



Sydney2030/Green/Global/Connected



# Reducing waste from events and services

## Guidelines for single use items

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# Reducing waste from events and services

## 01 Zero waste vision by 2030

The City of Sydney is committed to environmental leadership. Our guiding documents Sustainable Sydney 2030 and Leave Nothing to Waste set bold targets, including a long-term goal of zero waste to landfill. Our long-term waste objectives are:

- to reduce the amount of waste produced
- to recycle as much as possible; and
- to treat what's left over in the most sustainable way.

The City, through its [Leave Nothing to Waste Strategy and Action Plan](#), has a commitment to continuous improvement when it comes to reducing waste across all of our operations including events.

The temporary nature of events can often increase our reliance on single use items. Single use items are typically products and packaging that we dispose of after one use. In many instances, these items are not recycled because the type of material used isn't recyclable and/or can't be collected separately.

The City has developed these guidelines to assist staff and event managers to find more sustainable alternatives to single use items and how to ensure that where waste is generated, recycling is maximised.

## 02 Who the Guidelines apply to

These guidelines apply to City staff, contractors and other entities using City venues and outdoor spaces to deliver services and events.

## 03 What activities they apply to

These guidelines apply to the delivery of services, events, festivals, markets and programs delivered by the City of Sydney, and those delivered by other entities who hire venues or seek a permit for the use of outdoor venues.

## 04 Where do they apply

The Guidelines apply to City venues and outdoor spaces within the City of Sydney [local government area](#) except for places and land managed by other authorities and corporations, including, for example:

- Barangaroo Development Authority.
- Botanic Gardens, Domain and Centennial Parklands Trust.
- Department of Education and Communities.
- Land and Housing Corporation.
- NSW Maritime.
- Property NSW.
- Rail Corp.
- University of Sydney, University of Technology and Notre Dame University.
- Parts of Central Park.
- International Square.
- Westpac Plaza.

Some City venues may have existing tenancy agreements that do not require adherence to these Guidelines.

## 05 Zero waste principles

The following four principles provide a framework for planning more sustainable zero waste events.

- **Reduce/Avoid:** The best environmental outcome is to reduce the amount of resources and products required in the first place. Leaflets, promotional materials and excess packaging should be avoided wherever possible.
- **Reuse:** Choose items that can be used many times over will prevent unnecessary waste and often has a reduced carbon impact on the environment.
- **Recycle:** Where single use items cannot be avoided, select items that are easily to collect and can be sent for recycling or composting.
- **Recover:** Recovery of waste is often where a material cannot be recycled back into the same product but another by product can be produced such as creating a secondary material for the construction industry or by generating energy.

## 06 Phasing out single use items

Single use items are having devastating effects on our environment. Studies have shown that up to 1 million plastics drinks bottles are purchased globally **every minute**. Less than 50% are collected for recycling and only 7% are turned back into new bottles. Research estimates that by 2050 there will be more plastic in the ocean than fish.

The City has committed to phasing out the use of single use items in our buildings, at our own venues and at events within our local government area.

Subject to certain exceptions the following items should no longer be freely available on City properties and venues without Director approval:

- bottled water,
- plastic straws,
- plastic serveware (including items made from expanded polystyrene),
- plastic utensils,
- promotional flyers,
- plastic single use sampling / giveaways, and
- single use cups.

Advice for staff and event managers on how to avoid single use items is provided below. Details of available alternatives and a quick reference guide are provided at the end of this document.

### Bottled water alternatives

#### Access to water

- Many City of Sydney properties and venues have access to free drinking water taps or fountains.
- Events with more than 1000 expected attendees can request Sydney Water to

provide free portable water stations (conditions apply<sup>1</sup>).

- Smaller community events operated by City of Sydney can hire portable water units.
- Events or set ups without convenient access to water supply can purchase reusable water containers.

### Drinking bottles and cups

- Where provided, use existing cups and glasses held on site at City properties and venues.
- Encourage staff and visitors to bring their own water bottles to work and events through training and event advertising channels.
- Hire re-usable cups.
- Where single use items cannot be avoided preference compostable items.

