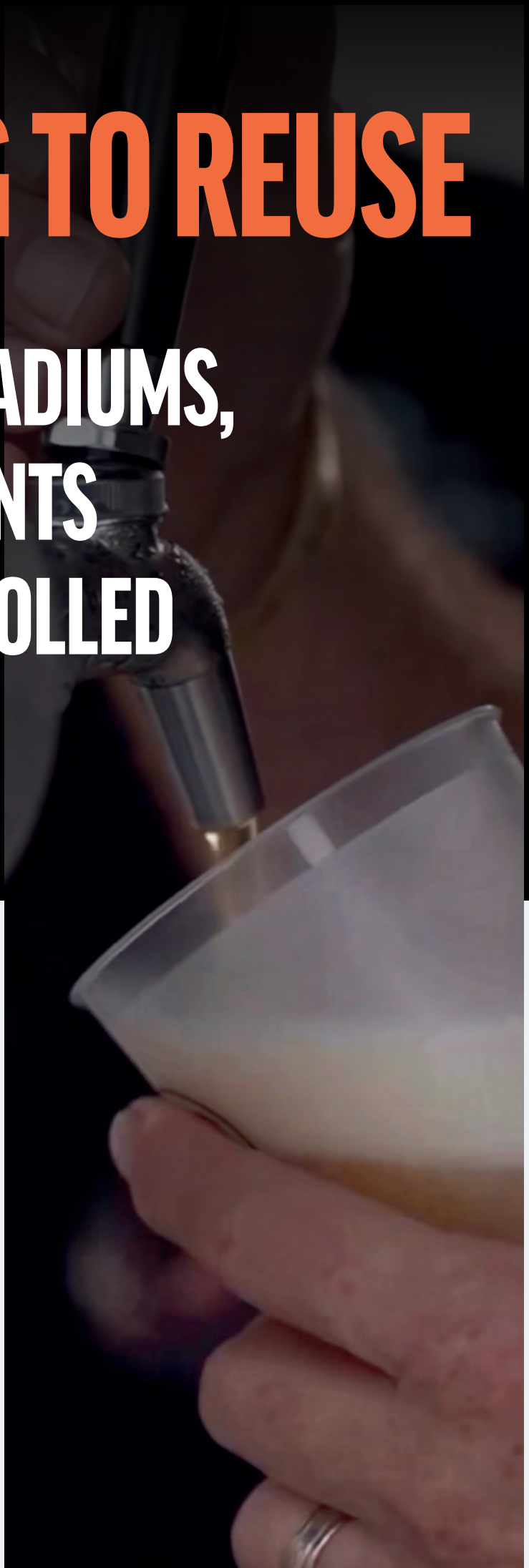
CHOOSING TO REUSE

A GUIDE FOR STADIUMS, FESTIVALS , EVENTS & OTHER CONTROLLED PLACES



BOOMERANG ALLIANCE

PO Box K61
Haymarket, NSW 1240
(02) 9211 5022
www.boomerangalliance.org.au
info@boomerangalliance.org.au

THE REUSE REVOLUTION IS COMING

Stadium, venue and event managers are seeing the benefits of **reusable options** as a sustainable food ware alternative.

The act of supplying cups and food containers to the public that can be used, returned, washed and reused again can mean less cost, reduced GHG emissions and waste elimination. Switching to reuse systems is putting the circular economy into action.

The question is how to get started and what needs to be considered. This quick guide has been created to outline the actions that venues and controlled places need to take.

The Boomerang Alliance is available to assist venue and precinct managers in the pursuit of reusables. We are also urging governments to adopt policies to assist implementation of reuse.

A growing list of venues are now making the switch.

This has accelerated following the Paris Olympic Games and Euro Football Championships, both of which used reusable cups and containers. The Brisbane Olympics and a growing number of other sporting and cultural events are expected to follow. We anticipate reusable cups and containers will become standard in the future.

In Melbourne the Australian Open piloted reuse at selected outlets in January 2025.

Major festivals such as WOMAD (SA) and Woodford (QLD) and Dark MOFO (Tas) provide reusable cups. Green Music Australia estimate that half their festival members are using or planning to provide reusables.

A number of corporate offices (Mirvac, EY) have set up cup share networks for their staff.

At least 3 cities Aarhus (DEN), Lisbon (PORT) and Wellington (NZ) are piloting public place reuse. A number of smaller towns in Australia are switching (Bermagui, Noosa, Port Douglas) largely driven by local community demand.

