

TURNING THE TIDE ON SINGLE-USE PLASTIC PRODUCTS



NEXT STEPS 2022



Government of South Australia
Green Industries SA



**Government
of South Australia**

Green Industries SA

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Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Kaurna people of the Adelaide Plains as the traditional custodians of the land on which we live and work on.

We respect their spiritual relationship with Sea and Country and acknowledge their Elders – past, present and emerging.

We also pay our respect to the cultural authority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples from other areas of South Australia and Australia.

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From the Deputy Premier



The *Single-use and other Plastic Products (Waste Avoidance) Act 2020* provides the means to phase out unnecessary and problematic single-use and other plastic products in South Australia. Some products have already been banned in South Australia as a result of this legislation.

Between Sunday 5 December 2021 and Saturday 19 February 2022, South Australians were invited to engage with Green Industries SA (GISA) and provide feedback on a discussion paper *Turning the Tide 2021: The future of single-use plastic in South Australia*.

This discussion paper sought to receive community and industry input to help consider future stages of single-use plastic product phase-outs and the indicative timing for any future bans.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to provide their views on this important matter. It is clear that the South Australian community remains profoundly interested in this issue as indicated by the number of the responses received and the sentiments expressed.

A report summarising feedback from the community, businesses and others is available on the [Replace the Waste](#) and [Green Industries SA](#) websites.

Based on this report and further analysis, I can announce that sufficient grounds exist to ban all the products featured in *Turning the Tide 2021*.

However, as we emerge from the global COVID-19 pandemic, it is important to minimise any impacts to business and industry and not unduly exacerbate community cost of living pressures. For this reason the bans will be staged over a period of three years.

Some of the products to be banned in South Australia will be aligned with other Australian jurisdictions and New Zealand. However for some products such as confetti we are taking the lead in removing these unnecessary and problematic single-use plastic products from sale, supply and distribution in our state.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Susan Close', written over a light blue circular watermark.

Hon Susan Close MP

Deputy Premier

Minister for Climate, Environment and Water

The plastic problem

It is recognised around the world that phasing out single-use plastics is an important and achievable step in striving to reduce pollution, cut carbon emissions and protect marine life. Without action, the annual flow of plastic into the ocean alone will nearly triple by 2040 to 29 million metric tonnes per year, the equivalent of 50 kilograms of plastic for every metre of coastline worldwide.

South Australia has taken steps to address the impacts associated with a range of single-use and other plastic products and was the first jurisdiction in Australia to do so on a state-wide basis. Other states and territories have since followed South Australia's lead.

The steps we have taken

Established a stakeholder taskforce

A taskforce of select business, industry, local government and interest group stakeholders was established to ensure impacts associated with government intervention on single-use plastics are properly considered and inform the development of legislation and its ongoing implementation. The taskforce continues to meet as required and remains an important advisory body to help inform the government's ongoing approach.

Established plastic-free precincts

The plastic-free precincts program (now Plastic Free SA) run by the Boomerang Alliance was established to 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. Plastic Free SA program is now open to any engaged business that is seeking to transition away from problematic and unnecessary plastic products.

Introduced legislation

The Single-use and Other Plastic Products (Waste Avoidance) Act 2020 (the SUP Act) commenced on 1 March 2021, prohibiting the sale, supply or distribution of single-use plastic drinking straws (subject to exemptions for disability or medical needs), cutlery and beverage stirrers.

On 1 March 2022, the prohibition extended to include expanded polystyrene cups, bowls, plates and clamshell containers and oxo-degradable plastic products.

The Turning the Tide (2021) – The future of single-use plastic in South Australia discussion paper (Turning the Tide 2021) was released on 5 December 2021. It sought feedback from the community and businesses on whether further products should be prohibited from sale, supply and distribution in South Australia under the SUP Act and also suggested indicative timing for any future bans.

