

# Position Statement on single-use coffee cups and lids

August 2022

**Boomerang Alliance proposes a national goal to phase-out on all single-use (disposable) coffee cups and lids by 2030, with milestone bans on single-use plastic cups and lids in 2024 and 2026 designed to achieve this goal.**

## The problem with single use coffee cups/lids

An estimated 1.8 billion coffee cups<sup>1</sup> are used every year in Australia. Single use coffee cups and lids are a major litter and waste problem. According to datasets that include Clean Up Australia, Keep Australia Beautiful and the Australian Marine Debris Initiative, they remain amongst the most habitually littered items in Australia.

They present significant issues and have been identified by many countries as a problem that must be addressed.

## The recovery issue

Irrespective of their material use, single-use cups and lids are not effectively collected, recycled, or composted when thrown away. There is broad confusion surrounding the correct disposal method of these items. They commonly contaminate the recycling and organic streams as most municipal waste services do not have the ability to recycle or compost these products - although organic waste facilities are becoming more common. Furthermore, they are a massive drain on resources and for their size, add significant volumes in landfill.

## Reusables are the answer

To address these problems, government policy should be focused on reducing resource use and eliminating both litter and waste of these products. Reusable coffee cups/lids are a preferred and better alternative that will positively address all the problems. They present a very viable and achievable option. There is a common and growing practice by many cafes and their customers to use reusable/BYO cups and lids, as well as the implementation of cup swap systems that have shown to be very successful in various communities throughout Australia.

Of all disposable takeaway packaging items, coffee cups/lids are an easier option to make exclusively reusable in the public place. The switch to reusables must be coupled with specific regulation, policies, and incentives to support reusable cups/lids uptake, making these a common practice.

Governments cannot rely on voluntary or individual action alone and must set a strategic agenda and timeframe that will achieve desired goals.

A reusable cup can be crockery, glass, metal, or BPA-free plastic. It must meet certain essential requirements. This includes:

- Designed to accomplish a minimum number of reuse cycles (including through cup share systems)
- Manufactured using durable (and non-toxic materials) that meet food safety standards
- Have associated reuse/return options in place (such as return to retail, cup share networks or public collection infrastructure)
- Reuse/return options that are convenient and provide reasonable opportunity to participate
- Collected at the end of their useful life and recycled

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.agriculture.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/apff-national-report\\_0.pdf](https://www.agriculture.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/apff-national-report_0.pdf)

## A National Strategy for Change

The goal of this strategy is to switch public behaviour away from disposable coffee cups and lids towards reusable alternatives. It recognises that single use plastic coffee cups and lids represent a particular resource, litter, and waste problem.

Our strategy proposes immediate policy actions by government to directly promote reusable cup uptake whilst implementing additional deterrence on single use items.

All policy interventions contained below are currently being planned or implemented in other parts of the world.

### Commonwealth Government

Introduce a National Product Stewardship Scheme for all Packaging with mandatory recovery and reuse targets. Such a scheme should place responsibility on producers to design products for recovery and fund the collection and recovery of their products. While a Product Stewardship Scheme for Packaging applies to all packaging, it will inevitably assist the switch to reusable cups and lids through greater reusable packaging recovery targets and more funding for these measures.

The Australian Packaging Covenant Organisation has a 10% reusable packaging target. The Boomerang Alliance proposes that, for coffee cups and lids, the reusable target should be at least 80% before 2030, and achieved through the adoption of our policy roadmap outlined below and funding support from industry.

### All State and Territory Governments

**Set a national goal to phase-out all single-use coffee cups and lids by 2030 and implement a roadmap to achieve this.**

To achieve this goal, the Boomerang Alliance is proposing a staged, transitional approach, with:

- (1)** All single use plastic\* coffee cups/lids banned in 2024. Exemption for compostable cups and lids (AS 5810 and 4736 only) \*\*
- (2)** Removal of the exemption for AS 4736 (commercially compostable) cups and lids in 2026. Home compostable (AS 5810) would still be allowed.
- (3)** Then all disposable coffee cups and lids, including non-plastic/home compostable, would be phased out between 2026 - 2030.

All single use coffee cups and lids would be replaced by reusable alternatives.

*\*A single-use plastic product means a product that is made wholly or partly from plastic and that is not conceived, designed, or placed on the market to accomplish, within its lifespan, multiple trips, or rotations by being returned to a producer for refill or re-used for the same purpose for which it was conceived*

*\*\*This exemption is proposed on the proviso there are no generally available non-plastic or home compostable cups or lids currently on the market. If non plastic/home compostable cups/lids are on the market by 2024, there should be no exemptions for AS 4736 commercially compostable cups (and lids).*

### A Roadmap to make Reusable Coffee Cups and Lids a Common Practice

Essential to achieving the 2030 goal, is that all State and Territory jurisdictions implement a set of strategic interventions that will lead to that outcome by changing industry practices and public habits between 2022 and 2030.