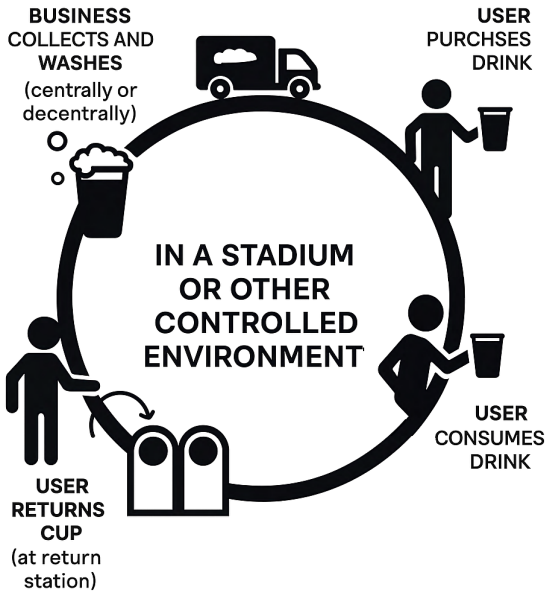
Image: eventcupsolutions.com

1 DEFINITIONS

The Boomerang Alliance has adopted this definition for reusable (multiple use) food ware.

Multiple use or reusable

A reusable product is one that has been conceived, designed, and placed in the market to achieve a **minimum number of refill/return cycles**, for the same primary purpose. Reusability must be conditioned on the basis that systems and services are in place that ensure that any refill/return cycles can be achieved.



2 REUSABLE CUP SYSTEMS: HOW THEY WORK

There are a number of varieties of reusable cup and container systems. These include:

- Customer BYO
- Café/caterers cup libraries or share networks
- Workplace systems that involve local cafes
- CBD/precinct-based systems that involve multiple takeaway businesses

Controlled environments such as stadiums, events, festivals and hospitality venues are obvious locations for reuse.

A reuse service involves the provision of reusable cups (and food containers if required), their return through dedicated collection, the washing of cups and their return to reuse. These services work best in contained venues where consumers remain within a distinct area, such as a stadium.

In a stadium/event system, the venue owns the cup and lends this to the consumer. The cup needs to be collected and reused multiple times.

The four basic systems involve a **deposit** paid on each cup, a **penalty** system where consumers are charged for non-return, a **non-refundable charge** through an entry ticket or on first purchase or a **free** system, where cups are simply supplied by the venue.

FREE

The simplest system where the venue provides reuse cups. It is reliant on the good will of consumers to return cups at designated collection points.

Experience shows that because there is less perceived value in the cup by the consumer, fewer cups will be returned or will be placed in waste/recycling bins.

DEPOSIT SYSTEM

The first time a customer buys a drink they are charged a deposit-usually $2-3 for the cup. Each time they return for another drink they need to return the cup. This can be collected and stored for washing. If they don't return the cup they will need to pay another deposit.

At the end of the event, cups are collected and the deposit returned-usually at the bar. Automated card transactions make this simpler.

In larger venues, collection points can be provided which read a credit card, embedded bar or QR code to allow the return of the deposit into a credit card or bank account.

PENALTY SYSTEM

The system is the same except that the cup is provided without a charge. Consumers must return the cup when making further purchases. However, a penalty is charged if the final cup used is not returned. The penalty amount is set by the service. This is usually done through the deposit/credit card used for the initial purchase.

NON- REFUNDABLE CHARGE

A cup charge is included in the ticket price or when the first drink is bought. Customers still need to return the cup when buying a second drink-or pay for a second cup.

At the end of the event, cups can be left at collection points. While this is a simpler system, more cups are likely to be littered on site or not returned.

3 MANAGING CUP PROVISION AND TECH INTEGRATION

MANUAL SYSTEMS

Simple to use where the non-refundable charge or free service is in place. This is a cash based or transaction similar to single use. It becomes more complicated where a deposit or penalty system is in place, as a deposit needs to be returned or a possible penalty charged.

The challenge under manual systems is in collection and return and how to ensure that cups are being returned in sufficient numbers.

DIGITAL SYSTEMS

There are two versions of these systems.

The first using a dedicated app or web-based platform to manage the transaction and any deposit return or penalty to be charged. This system relies on consumers using an app and having the equipment to use the system.

