occur in other locations. For the purpose of this Policy Council events may include civic, commercial or community events organised by Council.

Term	Definition
<b>Council endorsed or funded event</b>	An organised activity or event which has received Council funding, sponsorship or support, but which is run or delivered by other parties. For example, events funded by Community Grants. For the purpose of this policy it may include civic, commercial and community events such as festivals, ceremonies, exhibitions, expos, meetings, functions, markets, workshops, information sessions, conferences, competitive sport events and other organised sporting and recreational activities.
<b>Council owned buildings</b>	Buildings or facilities owned by Council, including buildings which have been leased to an external organisation.
<b>Council site or venue</b>	Land, buildings, venues, roads or any other location owned or managed by Council.
<b>Disposable coffee Cups</b>	For the purposes of this policy, this refers to cups frequently sold for take away coffee, but may include disposable cups which are made of/contain single-use plastic that are used for other hot or cold liquids.
<b>Microplastics</b>	Extremely small pieces of plastic debris (less than 5mm long) in the environment resulting from the disposal and breakdown of consumer products and plastic waste.
<b>Plastic</b>	A synthetic or semi-synthetic material made from petrochemical compounds and/or a combination of organic materials (eg. rice, starch, corn etc). Inclusive of both non-biodegradable plastic, and “compostable”, “biodegradable” and “degradable” plastic.
<b>Single-use item</b>	Any item designed to be used once and then discarded, this includes plastic and non-plastic items (eg. paper or cardboard based plates, disposable cutlery etc.)
<b>Single-use plastic bag</b>	A type of disposable bag made of thin, flexible, plastic film used for containing or transporting goods. In line with the Victorian Government plastic bag ban, the definition includes any single-use lightweight plastic shopping bag which has a thickness of 35 microns or less at any part of the bag that is used to carry goods, has handles, and is all or partly plastic. This includes degradable, biodegradable or compostable plastic.
<b>Single-use plastic</b>	For the purposes of this Policy, single-use plastic refers to single-use items that are either made from plastic or contain single-use plastic (eg. disposable drink cups and lids). This includes plastic bags, cups, bowls, plates, cutlery, straws, bottled water, balloons, sachets (e.g. sauces, sunscreen), containers, packaging and other similar items, plastic glitter, glow sticks and confetti, as well as single-use or disposable plastic promotional items and giveaways, soft plastic

Term	Definition
	packaging such as cling wrap, lolly wrappers, chip packets, bubble wrap and other packaging.
<b>Sporting and recreational activities</b>	Any regular or organised sporting or recreational activity occurring at Council owned or managed sites, including those run by community sporting clubs and sporting associations.

## Responsibilities

This Policy was developed and will be managed by the Environmental Services Team within the Infrastructure Services Directorate.

## Policy

**Except in an emergency situation, this Policy prohibits the use, distribution or sale of single-use plastic**

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

**The Policy identifies the following requirements for Council owned buildings and funded or endorsed events:**

1. Single-use plastic bags, wrap or items are not to be used, sold or distributed for transportation or promotional purposes;
2. Single-use plastic cups, plates, bowls, straws, cutlery and take away food containers are not to be used, sold or distributed;
3. Single-use disposable cups and lids are not to be used, sold or distributed;
4. All avoidable plastic packaging, including cling wrap, plastic bags or similar must not be used in the purchase, sale, distribution and transport of food or goods;
5. Balloons, plastic glitter, glow sticks and confetti are not to be used, sold or distributed;
6. Plastic bottled water and single-use plastic beverages are not to be provided, sold or distributed by Council (unless for emergency responses or health and safety purposes). Free access to water must be provided and any new water bubblers installed by Council must have water bottle refill points;
7. Event materials are to be reused where possible (including event signage and promotional banners);
8. The event site or venue must be left litter free and returned to pre-event conditions;

9. Event organisers are to play a key role in educating and guiding their event staff and audience on single-use plastic free practices. This includes providing information via guidance documents for event organisers and stallholders and promoting reusable alternatives; and
10. Where possible and safe to do so, reusable items must be considered as the first preference for replacing single-use plastic items, rather than using alternative disposable single-use items.

Council funded or endorsed events will need to commit to comply with the Policy before any Council sponsorship for that event is approved.

Council officers will provide advice for organisations or individuals organising an event to assist in complying with this Policy, however, if there is poor adherence to this Policy, officers may recommend that events not be funded or endorsed by Council in the future.

## Exemptions

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Where there is no appropriate substitute for medical, emergency and special needs items that Council uses (or are used at Council venues/sites/events), exemptions may be granted under this Policy.

Exemptions to this policy may be made based on the following criteria;

- Where single-use plastic items are required to protect public health and safety, or as part of public health response;
- Where single-use plastic items are needed to meet food health and safety requirements and legislation;
- Where single-use plastic items are an essential accessibility tool that allows for drinks to be consumed safely and easily;
- Where no other practical alternative product or distribution method is available.

