



**GANNAWARRA
SHIRE COUNCIL**

ATTACHMENTS

UNDER SEPARATE COVER

Ordinary Council Meeting

17 August 2016

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Plastic Bag Reduction and Recycling

Plastic Bag Reduction and Recycling Past, present and future

April 2016



Acknowledgements

April 2016

This issues paper was compiled by Hobsons Bay City Council's Strategy and Advocacy Department. For further information contact the Hobsons Bay City Council on 9932 1000 www.hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au

Council acknowledges all language groups of the Kulin Nation as the traditional owners of these municipal lands. We recognise the first people's relationship to this land and offer our respect to their elders past and present.

Council acknowledges the legal responsibility to comply with the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 and the Equal Opportunity Act 2010. The Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities is designed to protect the fundamental rights and freedoms of citizens. The Charter gives legal protection to 20 fundamental human rights under four key values that include freedom, respect, equality and dignity.

Plastic Bags Reduction and Recycling – past, present and future, April 2016

Plastic Bags Reduction and Recycling

Past, present and future

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1 Purpose of this report

The purpose of this report is to respond to a notice of motion on 1 December 2015 Ordinary Council Meeting to prepare a report in consultation with the Sustainable Environment Advisory Group (SEAG) that provides:

- an overview of littering in Hobsons Bay
- the strategic context at National, State and Local levels
- litter education activities in Hobsons Bay
- an assessment of approaches to plastic bag reduction and recycling initiatives
- an evaluation of the "Say NO to Plastic Bags" campaign to date

The report has been developed in consultation with Council's Sustainable Environment Advisory Group (SEAG) and analyses all relevant information currently available. The report recommends a future course of action that Council may consider in reducing plastic bag use in Hobsons Bay.

2 Background

2.1 The Issue

Australian individuals use almost 250 plastic bags per year totaling over five billion plastic bags annually. As a whole Australians use over 10 million plastic bags a day. Almost half of the 10 million bags used per day are given away by non-supermarket retailers such as newsagents, discount stores, pharmacies, fruit and vegetable shops, liquor stores and take-away outlets.

In 2014 plastic bags were recorded as the fifth most littered item across Victoria making up 25 per cent of all plastic items collected in the annual Clean Up Australia Day event. Over the entire 24 year history of this event, plastics have remained the dominant item collected.

This is supported in the 2014-15 Keep Australia Beautiful *National Litter Index* (NLI), Australia's only annual, land based, quantitative measure of litter. The index ranked plastic objects (including plastic bags) third in the top twelve littered items across Australia (Source: National Litter Index 2014-15, Keep Australia Beautiful, 2015).

2.2 National research and impacts

To date there has been limited research specifically addressing plastic bag litter and the subsequent environmental impacts, however general assumptions can be taken from general litter audits and plastic debris studies.

In a marine environment, a 2014 CSIRO study *Understanding the effects of marine debris on wildlife* involved surveying litter items found in Australian coastal environments. The study did not specifically address plastic bags but found that approximately three quarters of all 5,000 litter pieces found in the survey were of small plastic fragments of "indeterminate origin". The study acknowledges that plastic debris is an important and growing source of marine pollution, with a myriad of impacts, but understanding its sources and trends remains difficult. (Source: *Understanding the effects of marine debris on wildlife*, CSIRO, 2014)

It's estimated that plastics make up about 60 per cent of all marine debris, with an estimated 100,000 marine mammals and turtles killed by plastic litter every year around the world.

Entanglement and digesting plastic are the primary types of direct damage to wildlife caused by marine plastic litter. Plastics can smother sea beds and is a source of toxic substance in the marine environment. Available information indicates at least 77 species of marine wildlife found in Australian waters and at least 267 marine species worldwide, are affected by entanglement in or ingestion of marine debris, including 86 per cent of all sea turtles species, 44 per cent of all seabird species and 43 per cent of all marine mammal species. (Source: Plastic Bag Fact Sheet, Clean Up Australia, 2009)

2.3 Local research

In Hobsons Bay, the last litter audit conducted in 2008 showed that plastic (excluding beverage related items) made up three per cent of all litter by number across the municipality. Plastic bags made up 29 per cent of all plastic items by number while wrappers and plastic film accounted for 41 and 30 per cent respectively. Extrapolating these figures further, plastic bags make up approximately 0.9 per cent by number of all littered items across Hobson Bay.

