

ANZPAC  
ACTION  
GUIDE TO

# ELIMINATE SINGLE-USE PLASTIC PACKAGING



VERSION 1: FEBRUARY 2024

# INTRODUCTION

**The ANZPAC Plastics Pact (ANZPAC) brings together businesses, governments and organisations from across Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands, behind a shared vision of a region where plastic never becomes waste or pollution.**

Following significant consultation with ANZPAC Members, 11 plastic packaging items have been identified as problematic and/or unnecessary. By their very design, the majority of these items are destined for landfill or contribute to litter and waste.

The lack of viable after-use pathways for these items, coupled with their potential impact on our natural environment and on our existing organics and mechanical recycling processes, make it necessary for action to be taken on these packaging types.

This guide aims to support ANZPAC Members to identify and eliminate problematic and/or unnecessary single-use plastic packaging.

In some situations, plastic packaging can be a necessary and appropriate choice for your product, as it performs certain functions that other materials cannot perform effectively. However, where possible, we must eliminate plastic we do not need and look for opportunities to reduce necessary plastic packaging. Currently the ANZPAC region has a 17% recovery rate for plastic, but with significant variations between countries.<sup>1</sup>

As ANZPAC Members work to phase out unnecessary and problematic plastic packaging (under Target 1 of the [ANZPAC 2025 Regional Plastic Targets](#)), the highest priority is to eliminate any packaging item that does not deliver an essential function.

To achieve this goal a considered and coordinated approach is required to collaboratively find the best solution to avoid unintended consequences or perverse outcomes.

**This action guide aims to support Members to phase out:**

- **Any *unnecessary* plastic packaging (avoidable or excessive packaging) in line with the circular economy principle of reducing waste at its source.**
- **Any *problematic* plastic packaging (non-recyclable or hazardous) to support the achievement of the 2025 Regional Plastics Targets.**

<sup>1</sup> ANZPAC, 2023. Plastic Packaging Recovery Opportunities in the ANZPAC Region. Full report prepared by Institute for Sustainable Futures, University of Technology Sydney on behalf of the Australia, New Zealand, and Pacific Islands Plastics Pact (ANZPAC). October 2023. Available at: [https://anzpacplasticspact.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/ANZPAC\\_RecyclabilityAssessment\\_Summary\\_final.pdf](https://anzpacplasticspact.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/ANZPAC_RecyclabilityAssessment_Summary_final.pdf)

# PROCESS

**This document is the result of consultation with ANZPAC Members, representing the expertise of the whole plastics value chain, and taking regional needs into consideration.**

It is important to note that priorities may vary across the ANZPAC region due to differences in geography, climate, culture, and reuse as well as recycling infrastructure.

The list has been developed parallel to the 2023 update of the Australian Packaging Covenant Organisation (APCO) methodology to identify problematic, unnecessary and single-use plastic packaging, and aligns with approaches of the Ellen Macarthur Foundation and other Plastics Pacts such as the UK Plastics Pact and the US Plastics Pact.



# HOW TO GET STARTED

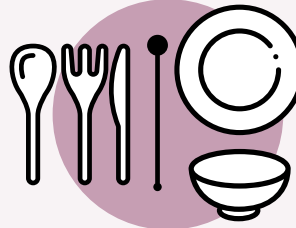
The Action Guide supports ANZPAC Members to review their product portfolios and design strategies to eliminate all identified unnecessary and problematic plastic packaging.

Before you introduce an alternative material or format:

- **Check whether the item is on the elimination list** of problematic and/or unnecessary single-use plastic packaging.
- **Consider whether the item can be eliminated completely through innovation in the product or service**, for example by introducing a reuse or refill system.
- **Investigate where there are innovations in design, collection, sorting or reprocessing systems** that may soon render your existing packaging as more recyclable.
- **Undertake research to ensure the alternative will not have any significant unintended environmental impacts**, for example by increasing the carbon footprint.
- **Ensure that there are systems in place for collection and recycling** at the end of the item's life.
- **Check if there are any regulations or mandatory requirements** as they may vary across regions.

## DON'T STOP HERE.

Continue your journey to reduce the impact plastics have by looking beyond this Guide.



**Plastic cutlery, plates and bowls** have been banned in some Australian jurisdictions, New Zealand, and some Pacific Island countries. **Plastic stirrers** have been banned in some Australian jurisdictions and in New Zealand.



Small format items such as **single-portions of condiments** in the tourism industry should also be considered for phase out due to their single-use nature and propensity for litter.

# DEFINITIONS

These definitions are a guide to establish a common understanding and language across the ANZPAC region. It is important to note that applying these definitions might result in different outcomes in the various geographies, for example, in remote areas plastics might be the best option for food preservation and shelf life.