The second uses smart technology at the point of sale. Consumers do not need an app, just a deposit/credit card to make a purchase. Modern systems can tag a purchase to a specific consumer using a QR code or another device embedded in the cup.

These systems also identify when a cup is returned and pay the deposit or when it has not been returned for a penalty charge. Fast reader technology is used at collection points for this purpose.

KEY REQUIREMENTS TO PUT IN PLACE

- A good reusable cup that can be used multiple times
- A bar service designed to provide reusable cups
- Trained staff who understand and can explain the system
- A transaction system (manual or automated) that tags consumers to their cup
- Easy to use collection bins and signage
- Washing facilities (either on for off-site)
- Logistic arrangements to allow cup return for next event

4 A GOOD REUSABLE CUP

This needs to be fit for purpose, cost-effective and meet sustainability objectives.

DESIGN

The challenge is to make the cup attractive enough to use but not to keep. A clear cup is usually preferred and one that can be discarded if showing signs of staining. Cups should be easily stackable.

BRANDING

Some venues like to brand their cups, but this can encourage consumers to keep it. We recommend a non-branded cup with clear and simple messaging about ownership and reuse.

MATERIAL

In public places, metal, ceramic or glass or not recommended from a safety point of view. Most returnable cups are made from polypropylene.

SUSTAINABILITY

Using a plastic such as polypropylene will create GHG emissions as these are manufactured from fossil fuels. Most manufactures can provide data on their cups' emission profile compared to single use.

As long as the cup is used multiple times it is a better option. A reusable cup returned and reused will reduce emissions, water use, waste costs compared to a single-use alternative.

A note on water use: The extraction process and manufacture of single-use plastic cups uses significant volumes of water. While a reusable cup needs to be repeatedly washed, its water profile is significantly less compared to the multiple single-use cups it is replacing.

DURABILITY

Most manufacturers design their cups for a minimum number of reuses. The standard number is now 50 or more reuses.

Image: Stack Cups

5 COSTS

There are two options for venues.

1. Manage a reuse system internally which involves providing cups, arranging a reuse system, collection, washing and return to bar for reuse
2. Engage an outside business to manage a system. There are businesses who can provide all or some of the services you may require.

The providers listed below offer reuse services to venues and events and some include calculators to show your cost savings when switching from single use to reuse.

There may be smaller, local providers not on this list that also offer similar services - check your local area.

For further advice on reuse opportunities and our facilitation programs please contact us on info@boomerangalliance.org.au.

BETTERCUP: bettercup.com.au
WOSUP: wosup.com.au
CERCLE: cercle.com.au
TURN/VYTAL US: www.turnus.in
GREENMYPLATE: greenmyplate.com.au
WISE: itsinyourhands.com.au
ReVIBES: re-vibes.co
ECUP: www.ecup.com.au
STACK CUPS: stack-cup.com.au
GO2CUP: go2cup.com.au
B-ALTERNATIVE: b-alternative.com
TOMRA: tomra.com

ABOUT PLASTIC FREE PLACES

Behaviour change is achieved by linking public awareness of a problem, with an incentive to change, and the opportunity to make that change. It is the combination of these elements that is required.

The Boomerang Alliance '**Plastic Free Places**' program integrates these elements into a hands-on behaviour change approach. The program works directly with food retailers, events, and other places to assist them in moving away from single-use plastics toward preferred alternatives (primarily reusables), and where these are not feasible, certified compostable products.

Designed as a flexible engagement model, the program can be adapted to suit a variety of sectors. Our current focus is on controlled environments where reusable products and systems can be introduced effectively – such as offices, public institutions, food courts, festivals, sporting stadiums, airlines, and long-distance train services.

In these settings, closed-loop systems and coordinated stakeholder engagement create the ideal conditions for successful and scalable reusable solutions.

PLASTIC FREE PLACES RESULTS (AT AUGUST 1, 2025)

2500

Business members

500

Plastic Free Champions

40 million

Pieces of plastic eliminated

Reusable cups at Woodford Festival (QLD)

Cercle offer workplace cup services

Better Cups at WOMAD (Adelaide)

Reusable cups & containers were provided at Paris Olympics

Reusable cups at GWS games (ENGIE stadium, Sydney)

TOMRA Collection pod (Aarhus, Denmark)

Stack Cup collection (RAC Arena, Perth, WA)

Cup collection pod at music festival (EU)