Soy sauce fish bottles and pizza savers. Ending the use of single-use plastic.

November 2026

The table behind us was celebrating a 60th birthday. Like other birthday parties it had helium ballons bobbing up and down. One got loose and went floating away to who knows where. It was accidental. Had it been intentional the person who released it would be committing an illegal act in State and Territory jurisdictions across Australia.

At our table we were using those soy sauce dispensers shaped like a fish with a very red nose. These are at present illegal in South Australia and will be soon New South Wales. I found no other State or Territory specifying this though undoubtedly if they haven't it won't be long before they do.

Over most of the 62 years I have lived in Australia it has been with single-use plastic. I've taken single-use cutlery and crockery on picnics and tossed them into a plastic garbage bags along with the remnants of food and drink and chucked the whole thing in more bigger garbage bags and put them out for the next visit of the Council garbos. I have saved up plastic take-away containers for my guests to take some of our meals home. But of course, that just leaves it up to the guests to get rid of it. I have eaten gozleme from a clam-shell container. I have used that small spade-shaped plastic spoon to eat my gelato with. I've got drunk on red wine served in a plastic cup. I have squeezed soy sauce from a plastic fish.

Phase out single-use plastic in the food sector and the Australia in which I live will in a short time be vastly different to now.

But why phase them out?

The human problem

Of the more than 8 billion metric tons of plastic produced worldwide, just 9% has been recycled. The remaining 91% has either piled up in landfills and the natural environment (79%) or been burned (12%).[1]

Most single-use plastics take hundreds of years to decompose, and some may never fully break down. For example, a plastic bottle can take 450 years or more to decompose in a landfill, while a plastic bag can take 10-20 years.[2]

Microplastics, smaller plastic particles that result from single use plastic breaking down, pollute our water sources and even our food. Their small size allows them to accumulate in the food chain, potentially transferring harmful chemicals to humans through their consumption. [3]

Research on the health impacts of microplastics in humans is just beginning. The particles have been found in multiple organs and tissues, including the brain, testicles, heart, stomach, lymph nodes and placenta. They've also been detected in urine, breastmilk, semen and meconium,

[1] Why Single-Use Plastic Should Be Banned Worldwide, Scienceinsights 2026
[2] How Does Single-Use Plastic Affect the Environment?, Institute for Environmental Research and Education, (IERE) 2026
[3] Ending Single-Use Plastics, Greenpeace Australia Pacific 2026

which is a newborn's first stool ... exposure to microplastics is suspected to harm reproductive, digestive and respiratory health and suggested a link to colon and lung cancer.[4]

What products are banned in each State or Territory?

In NSW:

The NSW Plastics Plan 2.0 actions include:

- phase out plastic bread tags and pizza savers from late 2027
- phase out non-compostable plastic fruit and vegetable stickers by 2030
- introduce tethered lids (meaning the cap or lid on a plastic bottle must remain attached to the bottle itself, even after it's opened) for plastic bottles by 2030
- require takeaway food service businesses to accept reusable cups by 2028 and large food service businesses to provide reusable cup options by 2030
- phase out small condiment containers such as soy sauce fish bottles by 2030 and similar single-use packaging that cannot be recycled, in favour of recyclable options
- require the redesign of takeaway food containers, such as plastic bowls with lids, bento boxes and sushi trays, to ensure they can be recycled safely
- regulate harmful chemical additives in plastic food and beverage packaging to prevent toxins entering soil, water and the food chain
- ban lighter-than-air (helium) balloon releases, in line with other states.[5]

In Queensland:

A range of single-use plastic items are banned from supply in Queensland.

These are:

- straws and stirrers
- plates, unenclosed bowls, and cutlery
- expanded polystyrene (EPS) takeaway food containers and EPS cups
- cotton buds with plastic stems
- EPS loose packaging
- plastic microbeads in rinseable personal care and cleaning products.

The outdoor release of lighter-than-air (for example, helium) balloons is also banned.[6]

In Victoria:

These problematic single-use plastics are now banned from sale or supply in Victoria:

- Drinking straws
- Cutlery
- Plates
- Drink stirrers
- Cotton bud sticks
- Expanded polystyrene food service items[7]

In the Australian Capital Territory (ACT):

- Single-use plastic cutlery, stirrers, plates and bowls, including paper and cardboard items that are plastic-lined.
- Single-use plastic straws (with exemptions for those who need them due to disability or health needs).