By comparison, cigarette butts accounted for 59 per cent by number of litter while paper and beverage containers made up 16 and 11 per cent respectively (Hobsons Bay City Council, Waste and Litter Management Plan 2012-17).

These results highlight cigarette butt litter as the major litter concern across Hobsons Bay. While plastic bags are recognised as a local environmental concern, the study indicates plastic bags are of lesser significance in terms of litter items by number across the municipality. Taking these results into consideration is important for Council when planning and initiating future programs targeting litter to ensure resources are targeted towards need and used in an efficient way. Council is implementing a three year cigarette but reduction program with funding support from the Victorian Government.

3 National Context

3.1 National Waste Policy

The National Waste Policy (the National Policy) sets Australia's waste management and resource recovery direction to 2020. It has two aims, the first of which is most relevant to plastic bags is to avoid the generation of waste, reduce the amount of waste (including hazardous waste) for disposal, manage waste as a resource and ensure that waste treatment, disposal, recovery and re-use is undertaken in a safe, scientific and environmentally sound manner. The National Policy sets 16 priority strategies, of which two are relevant for the management of plastic bags as follows:

- Strategy 1. Product stewardship framework legislation to allow the impacts of a product to be responsibly managed during and at end-of-life
- Strategy 3. To better manage packaging to improve the use of resources, reduce the environmental impact of packaging design, enhance away from home recycling and reduce litter

3.1.1 Strategy 1: product stewardship framework

Implementation of strategy 1 has been primarily through the National Product Stewardship Act and schemes that support voluntary, co-regulatory and regulatory product stewardship and extended producer responsibility. Schemes have primarily focused on television and computer products, tyres, and commercial mercury lighting. End of life batteries less than five kilograms and waste architectural and decorative paint are proposed to be addressed.

3.1.2 Strategy 3: better packaging management

Implementation of strategy 3 has been primarily on establishing the Australian Packaging Covenant (APC), releasing Sustainable Packaging Guidelines and Australian Standards for biodegradable plastics for home composting and notably preparing a consultation Regulatory Impact Statement (RIS) to increase packaging recovery and decrease packaging litter with a focus on beverage container packaging. On 29 April 2014, Ministers met to discuss packaging impacts. From their statement "Given the comprehensive nature of the analysis and the importance of this issue, Ministers agreed all jurisdictions need adequate time to fully assess the Decision Regulation Impact Statement (Decision RIS) after which the Decision Regulation Impact Statement will be publicly released." (Source: <http://www.environment.gov.au/news/2014/04/29/meeting-environment-ministers-agreed-statement>)

The Decision RIS was released in 2014 and recommended the preferred option as the Extended Australian Packaging Covenant (APC). The Victorian Labor Government have not officially stated their position but have stated that they are "unconvinced can and bottle-deposit laws were the best option for Victoria" and "supports modeling by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) which indicated a cash-for-containers program could prove expensive" (Source: <http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/lisa-neville-against-cashforcontainers-recycling-scheme-in-victoria-20150107-12j14t.html>)

3.1.3 Australian Packaging Covenant

The Australian Packaging Covenant (APC) is a voluntary, self-regulatory agreement between companies in the supply chain and all levels of government. The APC sets out to reduce the environmental impacts of consumer packaging, including lightweight plastic bags by:

- designing packaging that is more resource efficient and recyclable
- increasing the recovery and recycling of used packaging from households and away-from-home sources
- taking action to reduce the incidence and impacts of litter

3.1.4 Senate Inquiry Report: "Toxic Tide: Threat of Marine Plastics in Australia"

On 20 April 2016, the Parliament of Australia released the Senate inquiry into the threat of marine plastic pollution in Australia and Australian waters. The report provides an overview of marine plastic pollution, the role of the Australian Government, clean up strategies, source reduction and 23 recommendations for the Australian Government.

Recommendations of the inquiry largely support continued research into the extent, source, threats and effects of marine plastic pollution on the environment and human health. In relation to plastic bags, the report recommends supporting states and territories in banning the use of single-use lightweight plastic bags.

