



Plastic Free Darebin Business Guide

A guide to eliminating single-use plastics in your business



Plastic facts



Plastic Facts

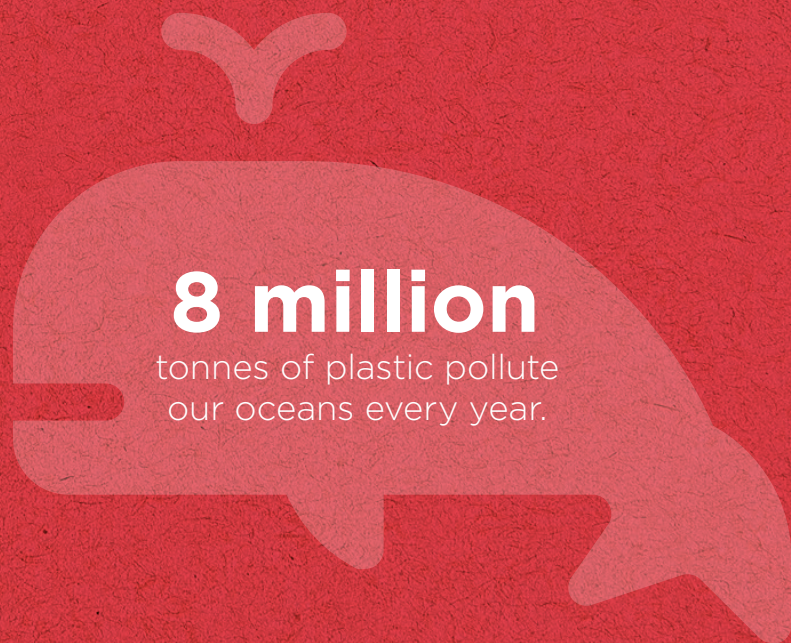
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8 million

tonnes of plastic pollute our oceans every year.

Plastic facts

Every piece of plastic ever made still exists somewhere in the world. Plastic is designed to last forever, yet every day we use many plastic products that are thrown away after only a few minutes.


It is estimated that annually Australians use four to six billion single-use plastic bags, with only three per cent of these being recycled and 80 million ending up as litter. Globally, at least eight million tonnes of mishandled plastic waste washes into our oceans and rivers each year.

Single-use plastic has many negative environmental, social and economic impacts. Plastic does not biodegrade; rather it breaks down into ever-smaller pieces. Accumulating evidence has shown that microplastics – tiny plastic fibres and fragments – can be found in the marine and human food chains and their impacts are a growing concern.

\$15,000

If a business gives out 100 free plastic singlet bags every day for 5 years, it will cost them up to \$15,000

