



PLASTIC WISE GUIDE 2021

For markets and events
IN SURF COAST SHIRE

Edition 2 October 2021

This guide will change over time. For the most recent edition visit www.surfcoast.vic.gov.au/plasticwise

CONTENTS

1. Plastic Wise Surf Coast

Why be Plastic Wise?

What is a Plastic Wise event?

2. Know your plastics

What is plastic?

Managing plastic waste - where does it go?

3. Swap this for that

Alternatives for plastic products often used at events and markets.

4. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

From “what is the difference between biodegradable and compostable products?” to “can my business serve food in containers provided by customers?”

5. Success stories

Learn from event organisers who have taken proactive steps to reduce single use plastic in the Surf Coast.

6. References and further information

Litter in our oceans, primarily plastic items, impacts over 600 species of animals worldwide, including 77 Australian species such as fish, turtles, sea birds, whales, dolphins, seals and sea lions.

(Tangaroa Blue, 2018)

In 2019 the Victorian Government introduced a ban on lightweight plastic shopping bags. From February 2023, the sale and supply of single use plastic straws, cutlery, plates, drink stirrers and expanded polystyrene food and drink containers will also be banned.

Why be Plastic Wise?

Council's [Plastic Wise Policy for Events and Markets \(www.surfcoast.vic.gov.au/plasticwise\)](http://www.surfcoast.vic.gov.au/plasticwise) supports our purpose to help our community and environment to thrive. Introduced in 2016, the policy requires event and market organisers to eliminate single use plastics and encourage the use of reusable alternatives.

Single use plastic items including bags, packaging, bottled water, straws, cutlery and balloons are commonly found as litter. Being light weight and long lasting, these items can cause harm to local wildlife and impact both environmental and human health.

Your support and leadership as a Plastic Wise event or market organiser, stallholder, contractor, sponsor or volunteer is vital for reducing single use plastics and litter in our area.

With your help, we can provide a cleaner experience for residents and visitors, maintain healthy natural environments, and build our reputation for hosting a diverse calendar of sustainable events every year.



What is a Plastic Wise event?

A Plastic Wise event avoids plastic and disposable items typically used once for a few minutes before being thrown away. This creates pressure on our natural environment and causes unnecessary waste.

Some tips for holding Plastic Wise events and markets:




- Promote your event as a Plastic Wise event, including what's needed from attendees, stallholders, sponsors and contractors.
- Tell your stallholders, contractors and sponsors early about what products, packaging and giveaways are acceptable (prioritising reusable, recycled, compostable and recyclable items), and how their waste needs to be managed. Include a clause in their registration/agreement requesting compliance with the Plastic Wise Policy and detailing the consequences of non-compliance.
- Give stallholders information to help them with questions from customers about why and how they're avoiding single use plastics. This guide can help.
- Encourage attendees/participants to bring reusable items, e.g. for food and drink, carry bags.
- Set up recycling and waste stations that are easy to see, use and manage.
- Consider collecting food scraps and compostable packaging for organic waste recycling – i.e. turn it into compost!
- Display signs at all stalls showing which packaging items go in which bins.
- Make sure the site is left clear of all litter, and that waste is removed from the site as agreed.



What are single use plastics?

Generally, single use plastics are used for packaging or consuming food and drink. They include bottled water, straws, disposable cups, plates and cutlery, condiment sachets and containers, food and lolly wrappers, lollypop sticks and cling wrap. Balloons and disposable coffee cups are also considered single use items.

We're lucky to have a number of local plastic wise community groups that are providing education about alternatives and helping to manage event waste. Connect with them on Facebook:

-  [Plastic Wise Torquay](#)
-  [Plastic Wise Winchelsea](#)
-  [Boomerang Bags](#)

Find more resources to support your event at [Surf Coast Events](#).

Another handy reference is the [Barwon South West Zero Waste Event Guide](#).