### Additional considerations and exceptions:

- The City is committed to being an inclusive and accessible for all. We understand that the use of bottled water may be a requirement for some of our community and we will continue to provide bottled water for those who require them.
- Consider including a small sign at your event that has written “*We are committed to reducing the use of single use plastics, like bottles and straws. But, we understand that*

*for some people, plastic bottles and straws are the only way you can drink, and are crucial to your independence. If you need one, let us know. For those of you who don't need a plastic bottle or straw, please support us to reduce the impact on the environment by not asking for one. Thank you”.*

- During extreme heat events, City staff may need to distribute water in plastic bottles to vulnerable members of our community
- Performers on stage may require bottles of water with a lid to prevent spills (please preference reusable bottles where possible).
- Be mindful when selecting alternatives to plastic. Currently biodegradable plastics cannot be recycled in the same way as non-biodegradable plastic.
- Biodegradable packaging can only be composted when it meets the appropriate composting standard.
- Compostable items must conform to Australian Standard (AS 4736—2006) or equivalent, for composting.
- Purchasers can request evidence of certification from suppliers if not provided.
- To minimise the impact on the environment compostable items should be separately collected and go to a composting facility.

<sup>1</sup> <https://oursydneyourwater.com.au/assets/uploads/Files/Sydney-Water-Portable-Water-Stations-Information-Pack.pdf>



- Soft drinks and sparkling water should be dispensed using postmix equipment. Plastic bottles are only permitted if alternatives are not available.

### Reducing plastic straws

#### Avoidance, composting and recycling:

- Remove straws from drinks and counters and provide only when requested.
- Compostable or paper straws are a good alternative to plastic for drinks that require a straw.

#### Additional considerations and exceptions:

- The City is committed to being an inclusive and accessible city for all and we understand that the use of plastic straws may be a requirement for some of our community and we will continue to provide plastic straws for those who require them
- Consider including a small sign at your event that has written *“We are committed to reducing the use of single use plastics, like bottles and straws. But, we understand that for some people, plastic bottles and straws are the only way you can drink, and are crucial to your independence. If you need one, let us know. For those of you who don’t need a plastic bottle or straw, please support us to reduce the impact on the environment by not asking for one. Thank you”*
- Compostable items must conform to Australian Standard (AS 4736—2006) or equivalent, for composting.

- Purchasers can request evidence of certification from suppliers if not provided.
- To minimise the impact on the environment compostable items should be separately collected and go to a composting facility.
- Please note that biodegradable plastic is not always compostable, even when made from plant based materials and **cannot** be recycled in the yellow bin (additional information is provided in the reference section).

### Reducing plastic serveware and utensils

#### Avoidance and recycling

- Consider providing finger food for events to reduce the need for serveware and utensils.
- Serve ice-cream in cones rather than providing cups and plastic spoons.
- Do not provide single use stirrers.
- Serve condiments in large dispensers rather than individual sachets.
- Where provided, use existing reusable crockery and serveware held on site at City properties and venues.
- Hire reusable serveware.
- Provide compostable serveware, utensils and napkins.
- If you need to use plastic serveware purchase items that can be recycled and ensure that there are recycling bins on site.

- Keep remaining or surplus items for future exceptional circumstances as required

**Additional considerations and exceptions:**

- Compostable items must conform to Australian Standard (AS 4736—2006) for composting.
- To minimise the impact on the environment compostable items should be separately collected and go to a composting facility.
- Please note that biodegradable plastic is not always compostable, even when made from plant based materials and **cannot** be recycled in the yellow bin (additional information is provided in the reference section).

**Reducing single use cups**

**Avoidance and recycling**

- Encourage staff and community members through event marketing and education to take reusable coffee cups to cafes and events. Consider adding the following statements in your communications *“The City of Sydney is committed to reducing avoidable waste and we would like you to help reduce the environmental impact of our event by remembering your own water bottles and coffee cups”*
- Require vendors at City events to provide returnable coffee cups.
- Hire returnable coffee cups for events.

- Where single use items cannot be avoided preference compostable items.

**Additional considerations and exceptions:**

- Compostable items must conform to Australian Standard (AS 4736—2006) for composting.
- To minimise the impact on the environment compostable items should be separately collected and go to a composting facility.
- Please note that biodegradable plastic is not always compostable, even when made from plant based materials and **cannot** be recycled in the yellow bin (additional information is provided in the reference section).