1. Introduce mandatory requirements that all outlets providing takeaway beverages also offer or sell reusable cups and lids. All outlets must accept returned cups and/or participate in a reusable cup network. This should be in place by 2024 to coincide with the single use plastic cup bans. Disposable cups and lids must not be offered for in-house consumption.
2. Identified 'controlled and managed environments' such as sports stadiums, festivals, airline and train services, government and public institutions should be early adopters and only provide reusable cups and lids to the public from 2024. Cafes in government and corporate buildings should be included to supply and provide only reusables for employees under an in-house share system.
3. A levy of 25 cents (or higher) will be charged on all disposable coffee cups, and their lids, sold from 2024 until 2030. Monies raised should be allocated to public awareness and the establishment of reusable cup/lid systems and services.
4. Maintain continuous improvement policies to support reusable product practices. These include the removal of retailer liability associated with reusable container use and continued innovation on the designs, materials and standards for all cups and containers.
5. Government Health advice provides guidance on reusable container food safe practices. There is no evidence that the COVID virus can be spread through packaging, so policies should clearly state that disposable cups and lids do not represent a preferred 'safe' option.

## Local Government

1. Set licensing conditions on cafes and mobile vendors that support participation in reusable cup services, including having a dishwasher or compact dishwasher and other facilities available for those reusable cup services.
2. To lead by example, all local government offices and facilities should supply, and only allow reusable cups and lids for employees and their visitors from 2024.
3. Promote reusable cup and container use in their communities, and the establishment and uptake of cup share and return collection networks in their LGA.
4. Set local policies and introduce conditions for events that include the provision of reusable cups and washing facilities at business, public and community events.

## Australian Certified Compostable Options as a Transitional Measure

Boomerang Alliance recognises that non-plastic or compostable coffee cups and lids may need to continue to be available until 2030.

Given that home compostable cups and lids are currently hard to find, we propose to exempt commercially compostable (as per AS 4736) cups and lids until certified home compostable alternatives become available. We have proposed a cut-off date of 2026 for this exemption. Non-plastic or home compostable items would be phased out by 2030.

Boomerang Alliance proposes the introduction of public place collection services for organics. Public place organics collection should start in 'controlled and managed environments' where discarded food disposal can be monitored to prevent bin contamination. Examples of these should be placed at cafes and food outlets, corporate, sporting, and public events, and at food courts and café precincts.

Non-plastic and AS certified compostable packaging, including coffee cups and lids can be collected in organics bins until they are phased out.

### Plastic Free Places/Plastic Free Beaches

The Boomerang Alliance program, Plastic Free Places (with Plastic Free Beaches) program, has over 1000 participating cafes around the country and includes a Reusable Cafes initiative. Through this initiative, all participating cafes have achieved a marked increase in the use of reusable cups. Some cafes have reported that many days have seen 100% of hot drinks being served in reusable cups.

### International Policy Actions

In the European Union, Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) schemes are proposed for single use plastic packaging. These include requirements on producers to cover the costs of the education, collection, transport, and treatment of single use plastic packaging by 2024.

Many EU countries (and other regions) are taking further steps as part of the EU *Directive on Single Use Plastics*. Here is a snapshot of new policies, including for coffee cups.

Country	Items	Action	Date
Germany	SUP coffee cups and food containers	Mandatory requirements for all cafes and food outlets to offer reusable alternatives	January 2023
The Netherlands	SUP coffee cups and food containers	Ban on SUP coffee cups Fee on other plastic packaging	July 2023
France	SUP coffee cups Reusable cups and plates	Banned (exemption for compostables) Mandatory reuse in restaurants	2020
Ireland	SUP coffee cups	0.20-euro fee	January 2023
Greece	SUP coffee cups and food containers	0.05-euro fee	January 2022
Portugal	SUP packaging in ready to eat meals and beverages	0.30-euro fee	July 2022
Sweden	SUP coffee cups, food containers and other packaging	Investigating the introduction of new policies and fees for reusables and SUP coffee cups	current
Italy	SUP products	Plastics Tax	January 2023
Spain	SUP products	Plastics Tax	January 2022
<b>Other Examples</b>			
UK	Reusable foodware	Proposed mandatory requirements Plastic tax on SUP packaging without recycled content	2025 2022
Scotland	SUP coffee cups	25 pence fee	pending
Vancouver, Canada	SUP coffee cups	25 cents fee	January 2022
Berkeley, California	SUP coffee cups	25 cents fee	January 2020
California	SUP products	Considering tax on all SUP products	current
McDonalds UK, Burger King US	SUP coffee cups	Trialling returnable cup systems	current
All Starbucks EU/Africa/Middle East	SUP coffee cups	Offering reusable cups share	2025
Korea	SUP coffee cups	Introduced CDS for cups sold at coffee shops and fast-food outlets	2022