

A clear plastic cup lies on a sandy beach, partially covered by the foam of a wave. The cup is the central focus, symbolizing single-use plastic waste in a natural environment.

TURNING THE TIDE ON SINGLE-USE PLASTIC PRODUCTS

Approach and
next steps



Government of South Australia
Green Industries SA



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A message from the Minister



There's no doubt that South Australians are concerned about single use plastics. This is something that is repeatedly raised with me, both as the state's Environment Minister and as a local Member of Parliament.

South Australians are concerned that plastics allow complacency around disposal; add waste to landfill; justify the use of fossil fuels; and contribute to marine pollution. They want to see less plastic being used and less being created in the first place.

Responding to these concerns, the government released a discussion paper in early 2019, seeking feedback from the community and businesses on how we can protect our environment from the impacts of single-use plastic products.

The response was overwhelming with around 3,500 submissions received and the vast majority of respondents across both community and industry keen to see measures implemented to reduce the use of single-use plastics.

Given the message has been so clear, we are taking action immediately.

The government has started developing legislation to establish a framework to phase out single-use plastics and other single-use items.

The legislation will phase out products such as plastic straws, cutlery and drink stirrers, while other problematic items such as coffee cups, polystyrene trays and thicker plastic bags will be dealt with in the future once considered by a new taskforce. The taskforce will include representatives from business, local government and interest groups to ensure that a sensible and timely strategy is rolled out.

South Australia has a great history of leading our nation - and often the world - in waste management. By taking action on single-use plastics, we're continuing this leadership and showing that we are serious about not only tackling the challenges posed by waste, but also embracing the opportunities that will inevitably come from taking a leadership role.

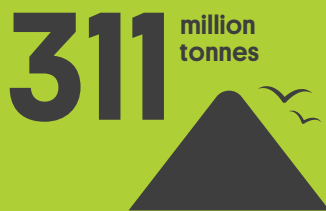
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Speirs', with a horizontal line underneath.

David Speirs MP
Minister for Environment and Water

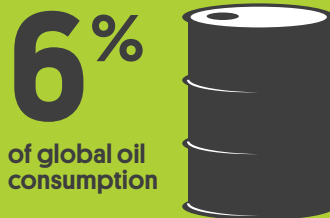
What is the problem?

Plastics play an important role in our economy and daily lives. When used in packaging, plastics help ensure food safety and reduce food waste. But too often, the way plastics are produced, used and discarded harms our environment.

The problem with plastics



Plastic production has risen from 15 million tonnes in 1964 to **311 million tonnes in 2014**. This is almost the same weight as the entire human population and is expected to double over the next 20 years.



The majority of plastics are produced from fossil fuels, representing around **6% of global oil consumption**. This is equivalent to the global aviation sector.



At least **8 million tonnes of plastics** end up in the ocean each year. This is equivalent to dumping the contents of a garbage truck each minute and if current trends continue, by 2050 there will be more plastics in the ocean than fish.

Major sources of litter

- Snack bags & confectionery wrappers
- Drink stirrers
- Cigarette butts
- Take away drinks cups and cup lids
- Drink bottles, caps and lids
- Plastic bags
- Food containers including fast food packaging
- Cotton bud sticks
- Straws

The next steps

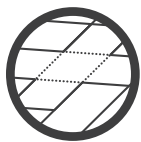


Establishing a stakeholder taskforce

The government acknowledges that intervention on single-use plastic products requires consideration of any significant or unintended consequences to businesses and the community. Therefore, a taskforce of select business, industry, local government and interest group stakeholders

will be established to ensure associated impacts are properly considered and inform the development of legislation.

Stakeholders are encouraged to [contact GISA](#) to register interest in being involved in the taskforce.



Piloting plastic-free precincts

Plastic-free precincts are being established to pilot the phase-out of single-use plastic products and items. The precincts will be voluntary business/retailer led, and trial the phase-out of the items identified by the government for intervention, as well as other items as identified/agreed.