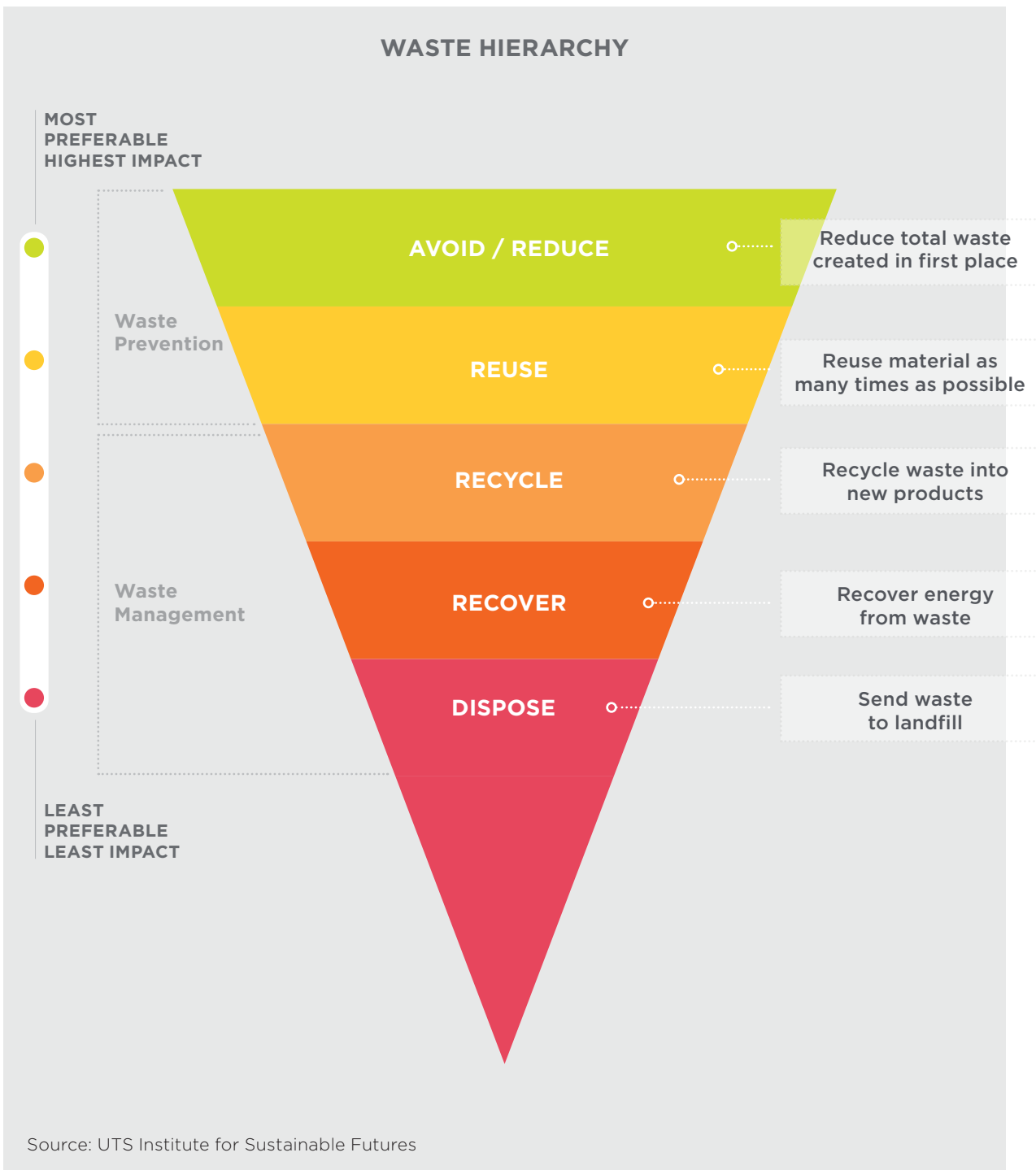
What's happening locally and globally?

- Darebin Council's events are **single-use plastic free** 
- Local organisations are leading plastic free initiatives¹ such as:
 - **Wangim Cup** 
 - **Boomerang Bags**  – bags made from second-hand materials to replace plastic bags
 - **Melbourne Farmers Market**  - plastic bag free since 2007, eliminated single-use coffee cups in 2014 and all single-use catering and food service equipment from their markets in 2018
- **VIC BAG BAN**  – A state-wide ban on single-use plastic bags was implemented in November 2019
- **VIC Single-Use Plastics Ban**  From February 2023, problematic single-use plastics will be banned from sale or supply in Victoria. This includes drinking straws, cutlery, plates, drink stirrers and cotton bud sticks made from conventional, degradable and compostable plastics.

¹ All organisations, businesses, suppliers, services and products mentioned in this Guide are correct at the time of publication. Darebin Council provides these as examples of possible solutions rather than endorsement of any particular entity.

Although the waste hierarchy is a useful tool when considering how you can eliminate single-use plastic, you don't have to address the principles in the same order as they are shown in the diagram below. For example, for single-use plastics there will be a better environmental outcome if you consider reusable products (Reuse) before considering reducing the

number of disposable ones (Reduce). In addition, other disposable products (such as paper and cardboard) still have environmental impacts and are not always better alternatives to single-use plastic - so it's important to prioritise reusable items.



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Why go single-use plastic free?



**600
years**

We use plastic straws for an average of 20 minutes, but they stay around for approximately 600 years.



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Why go single-use plastic free?

Be part of the solution and help create the kind of planet we want our children and grandchildren to steward and enjoy

Plastics cause harm to wildlife

- **National Litter Index 2018-19**  shows that take away packaging is responsible for 18% of all litter in Victoria (in volume).
- Our Municipal Waste Audit from 2022 found that plastics, both recyclable and non-recyclable, account for more than 9% of waste that ends up in landfill. Light weight wastes such as plastics can blow away and enter our waterways.