Know your plastics

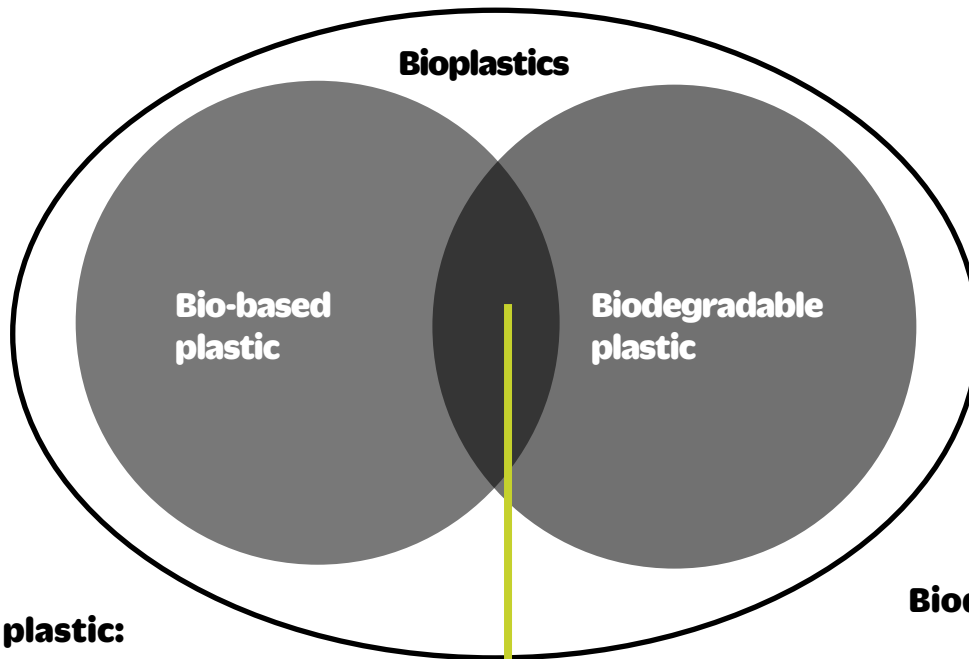
What is plastic?

The term **plastic** describes a synthetic material made from a wide range of organic polymers that can be moulded into shape while soft, and then set into a rigid or slightly elastic form (Oxford Dictionaries, 2018).

Plastic products are traditionally made from fossil fuels, such as crude oil, through a resource intensive process. Some plastics are now made from renewable materials, but these present their own challenges – outlined in the diagram below.

Bioplastics

Bioplastic is a term that can cause confusion, as it can describe two types of plastic.



Bio-based plastic:

Plastic made from natural bio-polymers - organic and renewable materials such as rice, starch, sugar cane, wheat or corn.

Some bio-based products are designed to behave like traditional plastics and do not biodegrade, having the potential to cause the same environmental harm as traditional plastics (State of Washington Department of Ecology, 2014).

Biodegradable plastic:

