
POLICY TITLE: Single Use Plastics

FOLDER NUMBER:

POLICY OWNER / DIVISION: Community and Environment

POLICY OWNER / BRANCH: Waste Branch

FUNCTION: Waste Management and Avoidance

RELEVANT LEGISLATION: LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 1993
WASTE AVOIDANCE AND RESOURCE RECOVERY ACT, 2001
PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT OPERATIONS ACT, 1997

POLICY ADOPTION/AMENDMENT DATE: **REPORT NUMBER:** GM08042020_4

REVIEW YEAR: **2023**

RELATED POLICIES: Sustainable Procurement Determination 2013

POLICY PURPOSE / OBJECTIVES:

To progressively transition towards the elimination of single-use plastics in council operations and events by 2022.

IMPORTANT NOTE: This Policy and the accompanying Waste Management Guidelines were developed pre-COVID-19. During COVID-19, NSW Public Health Orders, COVID Safety Management Plans and safe work practices related to COVID-19 requirements take precedence.

POLICY PRINCIPLES:

The principles that guide this policy are based on significant evidence which indicates that:

1. Single-use plastics comprise a large component of litter in NSW¹
2. Plastic pollution persists in the environment and has cumulative detrimental impacts on human and environmental health²
3. The production of plastics relies on the use of non-renewable resources that adversely impact on climate change and do not align with the principles of Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD)³
4. Plastics, including single-use plastics, do not biodegrade and can break into smaller micro-plastics that have long-term environmental, social and economic impacts. These place an inequitable burden on future generations⁴

¹ 2015-16 National Litter Index Results for NSW

² Centre for International Environmental Law, *Plastic and Health – the Hidden Costs of a Plastic Planet*, 2019

³ Ibid

⁴ UNEP 2018. SINGLE USE PLASTICS: A Roadmap for Sustainability

5. The waste hierarchy should govern the use and disposal of resources: avoid, reduce, reuse, recycle and then dispose.

CONTEXT

In recent years numerous local government organisations around Australia have sought to minimise and prohibit the prevalence of single-use plastics in council operations and events.

Hornsby Shire Council Resolved to develop a draft Single Use Plastic Policy on 24 July 2019 (NOM8/19 – F2018/00082).

This policy will be guided, in part, by the findings of local research conducted by Sydney University during 2019.

SCOPE AND APPLICATION

This policy applies to Council operational activities, council employees and contractors' activities within, and impacting on, the Hornsby Shire local government area. Further detail on the size and types of events that fall within the jurisdiction of this policy can be found in the new Waste Management Guidelines for Events Organisers (Attachment A).

A list of alternative suppliers and products will be provided to all event organisers (Attachment A – Appendix A).

Milestone timings for the transition of council events and operations to phase out single-use plastics are detailed in Table 1 below.

POLICY STATEMENT:

This policy recognises that many plastics have become an integral component of modern global packaging and food safety systems. Therefore, a strategic, planned and incremental approach is required to deliver a durable and structural transition towards alternatives.

Council will:

- Support relevant National Packaging Targets and national product labelling schemes
- Provide in-house education and engagement activities on single-use plastics
- Demonstrate leadership in the community to reduce the use of single-use plastics, particularly plastic straws, water bottles and plastic bags
- Phase out and, where possible, eliminate single use plastic items within council operations and at all events held on council owned or managed land. This will include plastic water bottles, plastic drinking straws, single-use plastic bags, coffee cups (with plastic lining), ready-to-eat plastic serving containers / utensils and balloons
- Provide alternative water sources at events particularly where water in single-use plastic bottles is limited or not available
- Investigate opportunities to provide permanent water refill stations in appropriate high-use public spaces and the use of temporary mobile water refill stations at high-use public events
- Implement responsible procurement practices to influence supply chains and support market development of recycled content products
- Support local business and retail industry sectors to provide products and services that do not rely on single-use plastics

- Build awareness within the community on alternatives to single use plastics
- Ensure outcomes align with Council policies, such as the Sustainable Procurement Determination, and that guidelines include requirements directly leading towards the elimination of single-use plastic in Hornsby Shire LGA.

The intent of the policy will also be delivered through the following mechanisms:

- Facilitating an Internal Council Officer Reference Group to support the ongoing operational transition away from single-use plastics
- Developing Waste Management Guidelines and a preferred supplier list for events
- Online promotion of alternatives to single-use plastics to assist the business and retail community to provide products and services that do not rely on single use plastics
- Providing advice and support to organisations wishing to run waste wise community events
- Supporting community access to relevant information and resources
- Developing and promoting case studies of sustainable community events

DEFINITIONS:

Single-use Plastics, often also referred to as disposable plastics, are commonly used for plastic packaging and include items intended to be used only once before they are discarded. Single-use plastics include but are not limited to petroleum-based disposable plastic and polystyrene items such as coffee cups (with plastic lining) straws, balloons, bags, sachets, cutlery and food and drink packaging.

EXCLUSIONS:

Exclusions will apply to:

- Plastic items already being recycled within a circular economy model (standard recyclables).
- All beverage containers dispensed by vending machines

EXEMPTIONS:

Exemptions may apply when:

- Specific plastic products are required to meet health and safety requirements
- There is no practical alternative product or distribution method available
- Those with a physical disability require a particular product to engage in day-to-day activities
- Patrons and facility users who bring pre-purchased and packaged food and beverage consumables
- Subject to current relevant legislation where single-use plastics are required in some circumstances, such as the NSW Gaming and Liquor Administration Act 2007

TABLE 1: MILESTONE TIMINGS FOR THE TRANSITION OF COUNCIL EVENTS AND OPERATIONS

Year	Council operation	Council Event	Commercial Events	Approval Processes
2020/21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council meetings • Councillor briefings • Councillor and staff training • Council run tours and workshops • Meetings with internal and external stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mayor's Christmas Party • Citizenship Ceremonies • Australia Day • Sunset Sessions • Westside Vibe • Children's Voices for Reconciliation • Screen on the Green 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly Thursday Organic Food Markets • Saturday Markets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nominated event approvals • Commercial terms and conditions
2021/22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Council facilities* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All council run and supported events • All relevant community run events on council land** 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modify existing hirer arrangements • Considered in all approvals processes

*Does not include vending machines

**As stipulated in the Waste Management Guidelines for Events. Will not be enforced for community run events with less than 300 people.