

Reducing single-use plastics

Single-use plastic is used on average for less than 12 minutes and then discarded. It makes up a third of the litter in our streets and waterways and has a devastating long term impact environmental impact.

Worldwide, leading sporting codes and clubs are taking action to reduce their environmental impact. Locally, Darebin, Monash, and Indigo Shire Councils are reducing single-use plastics at their local sports clubs. In NSW, GWS Giants Football Club have introduced reusable cups at their stadium. Across England, the Premier League pledged to reduce single-use plastics from all their soccer clubs.

Merri-bek City Council has committed to reducing single-use plastics across Council events, events on Council land, and within our facilities and services as part of our [Plastic Wise Policy](#).

What does this mean for clubs in Merri-bek?

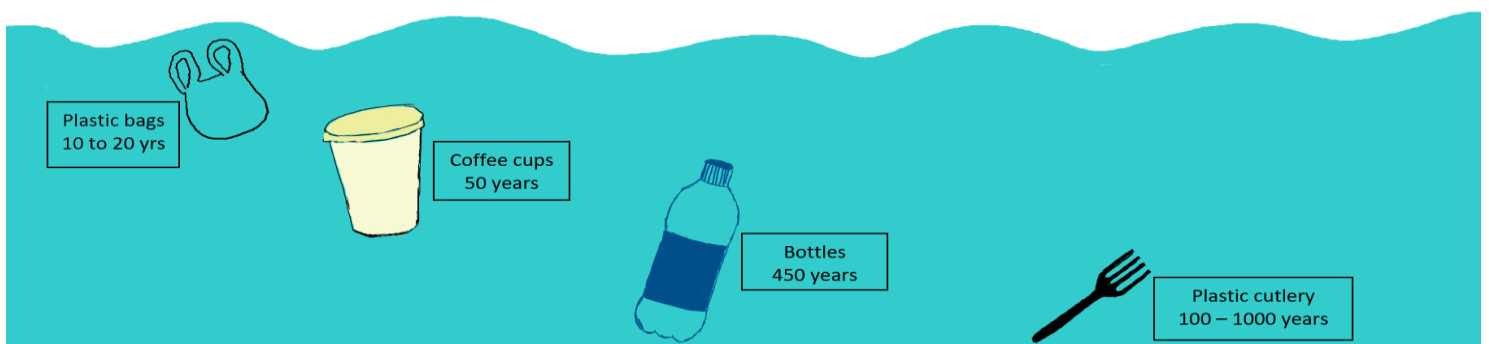
Sports clubs within Merri-bek started transitioning Policy in 2021. Initially clubs were asked to make a pledge to become *Proudly Plastic Wise*, reducing and eliminating the items below.

The [Victorian Government's ban](#) on 7 single-use plastic items in February 2023, has made it easier for clubs, with many items no longer available. For remaining items, Council continued to assist clubs transitioning to the Policy. To reduce reliance on single-use bottled water, Council installed 29 drinking fountains at clubs throughout Merri-bek.

What items are covered by the Policy?

- Single-use plastic plates*, bowls and cutlery* and polystyrene cups*
- Plastic straws*
- Plastic and polystyrene take-away containers
- Plastic lined paper cups, including compostable plastic
- Single-use plastic bottled drinks, where an alternative exists (e.g.: cans)
- Single-use bottled water
- Balloons, and plastic bags

** Note, asterisked items were banned in 2023. They can no longer be used, if still in circulation.*



PLASTIC WISE MERRI-BEK: SPORTS CLUBS



How can we start implementing the Policy?

Start with these simple changes as your clubs becomes Proudly Plastic Wise

- Sell branded reusable drink bottles or provide water jugs with reusable cups at the canteen or bar,
- Transition plastic bottled soft drinks over to alternatives, such as cans.
- Then, start working with Council on any complex changes your club might find more challenging.

What alternatives can we use?

The list below details alternatives to single-use plastic, for each item.

Preferred alternatives to single-use plastic			
Product	Preferred option	Use if reuse is not yet possible	Tips for success
Plates and bowls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customers BYO plate/bowl/container 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serviette, square of cardboard etc • Paper bowls/plates or cardboard (recyclable - when scraped clean) • Bamboo or Areca palm plates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If using disposable items, avoid products with plastic lining, including compostable and biodegradable lining, as this can't be recycled.
Cutlery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider serving foods that don't need cutlery • Customers BYO cutlery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bamboo cutlery • Wooden cutlery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask customers if they need cutlery rather than providing automatically
Plastic take-away containers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customers BYO reusable container 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cardboard take-away box • Sugarcane fibre container 	
Plastic cups and coffee cups (including paper, compostable and biodegradable)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customers BYO reusable cups. • Provide reusable cups with a refundable deposit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no 'next best' disposable option currently available. A policy exemption can be granted for clubs needing to use disposable coffee cups. Council will work with your club to find a solution where possible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only provide lids when requested • If disposable cups cannot be avoided, replacing plastic cups with paper cups can reduce the amount of plastic in the environment.
Drinks in plastic bottles (soft drinks/juice etc)	Drinks in <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aluminium cans (recyclable) • Glass (recyclable) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sell drinks in aluminium cans or glass bottles (if permitted)
Bottled water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drinking water available on site (e.g. jugs at the canteen/bar, bench top water dispensers, water fountains) • Customers BYO reusable bottles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no next best option. Bottled water can be avoided with adequate access to free drinking water. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct people to water jugs, dispensers or drinking fountains • Communicate early to players/spectators to bring a reusable bottle to the event.
Plastic bags	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customers BYO bags 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% recycled paper bags • FSC certified paper bags 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider adding a small charge to cover any cost increase if customers choose to take a paper bag • There is a State Government Ban on thin single-use shopping bags
Balloons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replace with paper lanterns, bunting or colourful streamers 		