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[4] Microplastics and our health: What the science says, Stanford Medicine, 2025

[5] NSW takes action to phase out single use plastics and harmful chemicals. New South Wales Government 2005

[6] Queensland Banned single-use plastic items, Queensland Government 2026

[7] Plastic pollution harms our health, wildlife, and the environment, Tasmanian Government 2026

- Plastic bags greater than 35 microns in thickness which are often heavyweight and boutique plastic bags. This includes all plastic shopping bags with handles.
- Expanded polystyrene loose-fill packaging, trays and takeaway food and beverage containers.
- Oxo-degradable plastics (plastics which break down into 'microplastics' and don't completely decompose such as pet waste bags and rubbish bags labelled as degradable).
- Bioplastics (a type of plastic made from plant-based resources that can still cause damage to the environment when littered).[8]

In South Australia

- Single-use plastic drinking straws
- Expanded poly-styrene (EPS) cups, bowls, plates, and clam-shell containers
- Single-use plastic bowls and plates
- Plastic-stemmed cotton buds
- Plastic pizza saver
- Thick supermarket or boutique plastic bags
- Plastic barrier bags
- Plastic confetti and balloon stick ties
- Plastic food bag tabs
- Single- use plastic food containers
- Expanded polystyrene consumer food and beverage containers (including coffee cups)
- Plastic soy sauce fish
- Plastic fruit stickers[9]

In Western Australia:

- Bags for loose fruit and vegetables, unpackaged meat, seafood and dairy products, as well as loose dry nuts and confectionary products.
- Thick plastic bags
- Straws and utensils
- Disposable plastic and plastic-lined hot beverage cups (including coffee cups), with or without lids
- Plastic plates, bowls, food trays, lidded trays, bowls, plates and containers
- Expand plastic food containers and clam shells
- Loose filled expanded plastic packaging
- Helium releases
- The purchase and use of single-use plastic promotional film for outdoor applications[10]

In Tasmania:

- Plastic straws — including flexible, straight, and cocktail straws made from conventional plastic (including PLA straws marketed as biodegradable but not certified to Australian Standards)
- Plastic stirrers — including cocktail/coffee stirrers made from conventional plastic
- Plastic cutlery — forks, knives, spoons, sporks, and chopsticks made from conventional plastic

[8] Single-use plastics, Australian Capital Territory 2026

[9]

[10] Western Australia's Plan for Plastics. Western Australia 2026

- Plastic plates and bowls — single-use plates and bowls made from expanded polystyrene (EPS) or conventional plastic
- Expanded polystyrene (EPS) food and drink containers — including cups, trays, clamshells, and takeaway containers made from EPS (commonly known as styrofoam)
- Plastic cotton bud sticks — the plastic stem portion (cotton/paper stems are compliant)
- Plastic balloon sticks — sticks and holders used to support helium or air balloons
- Fruit and vegetable produce bags — lightweight plastic bags used for bagging loose produce at retail checkout or produce displays[11]

In the Northern Territory:

- Single-use plastic disposable coffee cups and lids
- Single-use plastic smoothie cups and lids
- Single-use plastic straws
- Single-use plastic cutlery
- Single-use plastic beverage stirrers
- Single-use plastic plates, bowls and takeaway containers
- Deliberate release of helium balloons.
- Plastic cups — single-use cups made from conventional plastic, including cold drink cups and portion cups
- Plastic cup lids — lids for single-use cups made from conventional plastic (including many standard cold-cup lids)
- Plastic food containers — single-use food containers made from conventional plastic
- Plastic food container lids — lids for single-use food containers made from conventional plastic
- Plastic bags — lightweight plastic bags under 35 microns thick (the standard checkout/carry bag), noting that heavier reusable plastic bags are not banned but carry their own environmental concerns
- Loose-fill polystyrene packaging — EPS beads or packing peanuts used in retail and e-commerce packaging[12]

Alternatives to single use plastic

The NSW Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) lists several alternatives to single- use plastics.

- Paper, metal, bamboo, glass, cardboard and silicone straws
- Wooden chopsticks, bamboo/wooden reusable plastic and metal cutlery
- Wooden stirrers
- Bamboo/wood ceramic, cardboard/paper and reusable plastic plates
- Woden, ceramic, cardboard, metal, enamel, and reusable plastic bowls
- Cardboard, ceramic, steel, glass and enamel cups
- Carboard and paper clam-shell containers[13]

[11] Tasmania's Plastic Ban: Every Item Now Banned (2024–25), ZenPacks Australia

[12] Plastic Use. City of Darwin 2026

[13] Alternatives to banned single-use plastic items, NSW Environment Protection Agency 2026