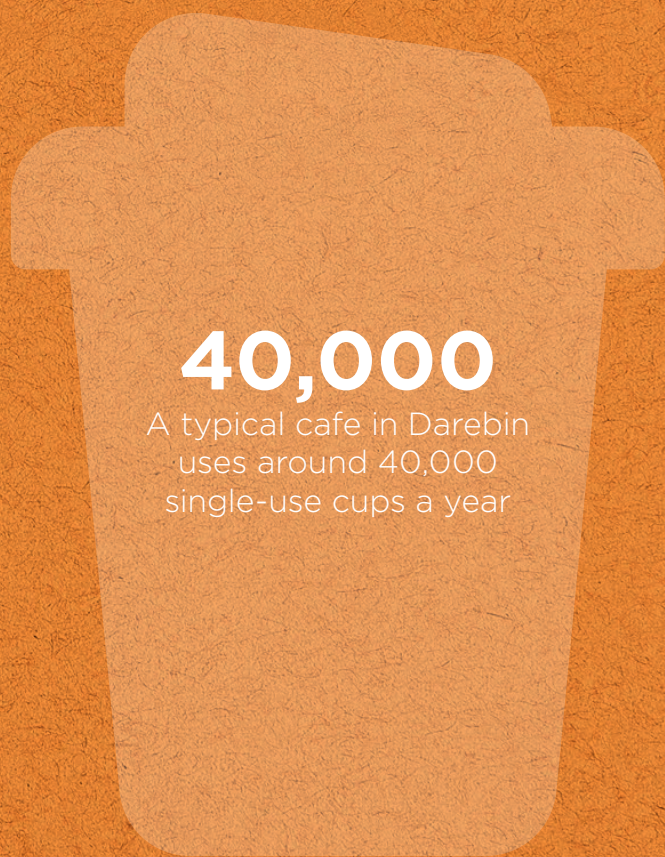
There are so many benefits to your business, some of which are featured in this **video** :



- Meeting customer expectations and creating loyal customers
- Reduce cost in the long run
- Reduce environmental footprint
- Join the network of sustainable business in Darebin



Steps to go single-use plastic free!



40,000

A typical cafe in Darebin
uses around 40,000
single-use cups a year



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Steps to go single-use plastic free!

Follow the steps below to begin your single-use plastic free journey.



1 Know your plastics

- Audit your current waste to establish a baseline.
- Track and record the sources, types, volumes and weights of plastics being used in your business. For a simplified waste audit template, check out page 10.
- Make sure you audit your waste bin, as well as your recycling bin. Are all recyclable plastics being placed in the recycling bin?
- Don't forget to consider the whole operation, from delivery and food preparation to storage and disposal. Some items you use don't end up in your waste streams such as take-away coffee cups and containers. Can you determine how much of these are used by looking at your order history and/or sales data?
- Depending on the type of your business, auditing a day's worth of waste might be sufficient, or you might want to keep a record for the whole week.

*For large and complex organisations, you may consider engaging a specialised service such as **Reground**  to help with the audit

2 Start the conversation

- What did your audit find? Share your results with your team and set a goal or target for where you want to get to and by when.
- Talk to staff about what your vision is and share it with customers. Do you want to be a 'Zero Waste' or 'Single Use Plastic Free' business?
- Ask your customers to help you get to your vision
- Set a timeframe for reviewing your progress i.e. how frequently you are going to undertake audits to check in on how you are going



3 Reduce, reuse, recycle

Based on the findings from your audit, identify some priority items to focus on. A good way to start is to pick one or two items that are relatively easy to tackle, and will have big impacts.

With the priority item/s consider if you can:

- a. encourage/incentivise customers to bring their own (e.g. BYO cups and takeaway containers)
- b. speak to your suppliers to eliminate single-use plastics in the supply chain (e.g. could your supplier pack their items in reusable trays instead of plastic bags? Can your supply chain be shortened to eliminate packaging?)
- c. replace single-use plastic items with products that are less harmful to the environment, or remove altogether (e.g. could you replace single-serve soy sauce, ketchups and other condiments with bulk dispensers and reusable containers?)
- d. improve your existing recycling system to ensure that no recyclable items are ending up in landfill. This may involve:
 - better labelling and signage to avoid wrong items being placed in the bins
 - establishing specialised recycling stream such as soft plastic recycling

4 Communicate

Let your customers know what you are doing by displaying posters and utilising social media. Explain why it is important to you. Get their feedback and document it in a way that is useful to you. Some of the things you can share include:




- Your progress, including the waste audit, and the waste stream you are targeting - ask for ideas and solutions
- Your successes, whether that is an empty rubbish bin, stats on how much plastic waste you have eliminated, new reusable cups, straws etc




5 Monitor progress

Once you implement changes, run another waste audit to determine the waste impacts. Track your short-term and long-term financial costs/savings of the changes (i.e. waste management fee, cost of buying packaging, upfront investment costs). Celebrate the wins and let your customers know.