**Commercial flyers, sampling and giveaways**

**Avoidance and recycling**

- Distribution of promotional flyers in the city is no longer permitted
- Distribution of City approved and state agency information leaflets are permitted. Please ensure leaflets are distributed responsibly and produced using recycled content paper.
- Single use items and excessively packaged items are not permitted. All sponsor giveaways need to be advised for approval
- Distribution of gift bags at events should be made from reusable materials and the contents, where possible, should not be made from plastic.

## 07 Additional resources

### Reference materials to help understand the impact of different consumable items

[Understanding plastic packaging and the language we use to describe it](#)

[Greenhouse Gas Impacts of Disposable vs Reusable Foodservice Products](#)

<https://anlscape.com.au/>

<http://www.vegware.com.au/>

## 08 Example suppliers

Below are some examples of suppliers of reusable and compostable items and services. Please note this list is not exhaustive and staff will need to refer to the City's policies regarding procurement of products and services.

### Portable water units

<https://oursydneyourwater.com.au/>

<https://splashdown.events/hydration-stations/>

<http://tranquilwater.com.au/news/water-trailers-portable-hydration-station/>

### Reusable cups, coffee cups and serveware services

<http://www.globelet.com/>

<http://absolutepartyhire.com.au/>

<https://ruzi.com.au/>

### Compostable cups and serveware

<https://www.biopak.com.au/products/plates-bowls-and-trays>

<https://www.detpak.com/>

### Composting and recycling services

<https://www.soilco.com.au/>



## 09 Glossary

**Biodegradable** - A product that can be broken down by microorganisms (bacteria or fungi) into water, naturally occurring gases like carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) and methane (CH<sub>4</sub>) and biomass. Biodegradability depends strongly on the environmental conditions: temperature, presence of microorganisms, presence of oxygen and water. The biodegradability and the degradation rate of a biodegradable plastic product may be different in the soil, on the soil, in humid or dry climate, in surface water, in marine water, or in human made systems like home composting, industrial composting or anaerobic digestion.

**Compostable** - Compostable materials are materials that break down at composting conditions. Industrial composting conditions require elevated temperature (55-60°C) combined with a high relative humidity and the presence of oxygen, and they are in fact the most optimal compared to other everyday biodegradation conditions: in soil, surface water and marine water.

**Recycling** - recycling is the process of converting waste materials into the same or new materials and objects

**Serveware** – items used to serve food and beverages

**Single use items** - products and packaging that are typically disposed after one use

**Zero waste** - the conservation of all resources by means of responsible production, consumption, reuse, and recovery of all products, packaging, and materials without burning them, and without discharges to land, water, or air that threaten the environment or human health<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> <http://zwia.org/standards/zw-definition/>

Single Use Item	Most favourable ⇌ ⇌ ⇌ ⇌ ⇌ ⇌ ⇌ ⇌ Least favourable			Discouraged	Exceptions
Bottled Water	BYO beverage containers (using existing water access points or temporary water stations*)	Venue hire re-useable beverage containers for event use (using existing water access points or temporary water stations*)	Compostable** single use beverage containers (using existing water access points or temporary water stations*)	Plastic bottled water	Alcohol licensing regulations Health and safety reasons Medical exceptions, or as needed by people with disability
Cups (coffee and other beverages)	BYO beverage containers	Venue hire re-useable beverage containers for event use	Compostable** single use beverage containers	Single use paper cups	Health and safety regulations Medical exceptions
Straws	No straws	Compostable paper straws**	Paper straws	Plastic straws	Medical exceptions, or as needed by people with disability
Serveware (plates and bowls)	Onsite existing permanent serveware or finger food	Venue hire re-useable serveware	Compostable** serveware /napkins	Plastic serveware including EPS (polystyrene) and PLA (biodegradable plastics)	
Utensils	No utensils or existing utensils	Reusable utensils	Compostable** utensils	Plastic stirrers / spoons	Medical exceptions, or as needed by people with disability
Condiments	Large dispensers	Small compostable dispensers**		Single plastic sachets or tubs	
Commercial flyers	None	Flyers made from recycled content		Flyers	Health and safety reasons Community related communications
Giveaways / sampling	None	Re-useable	Recyclable***	None recyclable / disposable items	

\*minimum patron numbers may apply

\*\*must confirm to Australian Standards (AS 4736—2006) and where possible compostable items should be separately collected and go to a composting facility

\*\*\*collection systems must be available