

## 6. OFFICERS REPORTS

### 6.1. REVIEW OF SINGLE-USE PLASTIC FREE POLICY 2023

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**DEPARTMENT** Resource Management

#### RECOMMENDATION

**That Council adopt the updated Single-Use Plastic Free Policy**

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#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Council's Single-Use Plastic Free Policy ("the Policy") is due to be updated. Extensive internal and external consultation has resulted in some minor amendments to the Policy relating to the scope of application.

#### BACKGROUND

The Queensland Government banned some single-use plastic items with the *Waste Reduction and Recycling (Plastic Items) Amendment Bill 2020*, which amended the *Waste Reduction and Recycling Act 2011* in 2020. This has resulted in some single-use plastic items being unavailable commercially and no longer required to be covered by the Policy.

Extensive internal and external consultation identified support for bans on items in addition to those banned by the Queensland Government. This includes all single petroleum-based plastic and polystyrene items, plastic bags and balloons for which there are easily accessible, commercially viable alternatives available. These items were already banned under the existing Policy and did not require updating.

Updates to the Policy included the insertion of some definitions for clarity and the expansion of the scope to cover Council's business as a whole, including all Council events, Council endorsed or funded events and activities on Council controlled sites.

#### COMMENTS

There is a visitor expectation that sustainable practices will be endorsed in Douglas Shire as an ecotourism destination. This is particularly the case at Port Douglas markets which receives a high volume of visitors each year. This is supported by the recent installation of a water refill station at Port Douglas Markets which gives visitors and vendors a viable alternative to plastic water bottles.

Council continues to participate in the Plastic Free Places Program ("the Program") run by Boomerang Alliance, funded by the Queensland Government. The program offers businesses free assistance in transitioning away from single-use plastics, which is particularly important with the second round of single-use plastic items bans commencing in Queensland in September 2023.

## PROPOSAL

That Council adopt the updated 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.
- The Policy only requires alternatives to single-use plastics when there is an easily accessible, commercially viable alternative therefore there will be no negative financial impacts. Encouraging reusables can result in financial savings over the long-term.

## RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

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

## SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

**Economic:** Economic benefits occur within the life cycle cost analysis when reducing 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, conservation of energy, positive impacts on marine and terrestrial wildlife and the reduction in the emission of greenhouse gas.

**Social:** Reduction of plastic waste in the environment has positive outcomes for visitors, recreational users and improves the liveability within the Shire.

## 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 2022-2023 Actions:

***Sustainable Waste Management at Events*** - Encourage sustainable practices at events, including supporting the culture of BYO reusables and provision of recycling bins where they are unavailable commercially.

## 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:** Representatives from Environment and Planning, Procurement, Frontline Services, Open Spaces, People and Community Services, including Port Douglas Market assistant, and Council's Social Club.  
Councillor Workshop held 11 July 2023.

**External:** A SurveyMonkey link was emailed to 112 stakeholders, with 9 responses received from a variety of businesses including event managers, caterers, stallholders, community groups and cafés.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Engagement with Port Douglas Market Stallholders has been ongoing under the Plastic Free Places Program, with further engagement expected with the adoption of this Policy and additional single-use plastic item bans coming into force in Queensland from 1 September 2023. Survey of businesses in February 2023.

## ATTACHMENTS

1. DRAFT Single Use Plastic Free Policy 2023 2026 [6.1.1 - 4 pages]

## 75. SINGLE-USE PLASTIC FREE POLICY

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### Introduction

Douglas Shire Council ("Council") is committed to the elimination of single-use plastic at Council events, Council endorsed or funded events and on Council controlled sites.

This Policy outlines Council's commitment to eliminating single-use plastic across its operations and aligns with Council's adopted Waste Reduction and Recycling Plan. Council supports the Queensland Government's single-use plastic items bans and will ban additional single-use plastic items in Douglas Shire for which there are easily accessible, commercially viable alternatives available.

### Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to outline Council's commitment to:

- Display strong environmental leadership by eliminating single-use plastic and balloons from Council controlled sites, at Council events, at Council funded or endorsed events and in the course of Council operations;
- Support the Queensland Government's Ban on single-use plastic items.
- Ban other single-use plastic items;
- Support the Plastic Free Cairns and Douglas Program;
- Educate our community on the ability to use and accept reusable items in the course of their business and activities;
- Support circular economy initiatives; and
- Discourage our communities from using single-use plastic and balloons.

