

Plastic Free Policy

To be read in conjunction with the
Plastic Free Policy Action Plan

VERSION 1.0



1 Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to operationalise Council’s commitment to reducing and eventually eliminating single-use plastics used:

- in Council operations and services
- at Council events
- at events held on Council land and in Council-managed sites.

This Policy is to be read in conjunction with the *Plastic Free Policy Action Plan*.

2 Scope

This Policy applies to all Council operations and services (including staff, contractors or other representatives) and to individuals, groups, businesses or organisations planning, organising, running, and approving events held on Council land and at Council-managed venues that require approval. For the purposes of this Policy, ‘approval’ refers to event permits, hire agreements, leases and tenancy agreements and bookings.

Community use of Council land and Council-managed venues where approval is not required (e.g. use of parks, attending a library, etc.) is not included in the mandatory scope of this Policy. However, voluntary compliance is encouraged in these cases.

Events include (but are not limited to) all civic, commercial or community events (small or large scale), official functions, community forums, information sessions, workshops, meetings, training events, parties, markets and organised/formal sport or recreational events.

The Policy covers single-use plastic items used in purchasing, packaging, sales, distribution and transportation or clean-up practices associated with Council operations, services and events.

Single-use plastics covered in this Policy have been grouped into two categories (see table below). Category 1 items align with Victorian government bans. Additional items have been included in Category 2, to enable maximum impact.

CATEGORY 1	CATEGORY 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Plastic bags• Plastic plates• Polystyrene food containers and cups• Plastic cutlery• Plastic straws• Drink stirrers• Balloons• Non-compostable bioplastics	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Plastic bowls and cups• Non-recyclable single-use plastic containers• Plastic wrap• Single-use water bottles• Disposable coffee cups and lids• Single-serving condiment sachets and sweets• Bubble-wrap

3 Objectives

The objectives of the Plastic Free Policy are to:

- Avoid waste in the first place, particularly use of single-use plastic items
- Avoid and reduce waste to landfill
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions associated with producing, transporting, recycling and disposing single-use plastics

- Reduce single-use plastic pollution in open space areas, streets and waterways
- Create opportunities for a circular economy
- Support the Stonnington community to prepare for the Victorian single-use plastics ban.

4 Definitions

Term	Definition
Civic event	An event or festival organised by Council staff for the community (includes official functions, community forums, workshops, markets).
Community/commercial event	Any planned activity that occurs in a certain place, during a certain time, which involves a small or large gathering of people and has some level of impact on the immediate surroundings; and that requires Council approval, including but not limited to an event permit, hire agreement, lease, contract or tenancy agreement.
Council venue	Buildings, land, roads or any other locations owned or managed by Council.
Plastic	Compostable, biodegradable, degradable and non-biodegradable plastic made from petrochemical compounds and organic and renewable materials (e.g. rice, starch, corn, etc).
Single-use items	Any item designed to be used once and then discarded. This may include plastic and non-plastic items (eg. paper plates, disposable cutlery etc).
Single-use plastic	Single-use plastic refers to single-use items that are either made from plastic or contain single-use plastic (such as disposable paper cups with plastic lining, etc). See items referred to in Section 2: Scope .

5 Policy Principles

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.

Council staff and organisations or individuals planning, organising, running and/or approving Council events or events held on Council land and in Council-managed sites must ensure the following event requirements are met:

- Single-use plastic bags are not to be used, sold or distributed for transportation or promotional purposes.
- Single-use plastic plates, bowls, cups, straws, cutlery and take away food containers are not to be used, sold or distributed.

- Bottled water is not to be provided, sold or distributed by Council. Alternative, free access to water must be provided.
- Single-use disposable cups and lids are not to be used, sold or distributed by Council.
- All avoidable plastic packaging, including soft plastic wrap, plastic bags or similar must not be used in the purchase, sale, distribution and transport of food or goods.
- Balloons and glow sticks are not to be used, sold or distributed.
- Event materials are to be reused where possible (including event signage and promotional banners and flags).

Event organisers must play a key role in educating and guiding their event staff and audience on single-use plastic free practices. This includes considering whether single-use plastic items are needed in the first instance, providing useful information, and promoting reusable alternatives.

Sporting clubs, food and other vendors at festivals and others participating in Council events on/in Council land/buildings are permitted to provide, sell or distribute single-use bottled water and disposable cups. However, they must promote and consider using and supplying/selling reusable options (eg: providing jugs and reusable glasses for patrons' water use, promoting/selling/supplying refillable drinking bottles or reusable cups etc); providing a discount to those choosing reusable cups (eg bringing their own); and displaying promotional materials on reusable options.

When substituting single-use plastic items, waste hierarchy principles must be applied as follows:

- Assess whether the item is necessary and avoid purchasing it altogether if possible.
- If the item is necessary, choose a reusable alternative if possible.
- If there are no reusable alternatives available, a recyclable alternative may be chosen.
- If there are no recyclable alternatives, a recoverable alternative may be appropriate.