The full report including all recommendations can be found at: http://www.apc.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Environment_and_Communications/Marine_plastics/Report

4 State and Territory Context

4.1 Victorian Policy

In 2013, the Victorian Government released 'Getting Full Value: The Victorian Waste and Resource Recovery Policy' (the Victorian Policy). The Victorian Policy commits the Government to working within the National Waste Policy and Australian Packaging Covenant to manage packaging waste, which includes lightweight plastic bags. In 2008, the Victorian Government conducted a trial of a charge of 10 cents on plastic shopping bags in the towns of Fountain Gate, Wangaratta and Warrnambool. Since this trial, the Victorian Government has not made regulations under the *Environment Protection Act 1970* to mandate a charge on plastic bag (Source: Plastic bags: an update, NSW Parliamentary Research Service, 2013).

In February 2016, the Parliamentary Secretary for the Environment attended a national roundtable between state governments and stakeholders to look at options to further reduce the impact of plastic bags across Victoria. The roundtable aimed to evaluate the experiences of other state jurisdictions where plastic shopping bag bans had been implemented. The roundtable meeting would also consider options for a plastic bag levy and the creation of a community education campaign. An announcement of outcomes from the round table meeting are unknown, however could be expected later in 2016. (Source: www.premier.vic.gov.au/victoria-takes-national-approach-to-plastic-bags/)

While discussions on Victorian plastic shopping bag reductions are welcome, the uncertainty around timeline and the details of a possible ban, a levy and education campaign creates uncertainty. The development of a comprehensive Council led plastic bag reduction program could be considered imprudent in view of possible bans and a potential implementation of a state wide community education campaign. It is considered advisable for Council to wait for the release of outcomes before commencing broader resource intensive community engagement activities.

4.2 South Australian Policy

In 2009, South Australia became the first jurisdiction to ban lightweight plastic bags. Under section 5 of the Plastic Shopping Bags (Waste Avoidance) Act 2008, a retailer commits an offence if they provide a plastic shopping bag to a customer as a means of carrying goods purchased, or to be purchased, from the retailer. Biodegradable bags compliant with Australian Standard, paper bags, heavier department store bags and plastic packaging for fruit and vegetables are exempt from the ban.

Since the introduction of the South Australia ban, the Northern Territory, Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory have all implemented state wide plastic bag bans. The provisions of these bans all mirror the conditions of those implemented across South Australia (Source: Plastic bags: an update, NSW Parliamentary Research Service, 2013).

No bans are currently present in New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria and Western Australia.

South Australian shoppers embraced the initiative with more than nine in ten shoppers taking reusable bags to do their shopping, compared to about six in ten before the ban took effect (Source: Plastic Bag Research, Ehrenberg-Bass Institute for Marketing Science, 2009). A statutory review of the Act in 2013 also revealed the percentage of the South Australian litter stream consisting of plastic bags fell by 45 per cent post ban however consumers purchasing bin liners had increased by 65 per cent.

Plastic Bags Reduction and Recycling – past, present and future, April 2016

While the ban on lightweight single-use plastic bags proved to be highly effective at reducing the supply of plastic bags and changing behaviour across South Australia, studies suggest bans have only transferred and not eliminated the waste problem. Waste generated from plastic bag bin liners dramatically increased following the introduction of the plastic bag bans. South Australia also records significantly more thick and heavy bags in the litter stream compared to any other Australian state (Source: Plastic bags: an update, NSW Parliamentary Research Service, 2013).

5 Hobsons Bay City Council Strategic Context

The management of plastic bag litter across the Hobsons Bay environment is encompassed under Goal 2 of the Council Plan 2013-2017:

A Well Planned, Vibrant and Sustainable Place – Fostering, safe attractive and connected neighborhoods that provide social and economic opportunities for all and are resilient to climate change; while caring for our precious heritage, coast and natural resources for future generations.

Plastic bag litter reduction also aligns with Council's Waste and Litter Management Plan 2012-17 however there are no actions that specifically address plastic bag reduction and recycling. This is because other materials including cigarette butts were identified as the primary littered item. A review of this plan will commence in 2016.

6 What's happening around Victoria

In the absence of Victorian legislation, local communities have been working together to implement plastic bag reduction initiatives and advocacy campaigns. Torquay, Yarraville, Moreland, Warburton and Frankston have all introduced plastic bag free initiatives into their communities while the Queen Victoria Market, Veg Out Market St Kilda and all Melbourne Farmer's Markets have introduced plastic free initiatives and reduction activities into their operations. The programs which these initiatives are modeled on are explained further.