During the transition period detailed in this Policy (see below) sporting clubs, aquatic and leisure centres are permitted to provide, sell or distribute drinks in single-use plastic bottles. However, they must provide access to free drinking water (e.g. water bubblers) and supply or sell reusable options (e.g. refillable drink bottles, reusable cups etc); and display promotional materials on reusable options. Single-use plastic beverages can also be replaced with aluminium cans or glass bottles.

Exemptions not captured in this list will be assessed on a case by case basis. All exemptions require prior written approval. A formal application for exemption can be made to the CEO or their delegate.

## Implementation

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Once approved, the Environmental Services team will work with Council teams, departments and organisations operating within Council owned buildings to help



identify single-use plastic items and establish actions plans and protocols to assist in identifying and eliminating single-use plastic, in line with the principles of the waste hierarchy.

To assist event organisers in adhering to the Policy, Council will develop supporting *Single-use Plastic Policy Event Guidelines* for guidance on ways to meet the requirements of this policy. Council will maintain and review the Guidelines annually to ensure information is accurate, relevant and reflects changes in products and waste management systems.

Following endorsement of this Policy, a transition period will apply to enable implementation in line with updates to event permit conditions and lease, contract and tenancy renewals.

- A six month transition period from the approval date of this policy and related development of Single-use Plastic Policy Action Plans will apply for events and operations across Council owned and managed buildings.
- Sporting clubs, aquatic and leisure centres and other organisations operating out of Council buildings and venues may apply for a 24 month transition period from the approval date of this policy, provided they can demonstrate policy implementation will have a significant negative financial impact on their ability to operate. Council officers will work with these organisations to assist them in meeting the Policy requirements.
- Conditions and requirements to comply with this Policy will be built into lease agreements for Council owned buildings as these are updated/renewed, and will be established in event permits/applications for Council funded or endorsed events, as well as park bookings and wedding ceremony permits.

## Key Stakeholders

Stakeholder	Roles and responsibilities
Environmental Services Team (Infrastructure Services Directorate)	Policy custodian Support implementation through the provision of Policy guidance documents and internal engagement Monitoring, evaluation and policy review
Festivals and Visitation (City Futures)	Support implementation for Festivals and events Provide advice on conditions for Council funded/endorsed events and event applications/permits Progressive implementation in line with update/renewal of event and festival permits
Community Centres & Library Services (Arts, Community Learning and Libraries)	Support implementation across Council libraries, Community and Youth Centres, Arts Facilities and leased venues.

Stakeholder	Roles and responsibilities
Early Years, Youth Services and Maternal Child Health (Community Services)	Support implementation across Maternal Child Health and ensure lease agreements for Council owned buildings are updated to include conditions of Policy.
Human Resources (People and Capability)	Support staff training and induction regarding single-use plastic Policy and requirements.
Facilities Management (Operations & Maintenance)	Support implementation across Civic events and Council buildings to ensure Council organised events and buildings meet Policy requirements.
Property Management (Governance & Commercial Services)	Ensure new and updated lease agreements include conditions of Policy.
Sports/Recreation Services/Maribyrnong Aquatic Centre (Leisure, Health and Wellbeing)	Support stakeholder engagement with sporting clubs prior to implementation, then support implementation of Policy. Update permit requirements for park bookings and wedding ceremony permits in line with Policy.  Progressive implementation in line with seasonal and annual ground allocations, renewals to tenancy, lease and contract agreements.
Risk Management & Strategic Procurement (Governance & Commercial Services)	Ensure Council procurement and contracts are aligned with Policy regarding purchase of single-use plastic.
Customer Engagement	Support implementation at any community engagement or consultation activity.
Civic Facilities	Responsible for implementation at the Town Hall and for both Council and community events hosted there.
All other Council Units	Support upholding the policy.

## Related Legislation

### Council

The policy aligns with the following Council Policies and Strategies:

- Climate Emergency Strategy 2020: Priority 5
  - By 2025 Maribyrnong will be a community that is conscious about its consumption habits and actively avoids and reduces consumption and waste.
  - Ensure Council's purchasing processes, contracts and tenders prioritise waste avoidance, recycled content and recyclability and reuse
- Towards Zero Waste Strategy: Action Area 8.2.2
  - Adopt a policy to ban the use of single-use plastic items such as disposable shopping bags, plastic straws and cutlery, balloons,

disposable coffee cups/pods within Council operations, facilities, functions and events.

- Conduct educational programs on preventing the use of single-use plastic across the wider municipality/community.
- Waste Management Policy: Objective 7
  - Prioritise waste avoidance by reducing the consumption of goods.

### **Victorian Government**

The policy aligns with the following State legislation:

- Victorian Plastic Bag Ban (2019)
- Victorian Single-use Plastics Ban (Due to commence February 2023)

## Related Documents

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To be developed: *Single-use Plastic Policy Event Guidelines*

To be developed: *Single-use Plastic Policy Action Plans*

## Review of Policy

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<b>Length of relevance:</b>	Three years
<b>Review:</b>	2024
<b>Responsible Department:</b>	Assets & Capital