Council Officers will support and assist organisations or individuals organising an event to comply with this policy, however, if there is poor adherence to this policy, Officers may recommend that these events not be supported or approved by Council in the future.

Events on Council managed land will need to commit to comply with the policy before any Council sponsorship for that event is approved.

Timeframe for compliance

While it is expected that progress will be incremental, full compliance for Category 1 single-use plastics is to be achieved by February 2023 to align with the Victorian Government's single-use plastics ban. Compliance with Category 2 items will be achieved as per the table below:

STAGE	COUNCIL AREA
1: December 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Category 1 items no longer used in Council's internal operations, meetings and events. • Single-use plastic bags must not be used, sold or distributed for transportation or promotional purposes.

	<i>Covers: Council-managed libraries and childcare centres.</i>
2: February 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Category 1 items no longer used at community festivals and events held at Council venues or on Council land. <p><i>Covers: Sporting and recreational facilities (including pools).</i></p>
3: December 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Category 2 items no longer used in Council's internal operations, meetings and events. • Bottled water must not be provided, sold or distributed - alternative, free access to water must be provided. • Event materials are to be reusable wherever possible (including event signage and promotional banners and flags). • All avoidable plastic packaging, including bags, plastic wrap, and bubble wrap or similar must not be used in the purchase, sale, distribution and transport of food or goods. <p><i>Covers: Council-managed libraries and childcare centres.</i></p>
4: February 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Category 2 items no longer used in community festivals and events held at Council venues or on Council land. • 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. <p><i>Covers: Sporting and recreational facilities (including pools).</i></p>

Exemptions

This Policy exempts single-use plastic items where:

- They are necessary to meet health, safety and accessibility requirements.
- There is no other practical alternative product or distribution method available.
- Adjustments to exclude their use cannot be made to existing lease agreements, permit conditions or contracts (however, revisions or renewals of these will be need to align with this Policy).
- Items are captured via targeted government waste collection initiatives such as the Container Deposit Scheme (except single-use plastic water bottles).

Blanket exemptions (no approval required)

- Use of single-use plastic items needed to meet Food Safety or Occupational Health and Safety requirements.
- Use of straws or other single-use plastic items where required for accessibility.
- Use of single-use plastics in heatwave or other emergency events.

Conditional exemptions (approval required)

These will be assessed and approved on a case-by-case basis by the Manager Open Space and Environment according to the responsibilities set out in **Section 6: Responsibilities**.

- *Example: certified compostable packaging used at a large event/festival with a closed loop composting service.*

6 Responsibilities

Party/parties	Roles and responsibilities	Timelines
Council	Champion the commitment through leadership, modelling practice and decision-making.	Ongoing
Sustainable Environment team	Review and update the policy. Monitor and report on the effectiveness of the policy.	Every three (3) years
Chief Executive Officer	Support the City of Stonnington to meet the objectives of this <i>Policy</i> . Refer exceptional exemption-related matters not covered in the existing Policy to Council for decision where appropriate.	Ongoing
Director Environment and Infrastructure	Support the City of Stonnington to meet the objectives of this Policy. Approve changes to this Policy.	Ongoing
Manager Open Space and Environment	Oversee the successful application of this Policy. Approve exemptions as covered in the existing Policy.	Ongoing
All staff, contractors and stakeholders	Work collaboratively to give effect to this policy.	Ongoing

7 Human Rights Charter

This policy has been reviewed against and complies with Section 13 of the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*, as this Policy aligns with and provides for the protection of an individual's right not to have their privacy unlawfully or arbitrarily interfered with. To ensure this is the case, a blanket exemption (no disclosure or approval required) to

this policy is available to any individuals or groups where required for accessibility. It is also in line with Section 18, which recognises a person’s right to participate in the conduct of public affairs.

8 Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

Council commits to monitoring processes, information sharing and decision making to understand the overall level of success in the Policy’s implementation.

Council will conduct an annual audit to monitor the performance of the policy. Monitoring and evaluation will involve feedback and improvement surveys completed by Council staff and relevant community groups.

Regular monitoring of bins within Council buildings and events will also provide an insight into whether or not single-use plastics are being used within Council grounds.

A periodic review of this policy will be undertaken to ensure any changes required to strengthen or update the policy are made.

9 Related Policies and Legislation

City of Stonnington

[Council Plan 2021-2025](#)

[Stonnington Community Vision 2040](#)

[Sustainable Environment Strategy 2018-2023](#)

[Towards Zero Carbon 2030: Our Climate Emergency Action Plan 2021-2024](#)

[Procurement Policy 2021](#)

Victorian Government

The policy aligns with the following state government legislation:

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

Document History

Version	Date	Author	QA Review	Comments
1.0	16/3/2022	Sustainable Environment Unit	Manager Open Space and Environment	Collaborative drafting process with key internal stakeholders

Document Authorisation

Plastic Free Policy	
Owner (By Directorate)	Environment and Infrastructure
Date of Initial Adoption by Council	