6.1 Plastic Bag Free Victoria

Plastic Bag Free Victoria is an overarching campaigning group aiming to highlight local community efforts to stop the free distribution of single use plastic bags as well as advocating to the Victorian Government for a ban on the free distribution of single use plastic bags.

The group is currently running the 'Stop Bagging Victoria' campaign by petitioning to the Victorian Government to take action on legislation for a plastic bag ban. The campaign has currently collected over 4,000 signatures as of April 2016 (Source: www.plasticbagfreevictoria.org/).

Plastic Bag Free Victoria also supports and encourages the establishment of start up community campaigning groups. These have included Plastic Bag Free Torquay, Plastic Bag Free Yarraville and Plastic Bag Free Moreland. These community led groups support the overarching Plastic Bag Free Victoria campaign message but also advocate to their Local Government authorities for localised plastic bag reduction initiatives and support towards a Victorian Government legislative ban.

As of April 2016, Council was unaware of any formation of a Plastic Bag Free group within Hobsons City Council. If a group sought Council assistance to become plastic bag free Council would work with these groups to assist as much as possible. If a group sought Council assistance to advocate for plastic bag bans Council would be best to consider any future research into a ban by the Victorian Government before stating its position. This is because the research involved in assessing the impacts are out of the scope of Council. Localised economic impacts would also need to be considered including the effect on traders.

For more information about current Plastic Bag Free towns in Victoria see the following website links:

www.plasticbagfreevictoria.org/
www.plasticbagfreetorquay.org.au/
www.facebook.com/plasticbagfreemoreland/
www.facebook.com/Plastic-Bag-Free-Yarraville-Village-269152979855232/

6.2 Boomerang Bags

Boomerang Bags is a not-for-profit, community initiative aimed at reducing the use of plastic bags by engaging local communities in the development of a free, sustainable alternative.

The initiative involves the establishment of bag-share, or Boomerang Bag Boxes throughout a target business district. Each box is stocked with re-useable Boomerang Bags for customers to borrow if they have forgotten their own and return on subsequent visits. The availability of free, re-useable bags reduces the need for single-use plastic bags.

Each Boomerang Bag is hand-made by volunteers from the local community using donated second-hand materials, keeping the initiative local and sustainable. The Boomerang Bag storage boxes are also often made by local community members through groups such as the Men's Shed.

Across Australia 20 Boomerang Bag communities have been established resulting an estimated 9.2 tonnes of plastic bags diverted from landfill. In Victoria, Boomerang Bag communities have been established in the regional townships of Torquay, Warburton and Mallacoota.

Boomerang Bags was rolled out in Mallacoota as part of the Plastic Bag Free Mallacoota campaign which started in July 2015. Local sewing groups met weekly to make Boomerang Bags using recycled materials. The initiative launched in December 2015 at the local market, Foodworks and IGA supermarkets. The IGA estimated a 75 per cent reduction in plastic bag use over the holiday period, resulting in an estimated 50,000 to 60,000 plastic bags being saved as a result of the campaign.

Plastic Bag Free Torquay implemented Boomerang Bags as part of a long term strategy to stop the free distribution of single-use plastic bags in Torquay. The group received start up funds to implement Boomerang Bags from the Surf Coast Shire Council's community grants program. The group held regular sewing sessions with support from the local community to make reusable bags to stock five Boomerang Bag boxes that had been constructed by the local Men's Shed group. Boomerang Bags were then made available at the local IGA, Bendigo Bank, Bellbrae Primary School, Surf Coast Shire Civic Centre and at the local Torquay Farmers' Market.

Hobsons Bay maintains a passionate and committed environmental community with a variety of community groups focusing efforts around sustainability and sustainable living. Hobsons Bay and it's presence of popular local shopping precincts backed by active and

energetic trader association's, present ideal opportunities for a Boomerang Bags system to be trialed or implemented.

Local community ownership is the key principle behind Boomerang Bags and would require active and passionate groups to take the lead. As seen in Torquay and Mallacoota, Boomerang Bags were implemented as part of the broader community led campaign Plastic Bag Free Torquay and Plastic Bag Free Mallacoota.

Linking the Boomerang Bags to a broader plastic bag reduction campaign, such as Council's Say No to Plastic Bags would provide greater promotional opportunities and generate wider community awareness of the initiative.

Council could also provide promotional support and assistance in volunteer recruitment during the implementation and start up of a Boomerang Bag initiative by the community.

