

5.4. SINGLE-USE PLASTIC FREE POLICY

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DEPARTMENT Environment and Planning

RECOMMENDATION

That Council adopt a Single-Use Plastic Free Policy

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Council wishes to adopt a Single-Use Plastic Free Policy.

BACKGROUND

The Council committed to implementing plastic free strategies as part of the 2019-2020 Operational Plan. Plastic Free Douglas program has successfully reduced the amount of plastics in the environment through education and plastic reduction initiatives. After reviewing plastic reduction policies from several local government areas, *Queensland's Plastic Pollution Reduction Plan* and asking for guidance from Boomerang Alliance, it was pointed out that the next step forward was to implement a Single-Use Plastic Free Policy.

After introduction of Queensland's waste levy of 75\$/tonne in 1 July 2019, waste reduction and recycling initiatives started gaining more financial benefits. Several Council areas have successfully implemented policies to reduce the single-use plastics in events and markets. Additionally, Queensland Government has decided to ban single-use plastic straws, stirrers and plates by 1 July 2021.

According to a World Wildlife Fund (2019) report '*Solving Plastic Pollution Through Accountability*', if business continues as usual the amount of plastic pollution in the environment globally is predicted to double by 2030. The report concludes that "the current trajectory for plastic pollution results from: consumption patterns that support single-use business models for plastic products; waste mismanagement leaking plastic into nature; and a supply chain currently producing five times more virgin plastic than recycled plastic."

COMMENT

Although plastic products and materials have many practical and necessary uses, plastics can have serious long-term impacts in the environment. Single-use plastics in particular can create challenges for waste management and resource recovery systems, the environment and the community.

Reduction of waste products is the key priority to achieve sustainable consumption and production patterns and move towards circular economy. Council is a very large user of recycled plastic products in its Open Spaces renewals and recreation areas which contributes to the circular economy relating to plastic.

By implementing a Single-Use Plastic Free Policy, the Council is showing strong environmental leadership and maintaining its eco-friendly image which can be used as an educational tool for the community.

PROPOSAL

That Council adopt the Single-Use Plastic Free Policy.

FINANCIAL/RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- Reduction of single-use plastics conserves natural resources.
- Waste reduction delivers financial benefits through reduced waste management costs.
- Although alternative products to single-use plastics may have marginal cost increases, encouraging reusable alternatives can bring financial benefits.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

There are no risk management implications arising from the introduction of the Single-Use Plastic Free Policy. Educational material will be delivered to assist with the implementation of the Policy.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

- Economic:** Economic benefits are seen within the life cycle cost analysis when reducing the amount of single-use plastics.
- Environmental:** Major environmental benefits can be achieved by reducing the use of single-use plastics. These benefits include pollution prevention, conservation of natural resources and conservation of energy.
- Social:** Reduction of plastic waste in the environment has positive social implications.

CORPORATE/OPERATIONAL PLAN, POLICY REFERENCE

This report has been prepared in accordance with the following:

Corporate Plan 2019-2024 Initiatives:

Theme 3 – Leading Environmental Stewardship

Our visitors and residents deeply value the unparalleled environment in which we live. We recognise our responsibility in protecting and preserving our natural world for generations to come. We understand the strong link between the environment and the economy: they are interdependent. Douglas Shire will be at the forefront of environmental protection by developing strategies, setting policies, and working with all stakeholders to become the envy of and to inspire locations across Australia and the World.

Goal 1 - We will protect our sensitive environment and plan for the impact of climate change.

Goal 2 - We will implement programs that reduce and offset our environmental footprint.

Goal 4 - We will partner with the community to educate and monitor.

Operational Plan 2019-2020 Actions:

3.1.3 - Develop a Plastic Free Douglas strategy.

COUNCIL'S ROLE

Council can play a number of different roles in certain circumstances and it is important to be clear about which role is appropriate for a specific purpose or circumstance. The implementation of actions will be a collective effort and Council's involvement will vary from information only through to full responsibility for delivery.

The following areas outline where Council has a clear responsibility to act:

Custodian: Council owns and manages infrastructure, facilities, reserves, resources and natural areas. In fulfilling its role as custodian, Council will be mindful of the community, the economy, the environment, and good governance.

CONSULTATION

Internal: Environment & Planning Team, Community & Economic Development Team, Councillors, Chief Executive Officer

External: Boomerang Alliance

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Investigation on single-use plastic products at Port Douglas Markets has been completed. Adoption of the Policy will lead to more engagement with stakeholders together with education and amendment of guidelines and forms.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Single- Use Plastic Free Policy [5.4.1 - 4 pages]

75. SINGLE-USE PLASTIC FREE POLICY

Purpose

This policy recognises Council's commitment to reduce waste and protect the health of the environment.

The intent of this policy is to reduce waste and pollutants generated at the source by avoiding the use of single-use plastic products. Where waste and pollutants cannot be avoided they are to be reduced, reused, recycled, recovered, treated or disposed of in line with the Waste Hierarchy and in compliance with relevant legislation.