Phase out of single-use plastic products

Following this most recent consultation process, South Australia intends to continue its leadership in phasing out unnecessary single-use and other problematic plastic products. It is considered appropriate that the timing of any future product bans provides sufficient time for business, industry, and the community to prepare and avoid busy trading periods such as Easter and Christmas. Regulations to support further product bans for all the products discussed in Turning the Tide 2021 will be progressively implemented under the framework of the SUP Act over the coming years.

For all the products listed below, consideration will be given to defining the product so it is clear what is being banned and also whether any exemptions may be required.

Phase out by September 2023

Plastic stemmed cotton buds will be phased out and align South Australia with a number of other Australian states and territories, New Zealand and elsewhere. Exemptions where plastic stemmed cotton buds are required for medical, veterinary, and other scientific purposes will be developed.

Single-use plastic bowls and plates will be phased out as alternatives exist and bans are already in place in Queensland and Western Australia.

Plastic pizza savers are difficult to recycle in conventional recycling facilities, and if inadvertently left inside a cardboard pizza box once the pizza has been consumed will impact on the recyclability or compostability of the pizza box.



Phase out by September 2024

Plastic produce bags will be phased out enabling the market to switch to compostable produce bags that are certified to Australian Standards for compostability [AS4736-2006 and AS5810-2010] and that align and support our state's efforts in recovering food waste from households. A major supermarket chain in South Australia alongside some smaller supermarket stores have already transitioned to these compostable produce bags. However, this is not the case for all businesses and the timing of this ban allows them to transition to compostable produce bags and also for suppliers of the bags to tool up and/or for new compostable bag suppliers to enter the market.

There are alternatives for **thick supermarket or boutique-style single-use plastic bags** and the timing of this ban allows retailers to source alternatives and inform customers.

Single-use plastic cups (including coffee cups) offer convenience for consumers, however, these items and their attachments (such as lids and beverage plugs) have limited recovery and recycling pathways, creating confusion for consumers. Some estimates suggest that Australians throw away up to 1 billion coffee cups a year. In order to tackle plastic pollution, business and industry must transition to more sustainable cups, **lids and beverage plugs**.

Fibre and other compostable, or non-plastic recyclable or re-usable alternatives can replace **single-use plastic food containers** with various alternatives already available and in use.



Expanded polystyrene cups, bowls, plates and clamshell containers were prohibited from sale, supply and distribution in South Australia on 1 March 2022. **Other expanded polystyrene (EPS) consumer food and beverage containers** in the market (e.g. gelato tubs) will now also be removed and complete the approach intended for this type of plastic. EPS trays **used for meat, fruit and other food items for retail sale** will also be phased out. Alternatives exist and some major supermarkets are already transitioning to recyclable product trays. EPS is not recyclable through household kerbside collection systems and there are no alternative collection systems available.

Banning **plastic balloon sticks and ties** by this date allows time for businesses / retailers to prepare and source alternatives.

Plastic confetti causes preventable damage to the environment and will also be phased out in South Australia. The interpretation of what constitutes confetti will be defined in regulations.