Visit our Sustainable Business playlist on YouTube to see how local businesses are tackling the issue of waste.

-  Communicate with customers to BYO reusable items
-  If customers forget their reusable item, consider charging a small fee for a single-use item
-  Selling reusable items branded with your business is a great way to promote your business

-  Connect with like-minded local businesses
 - Join the Darebin Zero Waste Business Network 
 - Attend Council's Green Business Networking  events

Handy hints

Plastic waste audit

Waste audits help to identify what kinds of items are filling up your bins. It is important to establish baseline data, so you can show how much waste you have reduced through your initiatives.

Date: ____/____/____ Organisation: _____

Period of audit: _____

Source	Type of plastic waste	Volume	Weight
Example: Kitchen waste bin	Plastic bread bag	3L	100g

Additional information

Other plastic waste that do not end up in your bins e.g. takeaway coffee cups	Estimated amount (volume and weight)

Total plastic waste (volume and weight) _____

Total waste (volume and weight) _____

% of plastic in waste _____

Key findings:

Top 3 items in your plastic waste:

How much of the recyclable plastics were found in your waste bin?

Now that you have the data above, you can set targets. Examples of targets include:

- Reducing the use of single-use coffee cups by 50%
- Eliminate soft plastics entering the waste stream



A quick guide to single-use plastic product alternatives



Always choose **reusable** over single-use



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A quick guide to single-use plastic product alternatives

See the table below for single-use plastic alternatives. Remember to choose reusable options over single-use options even if they are labelled compostable or recyclable.

Single-use Plastic Product	Best Option	Next Best Option
Plastic Bags	<p>Customers BYO reusable bags</p> <p>Boomerang Bags  are available</p> <p>Sell reusable bags for a small fee (option to include your brand)</p>	<p>100% recycled paper bags or FSC-certified paper bags</p> <p>Suppliers include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - DetPak  - PAC Trading 
Bottled Water	<p>Drinking water is available onsite</p> <p>Offer reusable, washable cups</p> <p>Customers BYO reusable drink bottles</p>	<p>No next best option</p>
Disposable cups and lids (paper, polystyrene, plastic)	<p>Customers BYO reusable cups</p> <p>Reusable cups (e.g. ceramic mugs) are available and can be washed on site</p>	<p>Participate in a coffee cup sharing scheme or a recycling scheme (see page 15 for more information)</p> <p>Start a mug library (see page 15 for more information)</p> <p>Certified compostable cups, with specialised pick-up service</p> <p>Home compostable cup suppliers include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - BioPak , Detpak , Compostable Alternatives , or I am Not Paper  <p>Edible takeaway cups Suppliers include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Good Edi  <p>See page 16 for more information about setting up a specialised pick-up service for compostable items.</p>



Single-use Plastic Product	Best Option	Next Best Option
<p>Plates, bowls and cutlery</p>	<p>Reusable items (eg. ceramic crockery) are available and can be washed on site.</p>	<p>No next best option for dine-in customers.</p> <p>Consider only providing cutlery for take-away orders when customers ask for it</p> <p>Consider selling reusable sporks or fork, spoon, cutlery sets</p> <p>Certified compostable cutlery with specialised pick-up service</p> <p>Cutlery supplier: - BioPak  or Detpak </p>
<p>Takeaway containers</p>	<p>Customers BYO reusable food containers</p> 	<p>Certified home compostable takeaway containers from suppliers such as BioPak  and Detpak .</p> <p>Paper/ cardboard food boxes (recyclable)</p> <p>Suppliers include DetPak  and GreenPack </p>
<p>Straws</p>	<p>No straw</p> <p>Customers BYO reusable straws (metal, glass)</p> <p>Provide reusable straws that can be returned and washed</p> 	<p>Paper straws (compostable)</p> <p>Bamboo straws (Reusable)</p> <p>See page 16 for more information on straws.</p>
<p>Cling wrap</p>	<p>Beeswax wraps</p> <p>Silicone food covers</p> <p>Silicone lids</p> <p>Sandwich wrap/pouch</p> <p>Reusable containers</p>	<p>Aluminium foil (recyclable when rolled into a ball larger than a golf ball)</p>



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Small changes make a

big difference



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In this section you will find more information about how you can make progress in your single-use plastic free journey.