The selected precincts will help inform the wider phase-out of single-use items; identifying opportunities, challenges and barriers associated with transitioning away from single-use plastic products to reusable, recyclable or compostable alternatives, as well as inform support requirements for participating businesses.

Further information on the precincts including how to be involved is available on GISA's [website](#).

For the purposes of the pilot, a **precinct** could be one of or a combination of the following:

- a local government area
- a high concentration of traders within a hub (e.g. marketplace)
- a major retail centre (e.g. shopping centre complex)
- a proactive city/suburban street/block with a high density of traders
- or a series of sites linked by a common activity e.g. sporting venues, entertainment venues, surf lifesaving venues.



Introducing legislative reform

The legislation will be drafted to implement a phase-out of the initial single-use plastic products identified for intervention, as well as to establish an overarching framework for possible inclusion of other items in the future.

The government plans on releasing draft legislation for public consultation in late 2019 with the intention to introduce it to Parliament in 2020.

Phase out of single-use plastic products

Phase out immediately

Recognising the **readily available alternatives** to certain single-use plastic items and the community's call for action on single-use plastic products, the following are identified to be phased-out effective from the commencement of the legislation:



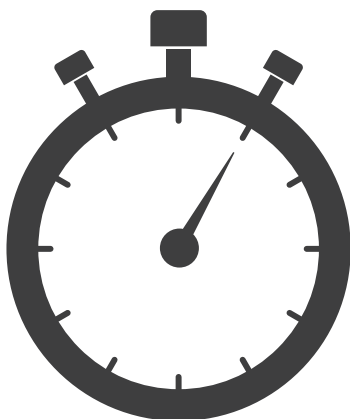
single-use plastic straws, plastic cutlery and plastic stirrers

Phase out after 12 months

The next items identified for phase-out consider that a **longer transitional period** may be required for businesses/retailers, with a proposed implementation timeframe of 12 months following commencement of the legislation:



takeaway expanded polystyrene cups, expanded polystyrene food and expanded polystyrene beverage containers (e.g. polystyrene coffee and soup cups, 'clam shell' containers); and



all products made of oxo-degradable plastic (e.g. some plastic bags)

Sending the early signal to the market on these items allows time for transitional arrangements to commence prior to the legislation taking effect. With regard to single-use plastic straws, the legislation will determine how to phase out this product from the general community while carefully considering the needs of people with a disability.



Further consideration required

There are a range of other single-use plastic products and single-use items that require further analysis and consultation prior to consideration of phase-out or alternative interventions. These include:



takeaway coffee cups – e.g. proven and effective collection and recyclable / composting systems in place