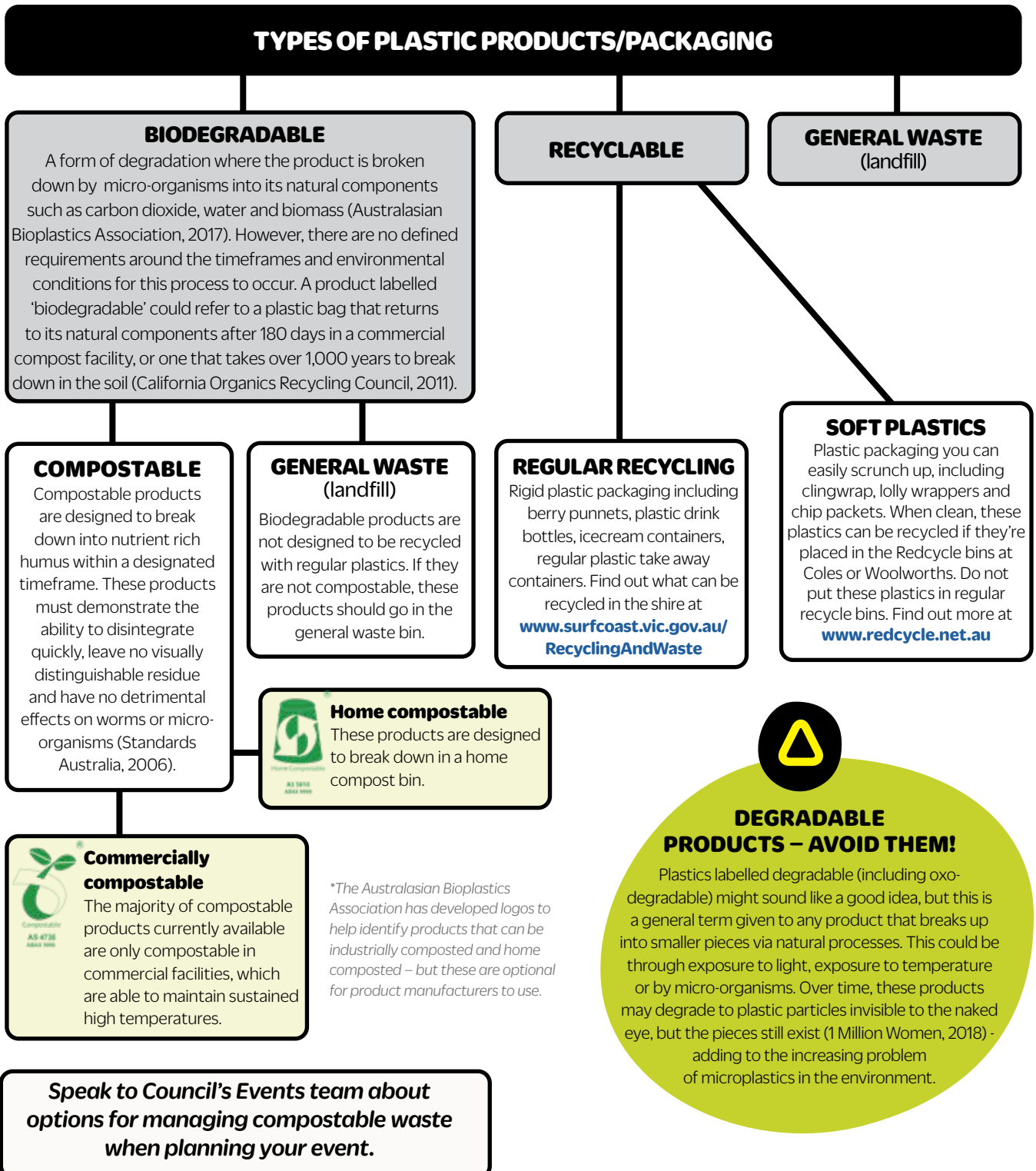
Plastic that has the potential to break down into its natural components over a period of time.

These products can be made from natural and/or fossil fuel-based materials (Halley and Coote, 2015).

Only some plastic products are made from plant-based resources AND biodegrade.

Managing plastic waste – where does it go?

With a diversity of plastic products available, knowing what to do with them at the end of their use can be difficult. Regardless of how we manage them, plastics are very long lasting, so the best option is to avoid single use plastics altogether!



Swap this for that

With all of the events held in Surf Coast Shire throughout the year, making the switch away from single use plastics has a big impact. Refer to the following table for alternatives to plastic products often used at events and markets.

Think about items that you and your customers/participants can:

AVOID

Avoid things that will become waste

REDUCE

Reduce the amount of waste you generate

REUSE

Reuse items again

RECYCLE

Recycle to recover energy and materials

A note about biodegradable packaging

Due to the confusion and ambiguity associated with packaging labelled 'biodegradable' (as outlined pp 4-5), these products are avoided in the following table of suggested alternatives.



Aim for these products. You can encourage people to bring their own reusable items to your market or event, and stallholders should play a role by allowing customers to use them.