Coffee cup sharing schemes and recycling options

Australians use an estimated 1 billion takeaway coffee cups every year. Coffee cups cannot be recycled in the commingled recycling stream because of their plastic lining, however, our most recent survey with Darebin residents have found that more than 60% of people incorrectly put coffee cups in the recycling bin, contaminating the recycling stream.

The ideal solution is for customers to sit-in to enjoy their coffee in a reusable cup, or 'bring your own' (BYO) cups. Many cafes around Darebin are registered with responsiblecafes.org and offer incentives, such as discounts, for customers who bring their own cups. Registered cafes are promoted through the Responsible Cafes website. Where BYO isn't possible, why not consider options below:

Mug library

Set up a mug library by getting old mugs from your local op shop, or ask your regular customers to donate them for a discount on the next coffee. Wash them thoroughly and place them near the counter with a sign explaining that the mugs are available for takeaway. Encourage customers to use these in place of disposable cups, and ask them to bring the cups back.

Right: Wangim Cup is an initiative delivered by Darebin's Zero Waste Business Network.
Photo by Marcus Coblyn

Cup and container sharing schemes

You may look into services where customers share reusable cups and containers, such as:

- [returnr](#)
- [Huskee](#)
- [Green Caffein](#)
- [Retub](#)
- [Skip Zero](#)
- [One Good Cup](#)

There is also Darebin's very own [Wangim Cup initiative](#). See supplier lists for more information.

Coffee cup recycling

Disposable coffee cups can't be recycled in our commingled recycling bin. If you go through a lot of single-use coffee cups, consider options like these instead:

- Simply Cups
- RecycleMe

As with all other single-use plastic items, it is best to consider reusable options first before recycling options. Note that used coffee cups need to be collected separately with these options, and most takeaway coffees are not consumed at the coffee shop. These options may be more suitable for shopping strips or large markets where a large number of disposable cups are being used.



Compostable products

Compostable products are another option when you cannot avoid single-use plastics. It is best to close the loop on compostable waste and products by either organising your own composting system or arranging a regular pickup by a commercial composting service. You can find local suppliers using suppliers such as **Compost Connect** 


Remember that compostable products **cannot** be placed in Darebin Council's Food and Green Waste Recycling bin, as the composting process is different. You may put in place a 'take-back scheme' so that customers can bring back the compostable products you supplied.

Straws

A survey of over 100 people conducted at Station Street, Fairfield in 2019 found that:

- 98% of respondents support elimination of plastic straws from Station Street
- 90% said they do not need a straw to consume drinks

Removing single-use plastic straws and only providing straws when asked is a great way to reduce waste from your business, and will help you reduce costs. Some customers may need to use straws due to their health conditions, providing single-use plastics straws in these situations is permitted under the state-wide ban. There are many sustainable options that you could consider, including:

- **Reusable metal straws** 
- **Bamboo straws** 
- **Paper straws** 
- **Home compostable straws** 

Catering

Can you make your catering single-use plastic free? Here are some things to consider:

- Adjust your catering menu to reduce individually wrapped items. Think finger foods that do not require individual wrapping or utensils, and sauces in reusable containers
- Invest in reusable containers that you can supply, and ask your customers to return them
- Can you go cling wrap free by using reusable containers with lids, beeswax wrap, butchers paper, or silicone wraps?
- If you cannot avoid using single-use containers, use recyclable cardboard




Point of sale

There are small changes that you can implement to further help your business' plastic free journey:

- Utilise an online system to email receipts instead of printing, and/or swap your receipts to BPA-free paper
- Your staff play a crucial role in educating your customers, encourage them to:
 - Ask customers whether they brought their own container, or coffee cups when they order, you can normalise reusable
 - Eliminate unnecessary disposable items, like straws, napkins, and lids for cups, or make available upon request only
 - Ask customers whether they want a receipt

Reuse solutions for events


Events can have a significant environmental impact and can be huge producers of waste. Consider reuse options such as these, as a way to divert disposables from ending up in landfill.


- **B-Alternative** 
- **Green My Plate** 
- **Better Cup** 



Want to shop package free?

Check out these local options:

- Farmers Market**
 Farmers Markets are a great place to pick up local, plastic packaging-free fruits, vegetables and breads. The Alphington Farmers Market is one of Darebin’s markets.
- Preston Market**
 Bring reusable bags and containers to stock up on fruit, vegetables, nuts, legumes, grains, meat and seafood at Preston Market.
- Roving Refills** 
 Bring your own container and fill up with locally made detergents. You can also organise a bulk order.

