

## CP 36 Plastic Wise Policy

<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	Manager Economic Development and Sustainability
<b>Document type:</b>	Council Policy
<b>Reference:</b>	CP36
<b>Approved by the Council:</b>	19 May 2021
<b>Date of next review:</b>	March 2023

### Policy Objective

The objective of this policy is to define Council's commitment to eliminate the use of single use plastics in Council operations and at Council managed events.

### Policy Background

The negative environmental, social and economic impacts of single use plastics are a growing concern to the community. In 2014, Victoria produced around 570,000 tonnes of plastic waste, of which only 28 per cent was recycled<sup>1</sup>. Therefore, most plastic goes into landfill or is not disposed of properly, ending up polluting the environment and causing harm to wildlife through entanglement or ingestion.

A significant and disproportionate amount of resources, including water, is used in the production of plastics, particularly for items intended to be used once then discarded. These resources, as well as the transport of the items throughout their lifecycles and disposal, also generates greenhouse gas emissions contributing to climate change.

In addition, there are potential health impacts from ingesting micro-plastics and chemical coatings on single use plastic products. Over time, plastic breaks down into smaller and smaller particles, known as micro-plastics. Micro-plastics accumulate and disperse other pollutants, such as heavy metals. These pollutants can be ingested by small organisms along with the micro-plastic particle, and then move up the food chain, causing even further damage.

Council is committed to minimising, and wherever possible eliminating, single use plastic items in Council operations and at Council managed events.

## Scope

The policy applies to all Council staff, contractors, volunteers or other Council representatives engaged in Council operations and the running of Council managed events.

Exemptions may be granted for plastic products that are required to meet COVIDSafe, medical and safety requirements, or where there is no other practical alternative product or distribution method available.

The policy will influence sustainable procurement practices and supply chains and improve community awareness on single-use plastics.

Events and activities occurring on council land, but not managed by council staff, are not included in the mandatory scope of this policy but will be encouraged and supported by council to voluntarily comply.

## Definitions

<b>Council</b>	Means the local government authority (i.e. Benalla Rural City Council).
<b>Council managed land</b>	Land owned by the State (i.e. Crown Land) or a third party that the council manages day to day.
<b>Council officers</b>	Includes Councillors, all employees, volunteers and contractors.
<b>Council operations</b>	Anywhere that council officers are present at a location or providing a service or function to the community.
<b>Council events</b>	Any small or large scale event organised by Council staff including, but not limited to, meetings, festivals, functions, launches, workshops, markets, information sessions and conferences.
<b>Single-use plastic items</b>	Any disposable plastic products used only once or for a short period of time including, but not limited to, plastic bags, bottled water, cups (including plastic lined paper cups), bowls, plates, cutlery, take-away food containers, straws, balloons, cling wrap.

## Policy

Council is committed to adopting more sustainable practices, including the reduction of waste and litter. Council will take a leadership role in the reduction of single use plastics by wherever possible, eliminating single use plastics in council's operations and at Council managed events whilst also encouraging and supporting the community to take similar action.

To meet the objectives of this policy, Council commits to:

- Progressively reducing, and wherever possible eliminating, single use plastic items including bags, water bottles, cutlery, plates, bowls, cups and lids, take away food containers, food wrapping, packaging, straws and balloons within council operations and at all Council-managed events.
- Providing alternatives to bottled water at all Council managed events and sites and continuing to install water fountains in key locations.
- Not using any balloons and single use plastic decorations (such as bunting).
- Re-using event materials where possible (including event signage and promotional banners and flags). Event are to be sourced with consideration of their future re-use.
- Implementing sustainable procurement practices and influence supply chains to avoid soft plastic packaging wherever possible.
- Implementing a sound stewardship model to ensure appropriate disposal of products at events and council facilities.
- Comply with all national and state legislations in relation to waste avoidance, generation, recycling and disposal.
- Encouraging and supporting events and activities within the community to voluntarily comply with this Policy.
- Building awareness within the community, including businesses, on single-use plastics.

Exemptions may be applied for plastic products that are required to meet COVIDSafe, medical and safety requirements, or where there is no other practical alternative product or distribution method available. All exemptions require prior written approval of the Chief Executive Officer.

A 12 month transition period will be applied to the Policy to enable an implementation plan to be developed and appropriate time for departments to commence identified actions. This is particularly important for the planning of larger events.

## **Related documents and legislation**

- Benalla Rural City Council Plan 2017-2021
- Benalla Rural City Waste Management and Minimisation Strategy 2014-2019
- Benalla Rural City Environment Strategy 2016-2020
- Environment Protection Act 1970
- Statewide Waste Resource Recovery Infrastructure Plan
- National Packaging Targets 2020

## **References**

1. Sustainability Victoria Waste projection portal <http://www.sustainability.vic.gov.au/services-and-advice/business/investment-facilitation-service/waste-data-portal/waste-projection-model>