Aim for these alternative products if it is not possible to avoid single use products.

| Product | Best option | Next best option | Tips for success |
|---|--|---|--|
| Drinks in plastic bottles | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drinking water available on site e.g. taps, portable water station, water barrels Customers BYO bottles Participants/competitors BYO hydration pack | Drinks in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aluminium cans (recyclable) Glass (recyclable) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clearly direct people to taps and/or set up a bulk water supply, e.g. Barwon Water Hydration Station or Council's MEET PAT drinking/refill stations (details over page) If single serve water cannot be avoided, look for canned water. Consider collaborating with other events/stalls for a better wholesale price. |
| Plastic cups | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customers/participants BYO bottles or hydration packs Customers BYO bottles Provide reusable cups at a cost, using a deposit scheme or using a wash up station[^] | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paper cups with wax instead of plastic lining (still need to be put into general waste due to the waterproof lining) Certified compostable cups | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If disposable cups cannot be avoided, replacing plastic cups with paper cups reduces the amount of plastic that has the potential to impact the environment. |
| Cups for hot drinks (e.g. paper, polystyrene) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customers BYO reusable cups Stallholders provide reusable mugs with an appropriate wash up station[^] | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paper cups with wax instead of plastic lining (still need to be put into general waste due to the waterproof lining) Certified compostable cups | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No polystyrene cups Look for paper cups that only have a coating on the inside, not the outside as well Only provide lids when requested |
| Plates and bowls | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customers BYO plate/bowl/container Stallholders provide reusable options with an appropriate wash up station[^] | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Serviette, square of cardboard, cabbage leaf or other low impact option (compostable*) Paper bowls/plates or cardboard (recyclable - when scraped clean, or compostable*) Areca Palm plates (compostable*) Bamboo (compostable*) Other certified compostable packaging* | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If using disposables, look to avoid products with plastic linings |
| Cutlery and stirring sticks | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider serving foods that don't need cutlery Customers BYO cutlery Provide silverware with an appropriate wash up station[^] | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bamboo cutlery (compostable*) Wooden cutlery (compostable*) Other certified compostable cutlery* | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask customers if they need cutlery rather than providing it automatically For stirring milk or sugar into hot drinks, provide metal teaspoons or wooden sticks |
| Straws | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No straw Customers BYO reusable straws Sell reusable straws | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paper straws (compostable*) Bamboo straws (compostable*) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only provide a straw when requested by a customer Quality paper straws last longer and dye doesn't run |
| Bags | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customers BYO bags Boomerang Bags Sell reusable bags (for the event or as stallholders) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 100% recycled paper bags (recyclable or compostable*) FSC certified paper bags (recyclable or compostable*) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider adding a small charge to cover any increase in cost if customers choose to take a paper bag |
| Single serve condiments (e.g. tomato and soy sauce, mayonnaise, pickled ginger) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stallholders serve condiments from large containers (e.g. large sauce bottles) | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that large serving containers like bottles or pump packs are cleaned and sanitised before refilling[^] |

* A commercial composting facility is generally required to process these products – so check with Council and/or your event waste contractor. If this is not available, these items should be disposed of in general waste as they cannot be recycled. With changing technology and accessibility, we expect to see composting facilities become more available in the Shire.

[^] See FAQs for information on cleaning and sanitising surfaces and utensils to comply with the Food Standards Code.

Some tips to help avoid, reduce and reuse

- Encourage stallholders to only hand out single use and disposable items when customers ask for them.
- Event organisers or stallholders could consider branding reusable cups, bottles or bags that customers can purchase, use and keep.
- Be informed of the health regulations if considering setting up a wash up station for reusable crockery, cups and cutlery (see FAQs).
- Ensure that sponsors and other support services are aware that disposable plastic promotional items are not permitted.

Did you know about these local alternatives?



Barwon Water Hydration Station

Drinking water trailers can be booked for large events from Barwon Water. Make sure to book early!



MEET PAT

Portable drinking/refill stations are available to borrow from Council's Events team.