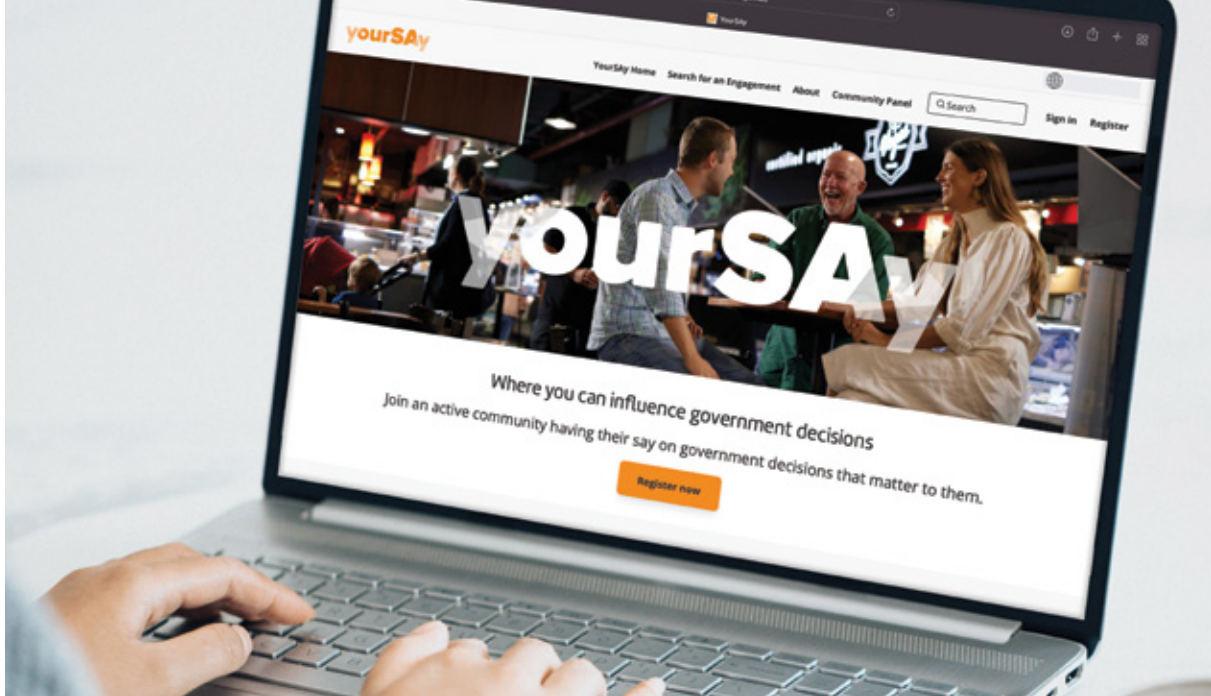
Plastic bread tags can be replaced with non-plastic alternatives as has already been done by at least one major bread producer.



Phase out by September 2025

For some products such as **plastic fruit stickers**, **plastic soy sauce fish**, and **pre-packaged and attached products** (i.e. products that contain plastic straws or cutlery), industry needs time to design new, more sustainable product formats and/or implement alternative arrangements that satisfy the existing purpose of the product where it is still deemed necessary.





Summary of consultation - what you told us

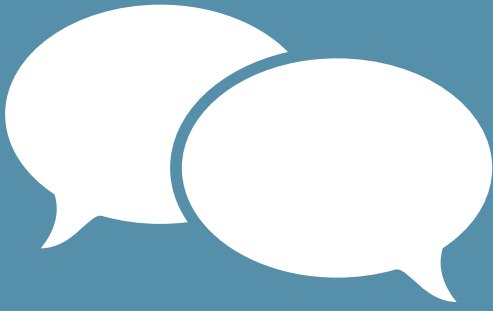
Turning the Tide 2021 specifically asked the community and businesses its views on a range of single-use and other plastic products. The premise of Turning the Tide 2021 was not to re-engage with the community on already agreed first principles – that single-use plastics are a problem and how to address this – but rather to obtain community views on the following nine product groups that are specifically listed at section 14(2) of the SUP Act:

- single-use plastic cups (including coffee cups)
- single-use plastic food containers
- single-use plastic bowls
- single-use plastic plates
- plastic lids on single-use cups (including coffee cups)

- plastic balloon sticks
- plastic balloon ties
- plastic stemmed cotton buds
- plastic bags

Other products considered were:

- fruit stickers
- plastic confetti
- plastic pizza savers
- plastic soy sauce fish
- plastic beverage plugs
- plastic bread tags
- other expanded polystyrene consumer food and beverage containers
- expanded polystyrene trays used for meat, fruit and other items for retail sale pre-packaged and attached products.



2735 GISA survey responses

Consultation ran for 11 weeks, with feedback provided via the government's YourSAy website, in writing to GISA and via social media.

