

NSW – ACT NOW ON PLASTIC POLLUTION



Three states (SA, Qld, WA) and the ACT are moving on plastic pollution with legislation – while NSW is on the slow track. It has not targeted takeaway plastics like foodware, nor put plans in place to address single use plastics from various retail, business, agriculture and marine sectors, that litter the environment or are dumped in landfill.

The New South Wales Plastic Pollution Reduction Plan should aim to eliminate all unnecessary and problematic single-use plastics before 2025. This will require a focus on strategies to avoid and reduce plastics in the first place, and, where plastics are used, that they are reused, composted or recycled in practice. Current industry figures show that only 16% of plastic packaging is actually recovered in Australia.¹

Other sectors need to attend to their disposal practices and develop collection for recycling and prevention of escape into the environment.

A comprehensive plastic pollution reduction plan should be in line with the principles of a circular economy.

After developing and issuing a discussion paper, and considering public comments over the last 12 months - NSW needs a comprehensive Plastic Pollution Reduction Strategy **NOW**.

WHAT NSW CAN DO NOW

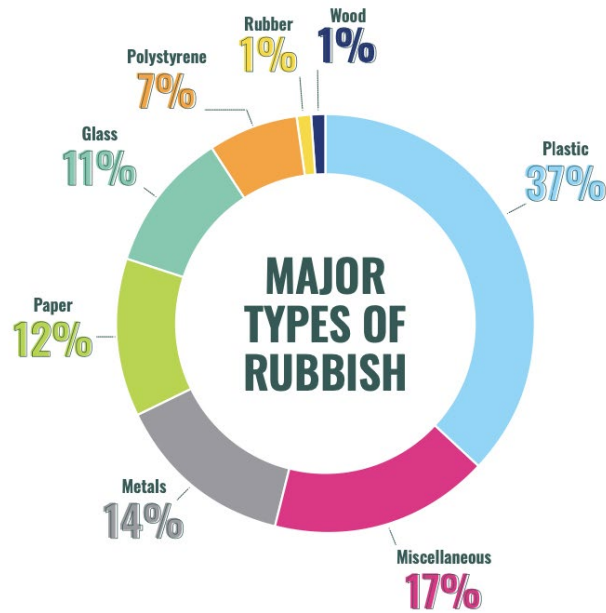
1. Introduce a state ban on lightweight plastic shopping (including so-called 'degradable' and 'biodegradable') bags (< 35 microns).² This ban should be implemented in 2021. Set a schedule to ban heavyweight plastic bags (35- 70 microns).³
2. Legislate a ban on certain single-use plastics such as straws, stirrers, cutlery, coffee cups/lids and other foodware (plates, bowls and containers). This should include expanded polystyrene, and oxo-degradable (ie, fake green) plastics.
3. Take further action on *at home* plastic products such as personal care products for example, plastic-stemmed cotton bud, wipes, products containing microbeads, and other plastic bags and wraps bought through retail (e.g. produce bags and non-food packaging). Many of these could be avoided or have readily available non-plastic alternatives.
4. Strengthen regulations and policing around deliberate helium balloon releases. The release of more than 19 helium balloons is illegal in NSW but remains common practice.
5. Support a national program to remove disposable butts from cigarettes. Cigarette butts are made from plastic and are the most littered item in Australia (by item number).
6. Introduce packaging labels that guarantee and provide consumer assurance that packaging marked reusable, compostable or recyclable is designed to be and will be recovered in practice everywhere in NSW.

¹ Australian Packaging Consumption & Resource Recovery Data December 2019-APCO

² NSW is the last state to take action on lightweight bags.

³ New Zealand and WA are banning heavier bags.

7. Regulatory action by the EPA to stop nurdle (plastic pellet) pollution by factories.⁴
8. Introduce government procurement policies and incentivise business procurement for recycled content in products. Set a minimum 50% recycled content for plastic packaging.
9. Introduce new collection and processing infrastructure for Food Organics and Garden Organics (FOGO) collection across NSW and for soft plastics collection services.
10. Invest in new infrastructure development that will support full resource recovery of used plastics. This includes repair, reuse, composting of Australian certified bioplastics and recycling infrastructure.
11. Instigate research to examine the extent and impact of plastic pollution on the environment and wildlife and identify new innovative ideas that will avoid or reduce the need for unnecessary and problematic single-use plastics; and allow ongoing, effective monitoring.



TOP 10 RUBBISH ITEMS AS A PERCENTAGE OF THE TOTAL RUBBISH SURVEYED

GROUPED DATA

*Grouped Data made up 98.9% [97.3% in 2018] of surveyed rubbish.

Rank	Item	Percentage
1	NON-FOOD PACKAGING	26.6%
2	BEVERAGE CONTAINERS	23.2%
3	FOOD PACKAGING	17.2%
4	BEVERAGE RELATED RUBBISH	12.0%
5	HOUSEHOLD ITEMS	7.6%
6	PLASTIC BAGS	4.7%
7	CHIP & CONFECTIONERY WRAPPERS	1.8%
8	TOYS, SPORTING EQUIP, ROPES AND STRAPS	1.5%
9	CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS	1.2%
10	CLOTHING	1.1%

INDIVIDUAL ITEM COUNT

*Individual Item Count Top 10 data = 50.4% [55.4% in 2018]

Rank	Item	Percentage
1	CIGARETTE BUTTS	14.2%
2	GLASS ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE BOTTLES	5.4%
3	PLASTIC BOTTLE CAPS & LIDS	5.2%
4	GLASS SOFT DRINK BOTTLES	4.4%
5	STRAWS	4.3%
6	PET DRINK CONTAINERS	4.0%
7	OTHER PLASTICS	3.7%
8	ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CANS	3.3%
9	NAPKINS & TISSUES	3.2%
10	PIECES OF GLASS	2.8%

Source: CleanUp Australia 2019

NOV 2020

⁴ The Protection of the Environment Operations Act places a general prohibition on all water pollution unless authorised - nurdles should receive specific regulatory action. There should be no release from the site and environmental management plans eg Operation Clean Sweep implemented as a matter of urgency with appropriate penalties.