Boomerang Bags

A borrowing system for cloth bags, operating in Surf Coast Shire



Joco Cups

A Surf Coast business making plastic free, reusable glass coffee cups

What goes up must come down

Balloons are an example of disposable items that can travel long distances from their original location (Tangaroa Blue, 2018). Whether they are helium or ordinary balloons, the balloon rubber/latex, plastic ribbon strings and plastic attachments often become choking and entanglement hazards to wildlife.

Balloons are listed for reduction or elimination in Council's Plastic Wise Events and Markets Policy, which also requires organisers and stallholders to utilise reusable promotional materials at events.

Keep that festive feel by switching to these alternatives:

- Paper lanterns
- Bunting
- Flags or banners
- Colourful streamers
- Garden spinners/pinwheels
- Kites
- Ribbon sticks
- Bubbles – remembering to avoid plastics!

More tips

- [Zoos Victoria - When Balloons Fly campaign](http://www.zoo.org.au)
- [Tangaroa Blue Foundation](http://www.tangaroablue.org)



Glitter is usually made from non-biodegradable materials such as plastic or foil. These tiny pieces can be classified as microplastics that are also best avoided where there is potential for them to enter the natural environment.

Frequently asked questions

Can food and drink be served in containers provided by customers?

Yes, they can. Food safety regulations in Victoria do not prohibit a food business from serving food or drink in a container provided by a customer. It's great to see businesses take customer provided containers. If they choose to take them, Council supports their right to accept items that are clean.

How do I wash reusable cups, cutlery and crockery to comply with the Food Standards Code?

Refer to Appendix 6, p173-181 of [A Guide to the Food Safety Standards](#), 3rd edition, November 2016 (www.foodstandards.gov.au). Council's Environmental Health Officers can also provide advice.

Can takeaway coffee cups be put into Council recycle bins?

Paper cup – No. Because they contain a waterproof (plastic or wax) lining they must be put in the general waste bin.

Plastic lid – No. Plastics with numbers 4-6 inside the triangle symbol are not accepted in recycling bins..

Compostable cup and lid – No. They need to be collected and sent to a commercial composting facility, otherwise they need to be disposed of in the general waste bin.

Which paper cups are best?

Compostable cups are best if they can be collected and composted appropriately. If this is not possible, look for recycled paper cups with a waterproof wax coating on the inside only. With our current system, these must go to landfill after use, but we expect to see composting facilities become more accessible in time.

Are paper and reusable bags actually better for the environment?

While the manufacturing of paper bags does have environmental impacts, they do not have the same long lasting impacts that plastics can have on our natural environment at the end of their use. Look for FSC certified or 100% recycled paper bags.

Reusable bags (e.g. cotton or polyethylene) also have an environmental impact associated with them, so it is important they are being reused. An Australian study found that the environmental benefits of reusable bags are realised after 52 uses (Verghese et al, 2009) – so get in the habit!

What's the difference between compostable and biodegradable products?

Compostable products are a subset of biodegradable products. They are designed to break down into nutrient rich humus (organic matter) within a short time frame, leave no visual residue and not impact the worms or micro-organisms. Not all biodegradable products meet these requirements (see page 5).

What's the difference between commercial and home compostable products?

A product labelled 'home compostable' is safe in your home compost. Most products currently available (sometimes just labelled compostable) are only suitable for commercial composting facilities that can sustain temperatures of over 55°C for extended periods of time (Biopak, 2017).

Can biodegradable packaging go in the home compost?

Only if it is labelled home compostable, otherwise it is unlikely that it will find the right conditions to breakdown and it may impact the worms and micro-organisms in your compost.

Can compostable packaging and food scraps go in the general waste/rubbish bin?

Where there is not an appropriate composting facility available, these should go into the waste bin. However, once in landfill they break down anaerobically and release more harmful greenhouse gases than non-organic matter does, so composting is the best option.

Success Stories

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a huge impact on in-person events in 2020-2021. We know there are many more success stories, so these will be updated in the next edition of the Guide.

Since the launch of Council's Plastic Wise Policy in 2016, market and event organisers have found innovative ways to transition away from single use plastics. The following organisers have shared their challenges and solutions when it comes to reducing plastics at events.