This 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; 4. Display strong environmental leadership.

### Scope

This policy applies to:

- Council's business as a whole - including Councillors, Council staff, contractors, volunteers and/or other representatives as part of their Council related functions or roles;
- Individuals, organisations or other groups organising an event or operating at a Council controlled site;
- Council staff organising, promoting, running, and/or approving events on behalf of Council;
- Individuals, organisations or other groups organising, promoting, running and/or approving an event which uses Council funding, seeks Council endorsement or uses a Council controlled site.

Events and activities which occur on a Council controlled site, but are not endorsed or funded by Council, and which do not require a Council event permit are not included in the mandatory scope of this policy. These types of events are encouraged by Council to voluntarily comply.

## Definitions

TERM	DEFINITION
<b>Balloon</b>	Coloured rubber bags inflated with air or water and then sealed at the neck, used as a child's toy or a decoration.
<b>Civic Event</b>	A formal event organised by Council staff for the community.
<b>Compostable items</b>	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.
<b>Council approved event</b>	A prescribed activity which requires a permit under Council's Local Laws.
<b>Council controlled site</b>	Land, buildings, facilities, venues, roads, or any other location owned or controlled by Council. This includes any of the above which have been leased to an external organisation.
<b>Council endorsed or funded event</b>	An organised activity or event which has received Council funding, sponsorship or support, but which is run or delivered by other parties. For example, events funded by Community Grants or Council in-kind support.
<b>Council event</b>	A Council event includes functions, workshops, Council meetings or briefings, education sessions or other activity organised by Council.
<b>Recyclable items</b>	Items accepted in Council's co-mingled recycling collection service
<b>Reusable Items</b>	Items which can be used instead of conventional single-use items, including coffee cups, water bottles, food containers and bags.
<b>Single-use plastic</b>	Includes any petroleum-based disposable plastic and polystyrene items such as bags, cups, sachets, sandwich wedges, chip cups and food and drink packaging designed to be used once and then discarded. This includes degradable and oxo-degradable / biodegradable plastic products.  This includes single-use plastic items banned by the Queensland Government, including straws, stirrers, swizzle sticks, plates, unenclosed bowls, cutlery, polystyrene takeaway food containers and cups.
<b>Waste</b>	Under the <i>Environmental Protection Act 1994</i> ,  <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 'Waste includes any thing, other than an end of waste resource, that is – <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Left over, or an unwanted by-product, from an industrial, commercial, domestic or other activity; or</li> <li>b. Surplus to the industrial, commercial, domestic or other activity generating the waste.</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. Waste can be a gas, liquid, solid or energy, or a combination of any of them.</li> <li>3. A thing can be waste whether or not it is of value.'</li> </ol>
<b>Waste Hierarchy</b>	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 avoid single-use plastics at all Council events, Council endorsed or funded events and on Council controlled sites. Council also encourages event organisers and businesses to reduce waste and the environmental impact an event or business will have in the community.

Single-use plastics must be avoided where there is a commercially viable alternative in accordance with the Waste Hierarchy. Where these items cannot be avoided, they must be replaced with the following items, in order of preference:

- Reusable items
- Compostable items
- Recyclable items

## Processes

Council will avoid 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. This 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. Avoiding the environmental impacts of any products, supplies and promotional materials by choosing products and materials that minimise the use of single-use plastics;
4. Displaying strong environmental leadership in the community by avoiding the use of single-use plastics through action and education;
5. Encouraging and educate the community to use and accept reusable items in the course of their business and activities; and
6. Developing and maintaining 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.

## 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

Community Support Program General Policy

## Policy Review

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

## Policy Details

<b>Policy Name</b>	<b>Single-Use Plastic Free Policy</b>
<b>Policy Number</b>	75
<b>Policy Version</b>	2
<b>Document Number</b>	1163510
<b>Endorsed by</b>	Chief Executive Officer
<b>Policy Type</b>	Council
<b>Approval Authority</b>	Council
<b>Date Adopted</b>	
<b>Time Period</b>	2 Years
<b>Review Date</b>	
<b>Policy Department</b>	Environment and Planning
<b>Link to Corporate Plan</b>	Leading Environmental Stewardship
<b>Revoked/Superseded</b>	

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