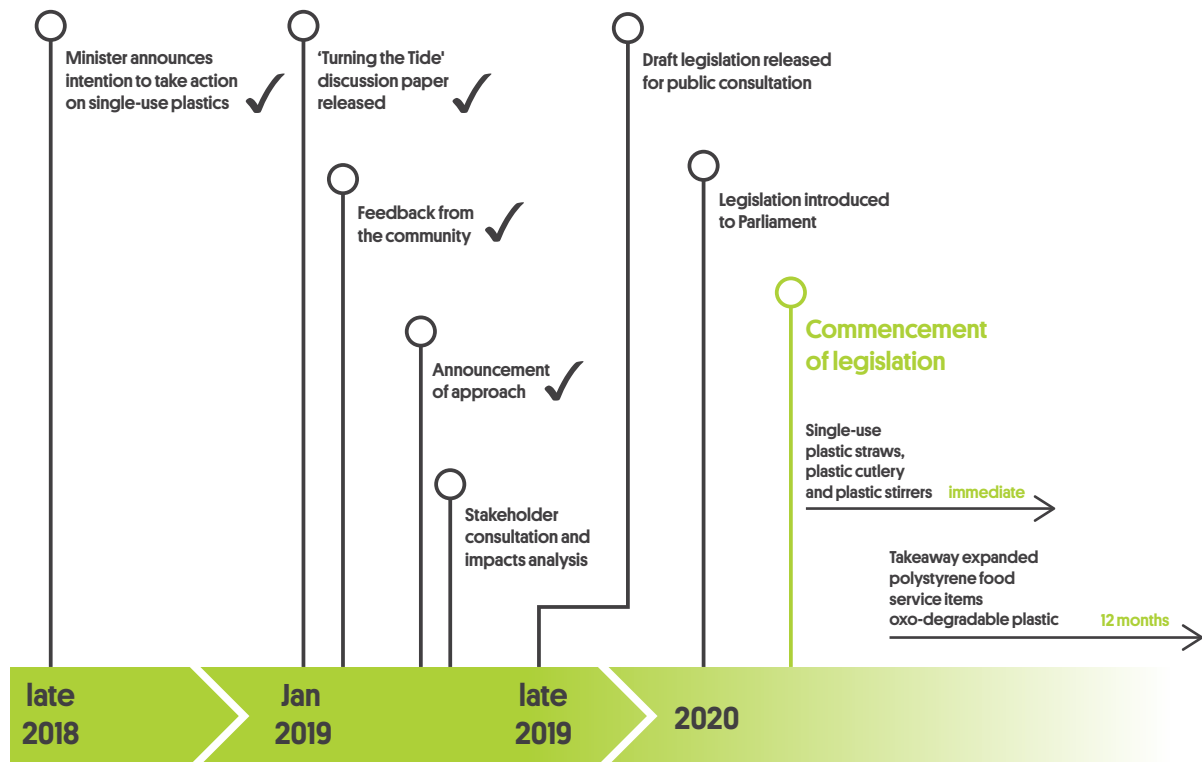


plastic bags – e.g. extend plastic bag ban to apply to thicker bags and non-recognised compostable bags



other takeaway food service items – e.g. proven and effective collection and recycling / composting arrangements

These items are proposed to be discussed by the stakeholder taskforce for potential inclusion in the legislation at a later date.



What you told us

Consultation feedback

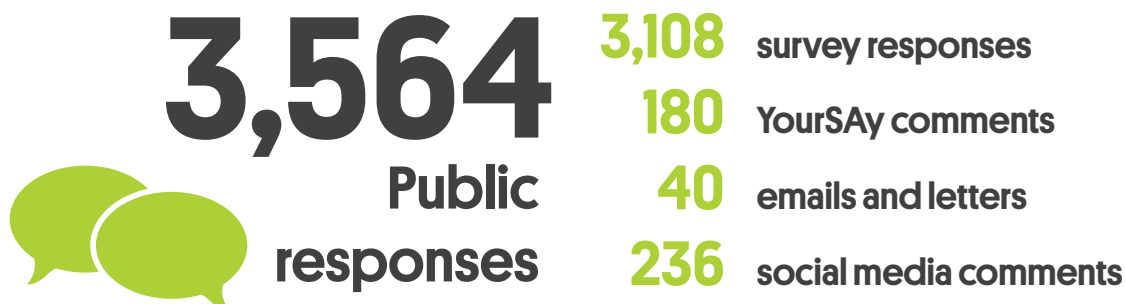
The *Turning the tide on single-use plastic products* discussion paper (Turning the tide) was released on 13 January 2019. It referenced a range of literature regarding the impacts of single-use plastic products and proposed that intervention is required to minimise and eliminate those impacts.

It discussed areas for consideration in determining intervention measures, and sought feedback from the community and businesses on measures to address single-use plastic products.

Consultation ran for six weeks until 22 February 2019, with feedback provided via the government's YourSAy website, in writing to GISA and via social media.