NIGHTJAR FESTIVAL

What: An independent artist festival attracting around 10,000 people each Thursday night in January in Torquay, and each Friday in February in Geelong.

The challenge: To avoid single use and other plastics, and have the majority of festival waste being composted.

The solution: A number of initiatives have been implemented: a ban on plastic bags; all food vendors use compostable packaging; no plastic bottled water; reusable cups for beer and wine; mug library for hot drinks; bin fairies provide guidance at bin stations; and food scraps and packaging are collected for composting.

Feedback and benefits: In 2018, 70-80% of festival waste was composted, with approx. 15% recycled and only 15% sent to landfill. Over 14,000 single use beer and wine cups have been avoided in the past two years by using reusable ones instead.

"I think it's great Nightjar has the reusable cup initiative. It really falls in with the community's overall values and vision for the place and I kept the cup so I use it at home now!"

Kate Baxter, Nightjar Festival patron.



ALL ABOARD

Who: A disability support service creating inclusive opportunities on the Surf Coast for people with a disability.

The challenge: Reduce single use bags at their local farmers market, and make a social and environmental contribution to the community.

The solution: Participants create reusable bags with material donated by local op-shops and sell them at their local farmers markets – a cheap and convenient alternative to single use bags.

Feedback and benefits: A positive response from all involved, including op-shops, market organisers and market patrons.

"People like the unique designs and it's a great initiative to breakdown any negative stigma regarding disability, by having our participants contributing and interacting with the wider community."

Kate Marshall, All Aboard Director and Founder.



COWRIE MARKET

What: A not-for-profit community market in Torquay, run once a month between September and April.

The challenge: To help customers and stallholders avoid using single use products by providing reusable or eco-friendly alternatives.

The solution: Plastic Wise Torquay and Boomerang Bags have supported Cowrie Market for a number of years. Last season, market organisers also engaged B-Alternative to hold a stall where customers can learn about the issues of plastic pollution, and buy or borrow reusable products such as bags and mugs.

Feedback and benefits: B-Alternative has received great compliments and support, including from event patrons and Councils.

"We aim to cultivate awareness of environmental issues and to provide low impact alternatives to individuals, businesses and groups. The fact that we get to work with the younger generations and see the positive change it has on them is really rewarding."

Jason Rahilly, CEO and Founder of B-Alternative.



RAPID ASCENT

Who: An adventure sports event management company that coordinates the Surf Coast Century run.

The challenge: To keep competitors hydrated with water without using single use plastic cups.

The solution: It's now compulsory for competitors to bring a reusable water container and to fill up at drink stations throughout the course and taps at the finish line.

Feedback and benefits: Competitors were informed of the change through clear communication. Using a water drum has proved to be more time-efficient for event volunteers, rather than filling up individual plastic cups.

"Being self-reliant adds to the experience. Whatever I take in, I take out. The only thing I'm leaving is a footprint. There's something cool about that."

Matt Taylor, Surf Coast Century competitor.

More and more, we're beginning to notice and understand the impacts of microplastics, and the toxins attached to them, on our natural ecosystems and on humans.

(Tangaroa Blue, 2018).



TOUR DE TRAILS

Who: Tour de Trails coordinate running and cycling adventures, including two Surf Coast events - Afterglow Twilight Half Marathon and Surf Coast Trail Marathon.

The challenge: Eliminate plastic cups supplied to competitors at drink stations and the finish line.

The solution: Participants are advised that they are responsible for bringing their own water-carrying device. Tour de Trails also offered a reusable collapsible cup to purchase at registration.

Feedback and benefits: Little to no negative feedback from participants. The move aligned with the trail running community's environmental ethics.

"With 600 to 700 runners drinking on average two times, and up to five, in the process of running the event course, there is the potential to save 1000 to 2000 disposable cups per event."

Peri Gray, Tour de Trails.