## PRODUCT OR PACKAGING

Consider the [Decision Tree: Packaging or Product](#) resource from APCO to identify if your item is product or packaging.

## PROBLEMATIC AND/OR UNNECESSARY, SINGLE-USE PLASTIC PACKAGING (SUPS)

is either:

- ▶ single-use plastic packaging that is unnecessary, or
- ▶ single-use plastic packaging that is problematic, or
- ▶ single-use plastic packaging that is unnecessary and problematic.

Use the [Decision Tree: Problematic and/or Unnecessary Single-Use Plastic Packaging](#) to identify if your item is problematic.

## PLASTIC PACKAGING

### Australia

Packaging that contains more plastic by weight than any other substance. Plastic means a polymer material to which additives or substances may have been added.<sup>2</sup>

Stay up-to-date on single-use plastic bans across AU states and territories [here](#).

### New Zealand

Packaging used for consumer goods at retail or wholesale level made of plastic resin codes 1-7, singularly or in combination with one or more of these plastics or any non-plastic material.<sup>3</sup>

#### Did you know?

Industry groups, The Packaging Forum and the NZ Food & Grocery Council have received funds to co-design and lead a [Plastic Packaging Product Stewardship Scheme](#). As part of this, a stewardship scheme for plastic packaging must be developed and all producers of plastic packaging must participate.

### Pacific Island Countries

Consider the same definition as Australia, subject to alteration post the UN Plastics Treaty Negotiations.

<sup>2</sup> This definition is aligned to the definition by the UK Plastics Pact.

<sup>3</sup> Ministry for the Environment. 2019. Proposed priority products and priority product stewardship scheme guidelines: Consultation document. Wellington: Ministry for the Environment. Available at: <https://environment.govt.nz/assets/Publications/Files/proposed-priority-products-and-priority-product-stewardship-scheme-guidelines.pdf>

# DEFINITIONS

**SINGLE-USE PACKAGING** is routinely disposed of after its contents have been unpacked or exhausted or is not part of an accessible reuse system where packaging can be used again in the same application for which it was originally designed.

**UNNECESSARY PACKAGING** can be reduced or redesigned with a fit-for-purpose alternative without diminishing product integrity, compromising product accessibility, hindering ability to meet health or safety regulations, or causing undesirable environmental outcomes.

**PROBLEMATIC PACKAGING** is packaging that, in the country or region, is currently either:

- ▶ difficult to collect for effective reuse, recycling, or composting, or
- ▶ a material that hinders, disrupts or obstructs opportunities to recover other materials or resources including via existing recycling streams, or
- ▶ a significant contributor to the litter problem, or
- ▶ manufactured with hazardous chemicals or materials (e.g., intentionally added PFAS or BPA) that pose a significant risk to human health or the environment.




## CRITERIA FOR ELIMINATION INCLUDES:

- ▶ the material or item is considered problematic and/or unnecessary single-use plastic packaging, or
- ▶ the material or item has either
  - been banned in at least one country in the ANZPAC region,
  - or
  - has easily separable components that can be frequently found in, or is particularly hazardous to, the environment.



# PRIORITY ITEMS FOR ELIMINATION

The following table provides the list of items identified for elimination including alternatives to the material, the reason the item has been identified for elimination and the potential impacts, both positive and negative, of using the identified alternatives.




Plastic item	Reason for elimination	Alternatives	Potential impacts of alternatives
 <b>Lightweight plastic shopping bags</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Banned in several countries.</li> <li>Limited access to recycling.</li> <li>High propensity to become litter.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reusable bags that meet a minimum performance standard.<sup>4</sup></li> <li>Paper bags.</li> <li>Product redesign to negate the need for a carry bag.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reusable bags require multiple uses to provide a benefit.</li> <li>Paper has a higher water and carbon footprint but is more widely recyclable.</li> </ul>
 <b>Heavy weight plastic shopping bags</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bans in place or planned in Australia.</li> <li>Limited access to recycling.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reusable bags that meet a minimum performance standard.<sup>4</sup></li> <li>Paper bags.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reusable bags require multiple uses to provide a benefit.</li> <li>Paper has a higher water and carbon footprint but is more widely recyclable.</li> </ul>
 <b>Barrier/produce bags</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Banned in New Zealand.</li> <li>Bans proposed in Australia.</li> <li>Banned in Vanuatu.</li> <li>Limited access to recycling.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reusable bags that meet a minimum performance standard.<sup>4</sup></li> <li>Paper bags.</li> <li>Certified compostable plastics if this supports recovery of food waste and there is a widely available system for composting (home or industrial composting).<sup>5</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reusable bags require multiple uses to provide a benefit.</li> <li>Paper has a higher water and carbon footprint but is more widely recyclable.</li> <li>Compostable packaging is not appropriate without a widely available composting system.</li> <li>May not be accepted by composting facilities even if certified.</li> </ul>

<sup>4</sup> For example, it has been designed to accomplish or proves its ability to accomplish a minimum number of trips or rotations in a system for reuse. The system for reuse should be proven to work in practice, i.e., that a significant share of the package is actually reused.