The policy builds on four (4) of the Environmental Sustainable Principles outlined in Council's Corporate Sustainability General Policy, which are: 1. Preserve and restore the natural environment; 2. Utilise resources efficiently; 3. Protect and enhance biodiversity; and 4. Display strong environmental leadership.

Scope

This policy applies to events proposed or held on Council controlled land, which require a permit under Council's Local Laws or are held in Council facilities. The policy also applies to civic functions and ceremonies conducted by Council, including markets and weddings on Council controlled land.

Definitions

TERM	DEFINITION
Compostable	Products certified under Australian Home Composting Standard (AS5810), Australian Commercial Composting Standards (AS4736), consisting of paper, cardboard, wood, bagasse, bamboo, palm leaf, wheat, rye or otherwise approved by Council. Products with fossil-fuel based plastic lining are not considered compostable.
Pollution	The Department of Forestry defines pollution as: <i>'an activity of man, which directly or indirectly results in the addition to water, air or soil, of matter or energy which has a deleterious effect on living organisms or structure it is desirable to preserve, or which reduces the quality of water, air or soil for any subsequent use'.</i>
Single-use plastic	Include any petroleum-based disposable plastic and polystyrene items such as straws, balloons, bags, sachets, cutlery and food and drink packaging designed to be used once and then discarded.
Waste	Under the Environmental Protection Act 1994, <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>'Waste includes anything, other than an end of waste resource, that is –</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. <i>Left over, or an unwanted by-product, from an industrial, commercial, domestic or other activity; or</i> b. <i>Surplus to the industrial, commercial, domestic or other activity generating the waste.</i> 2. <i>Waste can be a gas, liquid, solid or energy, or a combination of any of them.</i> 3. <i>A thing can be waste whether or not it is of value.'</i>

Related Legislation

Environmental Protection Act 1994

Waste Reduction and Recycling Act 2011

Related Documents (Local Laws, Policies, Forms)

Corporate Sustainability General Policy

Environmental (Council Operations) General Policy

Events General Policy

Port Douglas Markets Policy

Workplace Health and Safety General Policy

Other Principles

Circular Economy – a way in which we achieve economically sustainable development by keeping products and materials in use in the market longer, through sharing, repairing and reusing.

Intergenerational Equity – The present generation has a guardian duty to protect the natural environment for future generations, as each generation has the right to inherit the same resources enjoyed by previous generations.

Life Cycle Cost Analysis – The financial, environmental and social costs associated with an asset or resource throughout the entirety of its life. This includes the costs associated with raw materials, production, transport, operating costs and disposal.

National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development – adopted by all levels of the Australian Government in 1992.

Polluter Pays Principle – The costs associated with environmental pollution, including containment, abatement and avoidance, should be borne by the party who caused the pollution.

The Precautionary Principle – When an activity may lead to morally unacceptable harm, for example the destruction of the natural environment, action should be taken to avoid or diminish that harm even when the scientific evidence has a degree of uncertainty.

Waste Hierarchy – A guide for prioritising waste management practices with the objective of achieving optimal environmental outcomes. The most preferable option is to avoid producing the waste, this is followed by reduce, reuse, recycle, recover, treat and disposal.

Provisions

Council commits to reduce and minimise single-use plastics in all events proposed or held on Council controlled land, which require a permit under Council's Local Laws or are held in Council facilities. Additionally, the Council encourages organisers of events and local businesses to reduce waste and reduce the environmental impact an event or business will have in the community.

Replacement of single-use plastic products is by reusable, recyclable and compostable alternatives.

Processes

Council will reduce and minimise the use of single-use plastics in the local government area. This will be achieved by:

1. Prohibiting the use of single-use plastic products that include cups, coffee cups with plastic lining, plates, bowls, cutlery, takeaway containers (including sandwich wedges and chip cups), sauce sachets, straws, drink stirrers and lids. Prohibition includes degradable and oxo-degradable/biodegradable plastic products. Additionally, the use of biodegradable bio-plastics (PLA) is to be avoided where possible.
2. Prohibiting the use of plastic bags and balloons.
3. Minimising the environmental impacts of any products, supplies and promotional materials by choosing products and materials that minimise the use of single-use plastics.
4. Display strong environmental leadership in the community to reduce the use of single-use plastics through education.
5. Develop and maintain positive and constructive relationships with event and market organisers and the community while applying a best practice plastic wise approach.

Exemptions

Exemptions in relation to hygiene, healthcare, disability or workplace health and safety purposes can be applied for in writing.

Policy Review

This policy is to be reviewed whenever legislation changes, or every 2 years if no changes have been required to be enacted, at the direction of the Chief Executive Officer.

Policy Details

Policy Name	Single-Use Plastic Free Policy
Policy Number	75
Policy Version	1
Document Number	To be advised
Endorsed by	Chief Executive Officer
Policy Type	Council
Approval Authority	Council
Date Adopted	Date adopted at Council
Time Period	2 years
Review Date	May 2022
Policy Department	Environment & Planning
Link to Corporate Plan	Leading Environmental Stewardship

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