For more information about where you can shop package free, visit the **Sustainable Darebin Map** 

Is switching to paper products the answer?

No, paper products are resource intensive to produce so switching to reusable products is your best option. Paper-like products are not always made of paper, some are made from sugarcane bagasse, a by-product from sugar production, others from corn starch. For those that are made of paper, be sure it’s 100% recycled or Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified, and you know it’s coming from a sustainable source

The best alternative is to use a reusable product in all cases (crockery, glass, porcelain, heavy duty plastic). When this is not possible, and a disposable product must be utilised, firstly investigate recyclable options such as paper or cardboard where possible.

The difference between biodegradable and compostable products

Biodegradable

a natural process where micro-organisms (bacteria, fungi) in the environment convert materials into natural substances like water, carbon dioxide or biomass. The process of biodegradation depends on the surrounding environmental conditions (e.g. location or temperature), on the material itself, and on the application. This **means a biodegradable plastic will not simply break down wherever it ends up**. If it is not disposed of correctly or it ends up as litter, it might not break down at all.

Compostable

microbial treatment of materials at end of life in a composting environment. These items are usually suited to a commercial composting facility (look for **Australian Standards AS 4736-2006**). A small amount of products marketed as compostable will be suitable for home composting systems (look for Australian Standard AS 5810-2010). For a product or packaging to be verified compostable according to Australian Standards it must biologically disintegrate and biodegrade in the relevant composting system to set levels within a defined period of time.



Supplier list



Be part of the
solution
not the pollution



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This is not a complete or Council endorsed supplier list, but a useful list to get you on your way. Information is accurate as of December 2022.

Supplier	Services and notes	Contact
Reusable (item purchased and kept by customers)		
KeepCup	Reusable cups made of plastic, glass, stainless steel.	keepcup.com.au  T 03 8417 1100
UpperCup	Reusable cup	uppercup.com  T 03 8362 3781
Huskee	Reusable cup Businesses can also join the Huskee Swap program. For more information, visit huskee.co/swap 	huskee.co/huskeecup 
Reusable (item purchased and kept by businesses)		
EnviroShop (Local business)	Reusable straws - metal or silicon	enviroshop.com.au  T 03 8395 3030
Return/swap		
Wangim Cup (Local initiative)	Customers borrow reusable coffee cup and return at any participating cafes.	wangim.com.au 
Retub	Reusable takeaway container. Businesses can be part of the 'reswap' program. For more information, visit retub.com.au/pages/reswap 	retub.com.au  T 0404 367 924
Returnr	Reusable stainless cups and takeaway containers.	returnr.org  T 0432 143 474
Boomerang Bags	Boomerang Bags is a community group made of local community members who get together and sew bags using donated fabrics. You can stock their handmade bags to encourage your customers to use them instead of single-use plastic bags.	Facebook page: facebook.com/boomerangbagsdarebin 



Supplier	Services and notes	Contact
Compostable		
BioPak	Compostable coffee cups, takeaway containers, cutlery, paper straws. Its Sugarcane Clamshell product line is certified home compostable and can be placed in your compost bin at home. The rest of the products cannot be placed in commingled recycling bin, or food and green waste recycling bin. A specialised pick-up must be arranged. For information about composting, visit biopak.com.au/compost-service	biopak.com.au T 1300 246 725
Recyclable (paper)		
DetPak	Recyclable paper bags, food containers (paper).	detpak.com
PACTrading	Recyclable paper bags, food containers (paper).	pactrading.com.au T 03 9706 4535
Coffee cup recycling		
Simply Cups	Accepts any used coffee cups and recycle them into kerb blocks and outdoor furniture.	simplycups.com.au
RecycleMe	Accepts specially designed RecycleMe cups only. Collected cups can be recycled as paper.	detpak.com/recycleme

Updated December 2022 by Darebin City Council

This document will be updated regularly. If you have any feedback or questions relating to this document, email environment.support@darebin.vic.gov.au or call 03 8470 8307.





Thanks for doing
your part to make
Darebin a single-use
plastic free place
to live!

CITY OF DAREBIN

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National Relay Service
relayservice.gov.au

If you are deaf, or have a
hearing or speech impairment,
contact us through the
National Relay Service.



Speak Your Language
T 8470 8470

العربية	Italiano	Soomalii
繁體中文	Македонски	Español
Ελληνικά	नेपाली	اردو
हिंदी	ਪੰਜਾਬੀ	Tiếng Việt