Source: Ellen Macarthur Foundation (2022). *New Plastics Economy Global Commitment: Commitments, Vision and Definitions*. Available at: <https://emf.thirdlight.com/link/pq2algvgnv1n-uitck8/@/preview/1?o>





<sup>5</sup> Refer to APCO's [Considerations for Compostable Plastic Packaging](#) for guidance.

## ANZPAC ACTION GUIDE TO ELIMINATE SINGLE-USE PLASTIC PACKAGING

Plastic item	Reason for elimination	Alternatives	Potential impacts of alternatives
 <b>Expanded polystyrene (EPS) packaging for food and beverage service and retail fresh produce</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Banned in several countries.</li> <li>Limited recyclability.</li> <li>High propensity to become litter.</li> <li>Australian policy to phase out EPS in consumer packaging.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Paper.</b></li> <li><b>Cardboard.</b></li> <li><b>Bagasse.</b></li> <li><b>Certified compostable plastic.</b></li> <li><b>Polyethylene terephthalate (PET).</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Paper &amp; cardboard may contain per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS).</li> <li>Compostable packaging is not appropriate without a widely available composting system.</li> <li>Cardboard has a higher water and carbon footprint but is more widely recyclable.</li> </ul>
 <b>EPS loose fill packaging</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Banned in some Australian jurisdictions and under consultation in New Zealand.</li> <li>Limited recyclability.</li> <li>High propensity to become litter.</li> <li>Australian policy to phase out EPS in consumer packaging.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Paper.</b></li> <li><b>Cardboard.</b></li> <li><b>Low density polyethylene (LDPE) air pillow padding.</b></li> <li><b>Redesign to reduce air space in box.</b></li> <li><b>Recycled wool.</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cardboard has a higher water and carbon footprint but is more widely recyclable.</li> <li>Limited recycling for soft plastics (including LDPE pillow padding).</li> </ul>
 <b>EPS moulded packaging for white/brown goods and electronics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bans proposed in Australia and under consultation in New Zealand.</li> <li>Limited recoverability.</li> <li>High propensity to become litter.</li> <li>Australian policy to phase out EPS in consumer packaging.<sup>6</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Moulded fiber.</b></li> <li><b>Cardboard.</b></li> <li><b>LDPE air pillow padding.</b></li> <li><b>Redesign to reduce air space in box.</b></li> <li><b>Recycled wool.</b></li> <li><b>Reusable protective packaging and wraps.</b></li> </ul> <p>Note: Where replacement or elimination is not feasible, extended producer responsibility (EPR) models are being assessed with industry.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Difficult to achieve sufficient cushioning for heavy electronics.</li> <li>Cardboard has a higher water and carbon footprint but is more widely recyclable.</li> <li>Limited recycling for soft plastics (including LDPE pillow padding).</li> </ul>





<sup>6</sup> Learn more about the voluntary, industry-led approach to phase out consumer facing EPS packaging in Australia in APCO's [Roadmap to Implement the National Phase Out of Business-To-Consumer EPS Packaging](#)



Plastic item	Reason for elimination	Alternatives	Potential impacts of alternatives
 <b>Non-certified compostable plastic packaging</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not recyclable or compostable.</li> <li>Contaminates recycling and composting streams.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Certified compostable plastics if this supports recovery of food waste and there is a widely available system for composting (home or industrial composting).<sup>7</sup></b></li> <li><b>Reusable bags that meet a minimum performance standard.<sup>4</sup></b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Compostable packaging is not appropriate without a widely available composting system.</li> <li>May not be accepted by composting facilities even if certified.</li> <li>Reusable bags require multiple uses to provide a benefit.</li> </ul>
 <b>Opaque polyethylene terephthalate (PET) bottles</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited end markets.</li> <li>Contaminates clear PET and causes significant material losses.</li> <li>Reduces value of recovered PET.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Natural (clear) PET.</b></li> <li><b>If a light barrier is required – high density polyethylene (HDPE), polypropylene (PP), or an easily removable shrink sleeve on natural PET.</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More recyclable where services exist.</li> <li>Increase recovery of recycled content for PET packaging.</li> </ul>
 <b>Fragmentable plastics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Banned in some Australian jurisdictions and New Zealand.</li> <li>Australian policy to phase out fragmentable plastics.</li> <li>Not recyclable.</li> <li>Can create microplastics in the environment.</li> <li>Contaminates both material and organics recycling.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>PE film or bags.</b></li> <li><b>Paper.</b></li> <li><b>Reusable packaging options.<sup>4</sup></b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited recycling for all flexible consumer PE packaging.</li> <li>Paper has a higher water and carbon footprint but is more widely recyclable.</li> <li>Reusable bags require multiple uses to provide a benefit.</li> </ul>
 <b>Rigid polystyrene (PS) packaging</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To be banned in New Zealand for food and beverage.<sup>7</sup></li> <li>Limited recyclability.</li> <li>Voluntary phase-out underway in Australia.</li> <li>Global movement away from uncommon plastics.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>PP.</b></li> <li><b>PET.</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More recyclable where services exist.</li> <li>Ensure chosen alternative provides the same packaging functionality and consumer safety as the item listed.</li> </ul>

