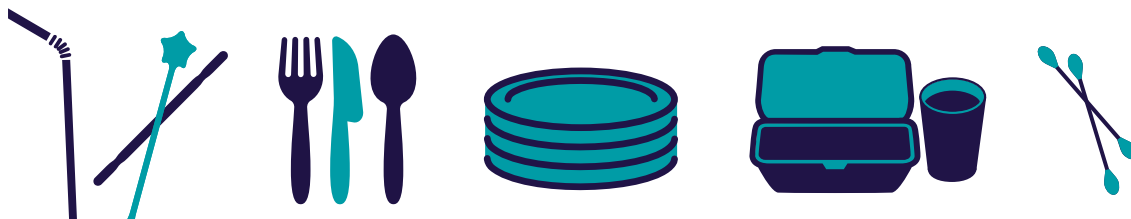


Single-use plastics ban

From 1 February 2023 these single-use plastic items are banned in Victoria



Why was a ban introduced?

Single-use plastics make up a third of the litter in our streets and waterways. They remain in the environment for a long time, harming our wildlife and contaminating our food and water. This ban will also help reduce plastic waste and contamination at recycling facilities.

The Victorian Government received thousands of responses from local businesses, community organisations and customers supporting bans on single-use plastics.

What items are banned?

From 1 February 2023, these items are banned in Victoria:

- × Single-use plastic drinking straws
- × Single-use plastic drink stirrers
- × Single-use plastic cutlery
- × Single-use plastic plates
- × Single-use plastic cotton buds
- × Foodware and cups made from expanded polystyrene

From 1 January 2026, these items are also banned when they are pre-packaged into a food or beverage product by a mechanical process (e.g. straw attached to juice box, plate in a frozen meal).

Compostable plastic alternatives are also banned. The ban applies where the items are sold or supplied for free, and where they are provided individually or in packets.

Who does the ban apply to?

The ban applies to all business and organisations. Key sectors include:

- **Retail and hospitality businesses**, such as cafes, bars, restaurants, hotels, takeaway food outlets, party stores, discount stores, supermarkets, market stalls, festivals, events, and online stores.
- **Suppliers, such as manufacturers**, distributors, importers, wholesalers, and online marketplaces.
- **Organisations and non-for-profits**, such as health and community services, charities, community groups, sporting clubs, schools, and government bodies.

The ban does not apply to individuals undertaking private or domestic activities.

How will the ban be enforced?

Banned items cannot be sold or supplied from 1 February 2023, even if they were purchased before the ban.

The Victorian Government will first work with businesses to ensure they understand their obligations, however penalties apply for non-compliance.

The Environment Protection Authority (EPA) is responsible for enforcing the ban. Non-compliance can be reported to the EPA.



www.vic.gov.au/plastics



Straws & utensils

✗ Banned

The ban applies to: single-use plastic drink stirrers, and cutlery, such as knives, forks, spoons, chopsticks, sporks, and food picks. Drinking straws are restricted*.



Plates

✗ Banned

The ban applies to: single-use plastic plates, including those made from expanded polystyrene.



✓ Allowed

First, consider if you really need to keep supplying these items, especially if many of your customers consume your products at home or in the office. Then, consider reusable items such as metal, or silicone.

If you need disposable alternatives, consider uncoated paper, wood or bamboo. Please note that items containing compostable plastic or 'plant-based' plastic are not allowed.



✓ Allowed

First, consider if customers could bring their own plates, especially at events. Then, consider reusable options such as ceramic, metal, or bamboo. If most of your customers dine in-store you could save money and waste by using washable items.

If you need disposable alternatives, consider plates made from paper, bamboo, or sugarcane pulp.



The ban does not apply to: serving utensils (e.g. tongs, cake servers).

* You can only provide a single-use plastic drinking straw to an individual who requires one due to disability or medical need, or someone acting on their behalf. These straws must not be accessible to customers, and only provided if requested. A person does not need to provide proof of need when requesting a straw.

The ban does not apply to: serving platters.

Paper plates which have a plastic lining or coating are exempt until November 2024. Businesses should take steps now to trial and transition to alternative products.



The ban also applies to single-use plastic cotton bud sticks. Many brands have already switched to cotton buds made from paper, wood or bamboo. Reusable plastic sticks with replaceable buds are also available. Cotton bud sticks used for scientific, medical or forensic testing are exempt from the ban.