SURFING VICTORIA - RIP CURL PRO

Who: Surfing Victoria runs a number of surf competitions throughout the year, including the internationally recognised Rip Curl Pro at Bells Beach.

The challenge: To work with the food vendors and retailers to minimise the amount of single use plastic coming into the event and improve year on year.

The solution: In 2019, compost bins were introduced for food scraps and packaging, with new bin station signage. Vendors continue to work with their suppliers to find ways to switch away from plastic packaging and to buy more in bulk.

Feedback and benefits: One food vendor was able to alter their product packaging from plastic bags to cardboard boxes, which resulted in 1100 less plastic bags coming to the event in 2016.

"The big picture is that our vendors will now go to other events, outside of the Surf Coast Shire, as fully sustainable. They can also share the knowledge they have gained because of this process."

Pete Murphy, Surfing Victoria

Most plastics are made using non-renewable natural resources such as crude oil, gas and coal. That's a lot of resources going to waste when we use single use plastics!

Seeking more information?

Surf Coast Shire Council

P. 5261 0600

E. info@surfcoast.vic.gov.au

W. www.surfcoast.vic.gov.au

Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority

P. 1300 736 533

E. info@greatoceanroadauthority.vic.gov.au

W. www.greatoceanroadauthority.vic.gov.au

References

Bioplastics explained, Australasian Bioplastics Association 2017, viewed 5 January 2018

www.bioplastics.org.au/bioplastics/bioplastics-explained/

California Organics Recycling Council 2011, Compostable Plastics 101, California Organics Recycling Council, viewed 19 February 2018 <http://compostingcouncil.org/admin/wp-content/plugins/wp-pdfupload/pdf/8095/Compostable%20Plastics%20101%20Paper.pdf>

Halley, P and Coote, M 2015, The future of plastics, Australian Academy of Science, viewed 5 January 2018,

www.science.org.au/curious/earth-environment/future-plastics

Oxford Dictionaries 2018, Oxford Dictionaries, viewed 5 January 2018, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/plastic>

Plastic Bags: What's the difference between degradable, compostable and biodegradable?, 1 Million Women 2018, viewed 5 January 2018 www.1millionwomen.com.au/blog/plastic-bags-whats-difference-between-degradable-compostable-and-biodegradable/

Standards Australia 2006, Biodegradable plastics—Biodegradable plastics suitable for composting and other microbial treatment, AS 4736-2006, viewed 19 February 2018, retrieved from Australian Standards Online.

State of Washington Department of Ecology 2014, Focus on “biobased,” “biodegradable” and “compostable” plastics, State of Washington Department of Ecology, viewed 5 January 2018, www.bpiworld.org/Resources/Documents/Washington%20State%20Biobased%20Fact%20Sheet%20Aug%202014.pdf

Tangaroa Blue Foundation 2018, Tangaroa Blue, viewed 5 January 2018, www.tangaroablue.org/

Verghese, K, Lewis, H, Fitzpatrick, L, Hayes, GM, Hedditch, B (2009), Environmental impacts of shopping bags, The Sustainable Packaging Alliance Limited, viewed 19 February 2018. http://www.academia.edu/16527330/Evaluating_the_sustainability_impacts_of_packaging_the_plastic_carry_bag_dilemma

What's the difference between commercial and home composting? 2017, Biopak, viewed 19 February 2018, www.biopak.com.au/blog/biopak-news/what%E2%80%99s-the-difference-between-commercial-and-home-composting

Information contained in this resource was accurate at the time of publication, October 2021.

This guide will change over time to adapt to changes in our Plastic Wise Policy and our waste management systems. The Victorian Government's single use plastic ban will come into effect in February 2023, and the policy and guide will be updated at that time.

See the most current version at www.surfcoast.vic.gov.au/plasticwise

This Plastic Wise Guide has been developed by Surf Coast Shire Council with the assistance of Damien Cole (Deakin University placement student), local market and event organisers and local community groups including Plastic Wise Torquay, Plastic Wise Winchelsea, Lorne Goes Plastic Free and Boomerang Bags.