<sup>7</sup> Refer to APCO's [Considerations for Compostable Plastic Packaging](#) for guidance.

## ANZPAC ACTION GUIDE TO ELIMINATE SINGLE-USE PLASTIC PACKAGING

Plastic item	Reason for elimination	Alternatives	Potential impacts of alternatives
 <b>Rigid polyvinyl chloride (PVC) packaging</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To be banned in New Zealand for food &amp; beverage.<sup>8</sup></li> <li>Voluntary phase-out underway in Australia.</li> <li>Limited recyclability.</li> <li>Clear PVC contaminates PET recycling.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HDPE.</li> <li>PP.</li> <li>PET.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More recyclable where services exist.</li> <li>Reduced contamination to recycling streams, and increased recovery of plastics.</li> <li>Ensure chosen alternative provides the same packaging functionality and consumer safety as the item listed.</li> </ul>
 <b>Rigid plastic packaging with carbon black</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Packaging cannot be detected and sorted in a recycling facility.</li> <li>Limited end markets and reduced value compared to natural polymers.</li> <li>Contaminated clear/lightly coloured streams.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where necessary (e.g. if packaging application contains high level of recycled content), explore opportunities to utilise other less pigmented colours.</li> <li>Explore opportunities to avoid dark coloured plastics. Preference is for clear/natural rigid plastic packaging.</li> </ul>	
 <b>Untethered bottle caps</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unable to be sorted in a MRF when loose.</li> <li>High propensity to become litter.</li> <li>Not accepted in New Zealand (as per Kerbside Collections Notice 2023).<sup>9</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tethered caps (now required in the <a href="#">EU</a>).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May use more material.</li> <li>Needs to be addressed at an industry level.</li> </ul>
 <b>Non-compostable Plastic fruit stickers / produce labels</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Non-compostable plastic produce labels banned in New Zealand.</li> <li>Contaminates composting process.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Compostable labels for produce.</li> <li>Laser marking system.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Compostable adhesives not yet resolved.</li> <li>Consider international food labelling standards and/or requirements.</li> </ul>

<sup>8</sup> Refer to NZ Ministry for the Environment's [Guidance on plastic products banned from mid-2025](#).

<sup>9</sup> Refer to [NZ Standard Materials for Kerbside Collections Notice 2023 \(Notice No.1\)](#) for guidance.


# TOGETHER WE WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

This resource was developed to support the delivery of ANZPAC 2025 Regional Plastics Target 1, 'Eliminate unnecessary and problematic plastic packaging through redesign, innovation and alternative (reuse) delivery models.'

Upstream solutions are critical to achieve circularity of plastic packaging and avoid these items becoming waste or end up in our oceans.

We acknowledge and thank all the organisations and individuals around Australia, New Zealand and Pacific Island Countries that contributed towards this resource. The completion of this resource was only possible thanks to your valuable insights and expert knowledge contributions.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

 <https://au.linkedin.com/showcase/the-australia-new-zealand-and-pacific-islands-plastics-pact-anzpac/>

 [www.anzpacplasticspact.org.au](http://www.anzpacplasticspact.org.au)

 [anzpac@apco.org.au](mailto:anzpac@apco.org.au)



### DISCLAIMER

The Australia, New Zealand, and Pacific Islands Plastics Pact (ANZPAC) have prepared this guide with a high-level of care and thoroughness. This guide has been prepared for use by the ANZPAC Plastics Pact and its Members to advise program planning and progress towards the 2025 Regional Plastic Targets. ANZPAC and the contributing authors are not liable for any loss or damage that may be occasioned from directly or indirectly using, or relying on, the contents of this publication. This report does not purport to give legal or financial advice. No other warranty, expressed or implied, is made as to the professional advice included in this report.