6.3 Say No to Plastic Bags

Say No to Plastics Bags is an initiative established in 2001 and implemented by Clean Up Australia Foundation in partnership with the Australian Government, the Australian Retailers Association, Stockland Shopping Centers and many non-supermarket retailers. The initiative encourages shoppers and retailers to start using plastic bag alternatives and increase plastic bag recycling (Source: <http://www.noplasticbags.org.au/>).

The campaign is currently in an unfunded stagnate state with outdated and obsolete information. The campaign has been scheduled for review by Clean Up Australia Foundation, however timelines for this are unknown.

In the absence of up to date resources and formal campaign materials, Council initiated its own Say No to Plastic Bags campaign in February 2016. The campaign used the Say No to Plastic Bags slogan coupled with a Council designed logo. More information about the campaign including an evaluation can be found under section 7.2.1 of this report.

7 Initiatives in Hobsons Bay

7.1 Past initiatives

Council has previously implemented plastic bag reduction initiatives across the municipality with varied results.

Throughout 2005 to 2007, Council implemented the community plastic bag exchange program. The program involved residents exchanging 10 plastic shopping bags for one re-useable bag at the Civic Centre and libraries. During this time plastic bag alternatives and recycling became readily available through large supermarkets resulting in a gradual phase out of the program.

The plastic bag exchange program later evolved into a program supplying small businesses with a kit as part of the then Council's external Green Team. Interested businesses were issued with a kit containing information, hints, posters, and window stickers all aimed at reducing plastic bag usage. The program had limited success despite promotion and was terminated. Alternatives to plastic bags have also been made available through the Council's customer service mobile program and at festivals to encourage shoppers to use alternatives to plastic shopping bags. Since this time, businesses with an environmental conscience have introduced plastic bag alternative options.

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7.2 Current initiatives

7.2.1 Say No to Plastic Bags

In February 2016, Council introduced the 'Say No to Plastic Bags' communication campaign. The campaign is aimed to create awareness about the impacts plastic bags have on our local environment while encouraging shoppers and retailers to reduce plastic bag use, use plastic alternatives and recycle their plastic bags through a variety of means. The campaign is a communication campaign using Council's social media platforms, website and local media to promote messages throughout the community.

Council received community praise and feedback following the implementation of the program highlighting community concern and desire for action around plastic bag reduction initiatives.

Evaluation of the campaign across Facebook and the Council website between 1 February and 23 March 2016 revealed the campaign reached 589 people through Facebook messaging while 29 views occurred on the Say No to Plastic Bag webpage. The link to the Say No to Plastics Bags media release received 95 views across the same timeframe.

While campaign reach and views during the evaluation period remain relatively low, community feedback towards the campaign was still very positive. This response suggests Council would benefit from continuing the communication campaign with further promotion and attention on messages across Facebook, local media and Council's website.

7.2.2 Flexible plastic recycling

Council is introducing flexible plastics into the kerbside residential recycling service in 2016. This initiative will see Council become one of the first Australian councils to introduce such a service. Householders will be required to consolidate used flexible plastic packaging into a single bag before placing that bag in the commingled recycling bin for sorting at the materials recovery facility. More details about this initiative will be released in 2016 once implementation timelines have been confirmed.

While reducing the community's reliance on plastic bag use is Council's ideal behavior change measure, the new recycling service will provide residents with a complementary environmental option for accumulated plastics and plastic bags. Once the inclusion of flexible plastics recycling has been introduced, the Say No to Plastic Bags campaign would run in conjunction with the new service complementing and promoting the refuse, reduce, reuse and recycle waste lifecycle hierarchy.

8 Community Consultation

Council's Sustainable Environment Advisory Group (SEAG) were consulted during the development of this report specifically the strategic context, the research undertaken, informing them of the initiatives undertaken and seeking their thoughts on the value of possible future initiatives. Feedback included that reduction measures should be focused on alternatives to plastic bags and to engage traders in the campaign. Suggestions were also made to rename the communication campaign 'Say to No Plastics' to be about single use plastic instead, however it was noted that focusing on plastic bags was a positive start. Questions were also asked why Council is focusing on plastic bags when it's been noted as only a minor litter issue compared to other items across the municipality. Feedback has been considered during the development of this report and the recommendations.

A broad awareness of local community's concerns regarding plastic litter is through observations of social media platforms and from local community actions.