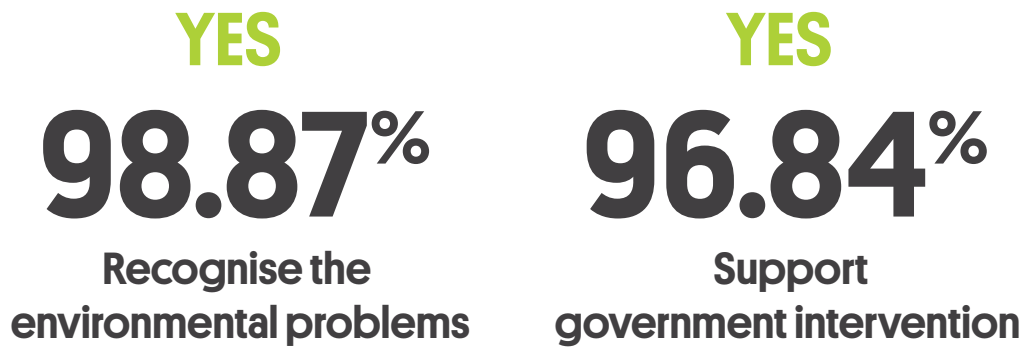
The response from the South Australian community has been overwhelming.

A report summarising the key themes and issues emerging from consultation is available on the [YourSAy](#) and [GISA](#) websites.



Community feedback

There is almost universal recognition that single-use plastics are causing environmental problems, and there is very strong support for government intervention.



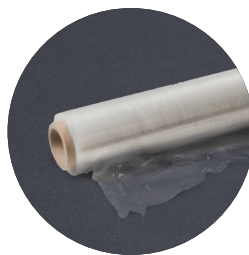
There is strong support from respondents to take action on single-use items referred to in the discussion paper – single-use plastic straws and cutlery, plastic-lined takeaway coffee cups. A vast range of other items were also identified for consideration of government intervention.



Other items put forward in feedback



All plastic bags



Plastic packaging



Excessive fruit and vegetable plastic packaging and wrapping



Takeaway food containers



Plastic plates



Balloons

The feedback shows that half of the people who responded acknowledged they do not know the difference between the terms 'biodegradable', 'degradable' and 'compostable'. This shows confusion amongst the community on these items, as well as 'oxo-degradable plastic'.

'Oxo-plastics' or 'oxo-degradable plastics' are conventional plastics which include additives to accelerate the fragmentation of the material into very small pieces, triggered by UV radiation or heat exposure. Due to these additives, the plastic fragments over time into plastic particles and finally microplastics, which can enter the food chain. The European Parliament has already announced a ban on 'oxo-degradable' plastics.

There is strong support from respondents for all checkout and produce bags to be made from compostable materials and to extend South Australia's plastic bag legislation to include thicker bags.

- **Biodegradable, degradable, compostable (51% don't know the difference)**
- **Support for compostable bags (93% say yes)**
- **Support for extending bags ban (86.34% say yes)**

Respondents suggested that there are some single-use items that should be excluded from government intervention for reasons specific to their purpose and those who rely on them. These include products and aids used by people living with a disability, and medical items requiring special use, packaging, sterility and storage.



Industry feedback

Feedback from industry and business respondents shows support for increased measures to address single-use plastics, recognising their environmental impacts. Many shared the ways that they are already taking action on some of these products.

“ The problem is urgent, but some lead time is clearly needed.

“ Single-use plastic products are clearly causing significant environmental harm as proven by countless credible scientific studies undertaken worldwide over many years.

“ My business is 100% committed to all reduction [sic] of single-use plastic until there is no single-use plastic.

“ The lack of an effective recycling system for single-use plastic products is the key issue that the market has failed to resolve.

There is strong support from many industry stakeholders for government intervention in relation to single-use plastic products and other single-use items.

Support for expanding South Australia's plastic bag ban to thicker plastic bags received widespread support.

There were differing opinions on how government intervention on single-use plastic products, including thicker plastic bags could be achieved.

Feedback also referred to processes and technologies that exist in relation to some single-use plastic products, such as plastic-lined takeaway coffee cups.

Industry raised the importance of ongoing consultation and collaboration to ensure costs and other impacts are considered in proceeding with intervention measures and to provide sufficient time to transition to alternative products.





Contact

Green Industries SA

To view the details of the public consultation
visit www.greenindustries.sa.gov.au/plastics

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