

General Policy

SINGLE USE PLASTICS MANAGEMENT POLICY

- Intent** To reduce single use plastics in Council and encourage a transition towards better alternatives in the broader community.
- Scope** This policy applies to Council operations, its procurement activities, facilities, events, community services and education.

PROVISIONS

Definitions

For the purpose of this policy:

- 'Single use plastics' refers to fossil-fuel based plastic materials and items which are designed to be used once.
- 'Operations' refers to Council managed activities and infrastructure.
- 'Events' includes, but is not limited to, commercial, community and civic events, markets, meetings, promotional activities and training.
- 'Community' refers to residents, visitors and businesses in the Cairns region.

POLICY STATEMENT

Cairns Regional Council is committed to reducing single use plastics and demonstrating leadership on this issue. The Policy acknowledges the impacts that plastic pollution poses to the general and marine environments, and the waste and litter management costs borne by Council and the community. Council encourages the avoidance of unnecessary and problematic plastic waste and the transition to a circular economy for plastics across the value chain.

POLICY APPROACH

In order of preference and in line with Council's Procurement Policy, Council's operational and community-related actions will broadly:

- avoid unnecessary and problematic items;
- reduce consumption;
- pursue reusable practices;
- switch to Australian certified 'Home Compostable' (preferred) or 'Commercially Compostable' single use alternatives and recover organic refuse;
- develop recycling solutions for remnant single use plastics; and
- purchase items made from recycled plastic materials.

ASSESSMENT PRINCIPLES

Priority Items listed in the Policy Schedule will be phased out and removed. The list will be reviewed annually, and Priority Items assessed and selected based on:

- high waste generation;
- high litter frequency;
- severity of impacts on the environment when littered;
- the item cannot be recycled; and
- the item can be avoided, reduced or a suitable alternative sourced.

Guidance will be provided by the Planning, Growth and Sustainability Directorate and exemptions may be granted for health, emergency and community accessibility reasons.

Council Operations

Council will phase out and remove Priority Items across Council operations where possible and reduce other single use plastics where practicable, positively influencing supply chains and sharing learnings.

As outlined in the Policy Schedules, Council will allocate responsible officers across relevant teams to deliver on the policy's intent, maintain records and report annually on its progress.

Community

In encouraging the transition to better alternatives in the broader community, Council will:

- progress education and awareness campaigns for community members, stakeholders and businesses
- advocate for plastics reform at all levels of government and encourage industry-led initiatives
- support priority items to be phased out in Council sponsored events (in-kind or financial) and in the hire of Council-managed land and venues
- support community access to waste avoidance, plastics recycling, litter reduction tools and infrastructure.

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This policy is to remain in force until otherwise determined by Council.

Director responsible for Review:

Planning, Growth and Sustainability

ORIGINALLY ADOPTED: 28 April 2021

CURRENT ADOPTION: 25 October 2023

DUE FOR REVISION: 25 October 2027

REVOKED/SUPERSEDED:



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Mica Martin
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

POLICY SCHEDULES

Schedule 1 - Priority Items
Schedule 2 - Council Operations
Schedule 3 - Community

SCHEDULE 1: PRIORITY ITEMS

Priority Items refers to bags of any thickness, straws, cutlery, containers, plates, bowls, sachets (such as sauce packets), polystyrene (foam) packaging or trays, non-compostable cups or balloons.

Any additional single-use plastic items in line with state or federal bans.

Exemptions may be granted for health, emergency and community accessibility reasons, or where there is no other practical alternative or distribution method available.

SCHEDULE 2: COUNCIL OPERATIONS

Delivery and Reporting

- Managers will allocate oversight responsibilities to at least one officer in the relevant teams below to support implementation of this policy and report on progress to the Planning, Growth and Sustainability Directorate annually.
- Apply Assessment Principles to identify Priority Items and annually review.
- Progress will be reported to Council and the community annually.

Area responsible: Executive Manager, Growth & Sustainability

Purchasing

- Purchasing practices are reviewed periodically for priority and emerging potential priority items.
- Priority items still in use due to existing contracts have a defined end date for their use.
- Influence supply chains to reduce plastic packaging.

Area responsible: Cairns Regional Council.

Facilities

- Priority items must not be distributed and are phased out in the hire of Council-managed facilities, with guidance provided.
- Implement and maintain waste and recycling bin stations in conjunction with servicing contractors and provide education to support correct disposal.
- Explore options which assist patrons to avoid waste.
- Maximise the value of remnant single use plastics that cannot be readily recycled by developing and promoting recycling and collection solutions.

Area responsible: Contracts, Facilities Maintenance, Resource Recovery

Events

- Remove Priority Items within Council managed events and demonstrate best practice in line with the Policy.
- Priority Items are not distributed by event related suppliers and agreements are updated when renewed.
- Council events support effective waste and recycling systems and improve waste data collection processes.
- Promotional items avoid single use plastics and promote better alternatives.

Area responsible: Marketing and Communications, Community Spaces, Creative Life, Resource Recovery, Sustainability, Procurement

SCHEDULE 3: COMMUNITY

Advocacy and Education

- Advocate for plastics reform at all levels of government and encourage industry-led initiatives across the plastics value chain
- Support programs for food and beverage businesses and customers where consistent with the Policy Approach and provide guidance.
- Explore opportunities for schools, canteens, kiosks or bars to reduce single use plastics and develop guidance materials.

Area responsible: Sustainability, Resource Recovery

Events

- All Council funded events phase out priority items to their best efforts, with a focus on the performance of 'major' and 'regional' events. Council will provide guidance in line with the Policy, promote achievements and support effective waste and recycling systems.

Facilities

- Externally managed, commercially operated pools and recreation facilities are required to phase out Priority Items and maintain waste and recycling bin systems as agreements are renewed, with guidance provided.
- Encourage other externally managed facilities to phase out priority items and install waste and recycling bin systems, with guidance provided.

Area responsible: Community Spaces, Creative Life