With respect to on ground localised activities, community groups such as Scab Duty, Beach Patrol, Port Philip Eco Centre and the numerous "Friends of" groups within Hobsons Bay have implemented or are implementing projects and activities to investigate, promote and address the issues of plastic marine litter. While plastic bags have been a contributing concern of these groups, the primary concern has been on single use plastic and plastic pieces in general.

Council has been working with the above community groups supporting and assisting litter reduction projects on a regular basis. This local involvement has provided a firm understanding of the concerns and aspirations that the local community have around local plastic litter issues in Hobsons Bay. Council has supported these groups with the aim of developing the community to create change and be involved in the solution.

Council social media pages provides valuable communication channels for local environment groups to connect with the community and promote their litter reduction initiatives and highlight litter hotspots locations within the Hobsons Bay. More broadly there is social media activity nationally and globally advocating solutions to address marine plastic litter.

9 Financial Implications

The plastic bag reduction initiatives explored in this report would have relatively low financial implications on Council due to the high levels of community ownership and management required of initiatives. It's expected Council's role would function as a supporting body in the instance of a Plastic Bag Free group forming locally, with no expectations of significant cash contributions required by Council. Similarly, implementation of a Boomerang Bags initiative would have only minor financial implications on Council due to the community led nature of the initiative. Expected Council support may include in-kind contributions for promotion, volunteer recruitment and collaborating with local trader associations. Council would need to be mindful of staff resources and the potential impacts on other waste and litter projects being implemented or already committed to before committing to any plastic bag reduction initiatives.

The continuation of Say No to Plastic Bags communications campaign would have minimal financial implications on Council. Officer availability would be the major contributing factor for the implementation of local communication and promotional activities. Monetary contributions may be expected if paid local media promotions are implemented.

Cash and in kind support will be monitored over the course of implementing the recommendations and Council will review its commitments in the future including within a reviewed Waste and Litter Management Plan.

10 Conclusion

The issue of single use plastic bags is a concern across Victoria with passionate local communities leading the way implementing reduction activities, awareness raising initiatives and advocacy campaigns in the absence of current Victorian Government legislation.

In February 2016 Council implemented a communication campaign to 'Say No to Plastic Bags' and will be implementing a flexible plastic recycling service to provide the community another way for the community to manage plastic bags.

The national round table discussion held in February 2016 demonstrates the Victorian Government has heard concerns of Victorian communities and will be participating in national discussions regarding a coordinated far reaching approach.

At a local level plastic bags rated a lower littering issue than cigarette butt, paper and beverage containers. Council is implementing a three year cigarette butt reduction program with funding support from the Victorian Government.

Council must consider the current actions of the Victorian Government and existing local litter projects and priorities when considering future plastic bag reduction initiatives across the municipality. As such the following recommendations are proposed.

11 Recommendations

Taking the current status of Australian and Victorian Government activities into account and based on an analysis of available options, it is recommended that Council:

1. Continue the 'Say No to Plastic Bag' communications campaign.
2. Investigate options to trial a Boomerang Bags initiative, similar to that of Plastic Bag Free Torquay, in key shopping precincts led by community organisations or businesses with Council support.
3. Consider the outcomes of the national roundtable discussion on reducing plastic bags across Victoria.

12 References

1. National Litter Index 2014-15, Keep Australia Beautiful, 2015)
2. Understanding the effects of marine debris on wildlife, CSIRO, 2014
3. Plastic bags: an update, NSW Parliamentary Research Service, 2013
4. Hobsons Bay City Council, Waste and Litter Management Plan 2012
5. www.environment.gov.au/news/2014/04/29/meeting-environment-ministers-agreed-statement)
6. www.theage.com.au/victoria/lisa-neville-against-cashforcontainers-recycling-scheme-in-victoria-20150107-12j14t.html
7. www.premier.vic.gov.au/victoria-takes-national-approach-to-plastic-bags
8. www.plasticbagfreevictoria.org/
9. www.boomerangbags.org/
10. www.tangaroablue.org/amdi/campaigns/99-plastic-bag-free/563-boomerang-bags.html
11. www.noplasticbags.org.au/

COUNCIL POLICY



Plastic Wise Events and Markets on Council owned/managed land	Document No:	SCS - 008
	Approval Date:	26/04/2016
	Approved By:	Council
	Review Date:	26/04/2017
Responsible Officer: Manager Environment & Community Safety	TRIM Reference:	D16/20510
Authorising Officer:	Chief Executive Officer	

1. Purpose

This purpose of this policy is to commit Council to reducing or eliminating **single use** plastic at events and markets in the Surf Coast Shire.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all events and markets conducted on land, in buildings or roads managed by Council including all civic events and all organised/formal sport and recreational events. A 12 month period is proposed for sporting clubs from the approval date of the policy to transition to the new expectations.