Expanded polystyrene

X Banned

The ban applies to: foodware and cups made from expanded polystyrene (EPS).



✓ Allowed

First, consider reusable options such as metal, glass, or bamboo. If most of your customers dine in-store you could save money and waste by using washable items.

If you need disposable alternatives, consider items made from paper, bamboo or sugarcane pulp.



The ban does not apply to: EPS trays; EPS transport containers (e.g. multi-serve gelato tubs, seafood transport crates).

The ban does not apply to any other plastic cup, bowl or container (only EPS plastic is banned).

What about...

Compostable plastics?

Compostable plastics, such as biodegradable plastics, degradable plastics, renewable plastics, and bioplastics are included in the ban.



This includes plastic items with composting certifications.

Biodegradable or compostable plastic items can still harm wildlife the same way conventional plastic items do, if they are littered. Such plastics require extended periods of time or processing at a specialised composting facility in order to break down.

If an item looks or feels like plastic, but claims to be made from PLA, corn, sugarcane, wheat or any other 'natural' source it may still be a plastic.

When ordering single-use alternatives to banned plastic items, ask your supplier to confirm in writing that the items do not contain any form of plastic polymer, including compostable or bioplastic. Logos, labelling or product claims are not proof of compliance.

Reusable plastic items?

A banned single-use plastic item is one that is not reusable.



'Reusable' plastic items must be manufactured:

- to be used for the same purpose on multiple occasions, AND
- with a warranty (or other written representation) of at least 1 year.

Manufacturers **MUST** supply a written warranty (or similar written representation) of at least one year, for reusable plastic straws, cutlery, stirrers, plates or cotton buds to be sold or supplied in Victoria.

More information on warranties is available on the Consumer Affairs Victoria website: www.consumer.vic.gov.au

If you are a business or organisation that sells or supplies these reusable plastic items, you should check with your supplier that these products meet these specific requirements.

How to comply

1. Manage stock

Check your stock ranges and ensure you no longer supply banned items.

- Check with your supplier as they may accept returns or exchanges of unopened stock.
- If you have excess stock, contact a local recycler to see if they can accept any of your items.

You cannot supply banned stock after 1 February 2023, even if you purchased it before this date.

2. Consider Your Options

Customers are increasingly seeking to support sustainable businesses. Before you simply replace items, think about how you can avoid use, increase reusability or reduce waste.

- 1. Avoidance:** First, think about whether you need to keep supplying items like disposable cutlery if your customers do not really need them. Reducing the number of items you give away can also minimise business costs and waste.
- 2. Reusable:** Look at whether you can use reusable, washable alternatives especially if many customers dine in-store or at an event where they could return items. You may like to sell reusable items or encourage customers to bring their own through promotions or discounts.
 - › **If you supply reusable items**, they must be intended to be used multiple times and be manufactured with a warranty (or similar written representation) for at least 1 year.
- 3. Disposable:** If you need disposable items, speak to your supplier about the most sustainable options for your business, such as responsibly sourced paper, bamboo or wood alternatives.

Ask your supplier to answer these questions, in writing, before you order disposable items:

- › Do these items comply with the ban which came into effect in Victoria on 1 February 2023?
- › Do these items contain any form of plastic polymer, including compostable or degradable plastic?

If you are unsure about options, check the website, call the hotline or email us.

3. Inform your team and customers

Help your staff and customers understand the ban, by informing them of the positive changes you have made to comply with the ban.

We recommend displaying signage to help your customers prepare. Free factsheets, posters and digital materials are available in multiple languages at www.vic.gov.au/plastics

Support for business

The **Victorian Government** has developed a website, information, resources and translated materials to assist businesses and organisations to understand the ban.

Website & materials:
www.vic.gov.au/plastics

Tollfree hotline:
1800 844 946



Email:
sustainability@nra.net.au

The Victorian Government has engaged the **National Retail Association** (NRA) to provide a tollfree hotline and email support for businesses until the end of July 2023. The NRA team are specialists in helping businesses understand and prepare for plastic bans across Australia.

Reusability resources

Sustainability Victoria is providing information and resources to help your business and customers make the switch to reusables.

More information:
www.sustainability.vic.gov.au/plastics



www.vic.gov.au/plastics