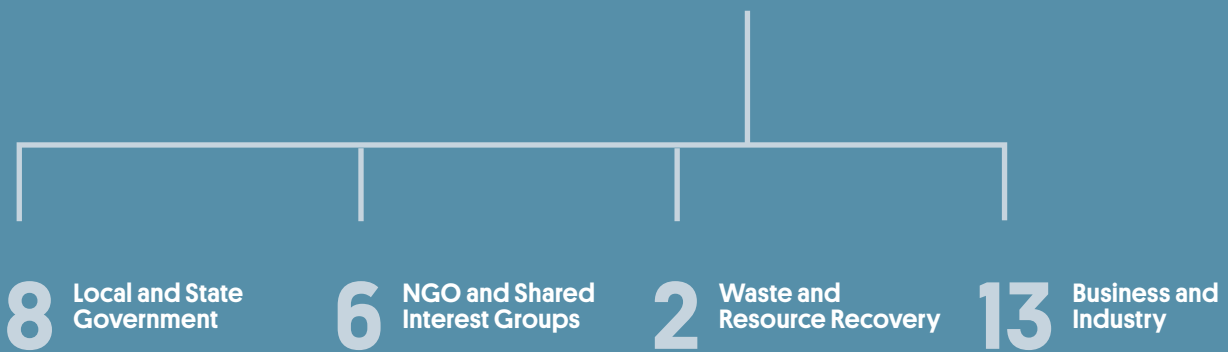
19 YourSAy comments and emails

It is clear that the South Australian community remains profoundly interested in this issue as indicated by the number of responses received and the sentiments and views expressed.

603 panel survey responses

We received 3357 submissions, comments and survey responses from individuals identifying as members of the South Australian public.

29 written submissions from stakeholders representing:



A report summarising the key themes and issues emerging from consultation is available on the Green Industries SA and Replace the Waste websites.

Overview

All stakeholders appreciate and understand the need for continued government intervention in dealing with problematic and unnecessary single-use and other plastic products. There is a reasonable degree of alignment between the views of the general public, councils, and non-government organisations in phasing out single-use plastics, however, opinions vary on some aspects such as the timing of product bans and the range of products to be banned amongst other areas of differentiation.

Business and industry, including the waste and resource recovery sector are less aligned with the above-mentioned group, and have raised a number of issues, concerns and suggestions.

Community feedback

Two surveys administering the same lines of enquiry were conducted, one via the YourSAy engagement platform, which was open to any South Australian desiring to provide feedback on the discussion paper, and the second gathered opinions and feedback from 603 members of the SA public who were recruited via an accredited, paid panel of the state's population aged 18+ years. The purpose of these two surveys was to compare the YourSAy responses with those gathered from a representative sample of the general population to account for the possibility that the YourSAy platform attracted more opinions from people with a more developed interest in this topic than the "average" member of the SA public.

While there were differences in strength of support for further intervention to address the environmental issues caused by single-use plastics, the majority of South Australians (ranging between 86% to 97%) told us they are in favour of this government-led undertaking.



Table 1: Do you support intervention to address environmental problems from single-use plastic products, like bags and takeaway coffee cups?

Support for intervention to address SUPs	GISA survey	General Population Survey
Yes	97%	86%
No	2%	6%
Unsure	1%	8%

Industry feedback

Twenty-nine government, non-government organisations, shared interest, waste and resource and industry stakeholders participated in this consultation via written submissions. They forwarded a wide range of opinions, actions, and suggestions for inclusion by the government. Many of these demonstrated contrary viewpoints, depending upon the sector being represented and the best interests of the submitting organisation.

The sector most affected by proposals to ban problematic and unnecessary plastic products are businesses and industries that manufacture, distribute, supply and sell those items. While most of this sector broadly agreed with the proposed ban/restrictions on the product group and supported a staged approach, it was requested that some categories of items and their alternatives received special/further consideration and attention. Other reservations and concerns included the following:

- creating or exacerbating national inconsistency, enforcement, commercial inefficiencies and confusion when different jurisdictions have different banned items and approaches to the reduction of single-use plastics
- reliance upon bans when other methods of plastics reduction could be considered
- definitions, scope and enforcement of the *Single-use and Other Plastic Products (Waste Avoidance) Act 2020*.
- implementing bans prematurely, before suitable alternatives to [some] plastic products, are available.