The policy covers plastic purchasing, packaging, waste and recycling collection systems and clean-up practices.

Plastic products required to meet health and safety requirements or where there is no other practical alternative product or distribution method available are exempt.

3. Application.

This policy applies to all Surf Coast Shire Council employees and contractors planning, organising, supporting or approving events. The Great Ocean Road Coast Committee (GORCC) is also considering endorsing this policy on land managed by them. Where possible, brochures, guidelines or other materials to support this policy will be co-branded with GORCC.

4. Definitions

- **Event:** Any planned activity where any structure (permanent or temporary), open area, road way, fenced or unfenced area will contain a number of persons greater than that normally found in that area or location at one time. This activity may affect the location surrounding the area prior to, during or after the event. (Event Management: Planning Guide for Event Managers in Victoria, 2002)
- **Civic Event:** All events that are organised by Council staff.
- **Plastic:** non-biodegradable polyethylene made from petrochemical compounds
- **Single Use Plastic Bag:** A plastic bag, polybag, or pouch is a type of container made of thin, flexible, plastic film, nonwoven fabric, or plastic textile.
- **Single Use Plastic Products:** – any disposable plastic material including balloons, straws, plastic sleeves and packaging.

5. Policy

Organisations or individuals organising an event conducted on land, in buildings or on roads managed by Council should:

- Refrain from distributing single use plastic bags e.g. participant event bag.
- Refrain from using single use plastic bags and plastic packaging for promotional purposes.
- Refrain from selling or distributing plastic bottles.
- Refrain from the distribution of straws.
- Refrain from balloon use and distribution.
- Avoid all unnecessary plastic packaging and plastic single use cutlery (including, for example, plastic covers on handmade goods and food items).
- Re-use event materials where possible (including event signage and promotional banners and flags).
- Play a key role in educating and guiding their event audience on plastic wise practices, including promoting re-usable bags and water bottles.
- Provide a waste management plan that demonstrates a Reduce, Reuse and Recycle commitment.
- Ensure that the event or market site is left litter free and the site is returned to pre -event condition

- Any site remediation required will be at the expense of the event organiser.

Council officers will support and assist organisations or individuals organising an event to comply with this policy, however, if there is ongoing poor adherence to this policy, officers may recommend that these events not be supported or approved by Council. Events on Council managed land will need to commit to comply with the policy before Council sponsorship for that event is approved.

6. Records

Records shall be retained for at least the period shown below.

Record	Retention/Disposal Responsibility	Retention Period	Location
Event application and approval correspondence	Economic Development & Tourism	Ongoing	HPRM

7. Attachments

Not applicable.

8. References

- Surf Coast Shire Council Plan 2013 – 2017 (Theme 1 Environment)
- Minutes of Council Meeting 25 November 2014 – Environment and Rural Advisory Panel Workshop 1 Outcomes: Advice to Council on Plastic Bags
- Plastic Waste Wise Approach D14/94136
- Surf Coast Shire Events Policy D15/68949

Surf Coast Shire Council - Proposed Plastic Wise Approach

The Environment and Rural Advisory Panel's (ERAP) advice captured in the first workshop is consolidated by Officers into three key themes, with suggested actions required to implement their advice outlined.

<p>Stage One Council direct control. ERAP's advice to Council was to ban plastic bags at our events and markets and for Council to have a clear position on soft plastic use. ERAP also wanted Council to have a Plastic Wise program that delivered on direct action, advocacy, engagement and education.</p> <p>Actions to implement advice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a Plastic Wise stance that will inform our position on soft plastic use at the Council. Develop a Plastic Wise Policy that will be the umbrella policy for all plastic wise initiatives. • Ban plastic bags at events, markets & Council run conferences – this will be more successful if we make the guidelines and application criteria more robust. The policy will help to do this. • Restrict the use of plastic bottles and packaging at all Council run events – where infrastructure is available i.e. taps, water fountains etc. <p>Continue to expand and promote our other marine debris initiatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Take 3 initiative will be continued as part of annual schoolies week. ✓ Seal the loop (fishing refuse waste program) ✓ Surf Coast Oceans Stewards Program (sustainable seafood, marine debris and education/awareness program) 	<p>Stage One Council advocacy ERAP's advice to Council was to advocate to the State Government and Opposition to legislate responsible use of plastic and seek commitment to ban use of single use plastic bags and implement refund for plastic bottles.</p> <p>Actions to implement advice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Notice of Motion in support of advocacy on this issue passed at September 2014 Council meeting. ✓ Letters sent to State Government and Labour Opposition. ✓ Motion regarding regulation of plastic bags submitted for Municipal Association of Victoria State Council meeting. ✓ Submission to the State Government for the support of the beverage container deposit scheme – 2011 ✓ Advocate to the newly formed Barwon South West Waste and Resource Recovery Group for best practice soft plastic recycling. ✓ Continue to support Council's recyclables receiver on exploring technology to separate plastic bags from the waste stream for potential recycling. • Advocate for a kerbside soft plastic recycling service 	<p>Stage Two Engagement and awareness ERAP's advice to Council was to further engage with traders to ban plastic bag use, provide marketing tools and education for traders and consumers to raise awareness within the community about plastic use and the effects it has on the broader environment.</p> <p>Actions to implement advice: Incorporate a best practice community engagement package within the Plastic wise Program that encapsulates these key actions;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue Stage 1 actions • Develop media/marketing collateral promoting Council's overall program to reduce plastic waste • Use icon/brand to promote a united message across the Shire • Engage with traders and work with businesses willing to lead to remove plastic bags and reduce plastic use • Raise awareness to residents and visitors through signage around town and at Visitor Information Centres • Raise awareness through promotion of plastic bag and bottle free events • Explore options for engaging with other businesses to promote 'waste wise' champions
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Two stages are proposed to deliver these actions. Stage 1 can be delivered with existing Council resources. Stage 2 will deliver a more extensive Plastic Waste Wise Program but requires additional resources (subject to 2015/16 budget allocation) or significant reallocation of existing resources.

Stage 1 – to 1 July 2015

- Develop a Plastic Waste Wise Policy that will inform our position on soft plastic use at the Council. Policy to be developed collaboratively across Council’s Environment, Waste, Tourism and Events units.
- Ban plastic bags at events, markets & Council run conferences – this will be more successful if we make the guidelines and application criteria more robust. The policy will help to do this.
- Restrict the use of plastic bottles and packaging at all Council run events – where infrastructure is available i.e. Taps, water fountains etc.
- Advocate to State Government & Opposition to:
 - Legislate responsible use of plastic;
 - Seek commitment to ban use of single use plastic bags & implement refund for plastic bottles.
- Advocate for a kerbside soft plastic recycling service

Resource implications – covered under existing budget

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be delivered with existing resources • Builds on the great work Council is already doing • Positions Council as a leader on this issue • Enhances public education and awareness of this issue through Council sponsored/run events • Good return on investment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restricted to Council sponsored/ run events and facilities and Council operations • No active engagement/outreach to business sector

Stage 2 – Beyond 1 July 2015

- Continue Stage 1 actions
- Develop and implement an expanded Plastic Waste Wise Program for Council approval
- Develop media/marketing collateral promoting Council’s overall program to reduce plastic waste
- Use icon/brand to promote a united message across the Shire
- Raise awareness to residents and visitors through signage around town and at Visitor Information Centres
- Raise awareness through promotion of plastic bag and bottle free events
- Explore options for engaging with other businesses to promote ‘waste wise’ champions

Resource implications – will require additional staffing and budget allocation (\$50,000 - \$70,000) or reallocation of existing Council resources

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Showcases Council as key environmental leader on soft plastics • Direct engagement with local business/traders across the Shire • Program extends across the Shire and isn’t restricted to Council sponsored/run events • High profile education and engagement program with branding, collateral and signage across the Shire to reinforce plastic waste wise messaging 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires additional resources (2015/16 budget bid) or reallocation of existing resources • No community or trader group is currently actively engaged/campaigning on this issue • Significant resource investment for minimal environmental outcome – plastic film (including bags) are not major waste/litter issue in the Shire

