

# SUSTAINABLE EVENTS GUIDE

Commercial Directorate  
Parks Victoria



## Acknowledgement of Country



Victoria's network of parks and reserves are an integral part of Aboriginal cultural landscapes, which have been modified over many thousands of years of occupation. The landscapes we see today are influenced by the skills, knowledge and activities of generations of Aboriginal land managers. Parks Victoria acknowledges the deep and continuing connection that Traditional Owners have to the parks and reserves across Victoria and recognises their ongoing spiritual and cultural obligations to ensure that their ancestral lands are managed responsibly and appropriately.

**Cover image location:**

Port Phillip

Copyright: Parks Victoria

# Contents

|                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Definitions .....                    | 3 |
| Introduction.....                    | 4 |
| What is a Sustainable Event? .....   | 4 |
| Case Studies.....                    | 4 |
| Avoiding Plastic & Paper Waste ..... | 5 |
| Reducing Food Waste.....             | 8 |
| Transport .....                      | 8 |
| Branding .....                       | 8 |
| Recycling & Composting.....          | 9 |
| Prop & Equipment Hire .....          | 9 |
| The Waste Hierarchy .....            | 9 |

# Definitions

|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| Event:               | Any planned activity where any structure (permanent or temporary), open area, road way, fenced or unfenced area involves a gathering of people and has some level of impact on the immediate surroundings.  |
| Plastic:             | Biodegradable and non-biodegradable polyethylene made from petrochemical compounds.   |
| Single use plastics: | Includes any disposable plastic and polystyrene items such as straws, balloons, bags, cutlery and food and drink packaging designed to be used once and then discarded.   |
| Waste Hierarchy:     | The waste hierarchy ranks waste management options in order of their general environmental desirability. Rankings are Avoid (most preferred); Reduce; Reuse; Recycle and Dispose (least preferred).   |
| Parks:               | Parks Victoria manages many sites such as piers, waterways, ports, bays, historic buildings, trails, urban parks, conservation reserves and national and state parks. For the sake of brevity these are collectively described as 'parks' in this document, unless a specific type of site is stated. |

# Introduction

In 2015, Australia committed to the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which adopted 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

The Goals are a call for action to promote prosperity while protecting the planet, and are supported by targets and indicators to drive success. Although Parks Victoria is only a small player in global sustainability, the community values our parks highly and we can inspire and lead change through our actions and the actions of people that use parks such as event organisers.

Parks Victoria's Sustainable Events Guide aims to provide you with helpful tips and tools to help take action on climate change by making your event more sustainable. It will assist you in working to minimise environmental impacts through promoting effective systems to avoid plastics and manage waste.

# What is a Sustainable Event?

## Background

A sustainable event aims to reduce waste generated through the implementation of waste wise strategies and restricting the amount of unsustainable materials distributed before and during the event.

A sustainable event can be achieved through:

- Working with suppliers and vendors to use reusable, recyclable, compostable and/or biodegradable packaging
- Having clear signage of where bins are located and what items should go in which bin
- Having a bin system that caters for recyclable, organic and landfill items and avoids contamination of recyclables
- Eliminating or restricting the distribution of single use plastics
- Reducing the amount of waste that needs to go to landfill
- Having a water wise, sustainable toilet system
- Minimising litter

## Flora & Fauna

As a conservation agency committed to protecting Victoria's biodiverse environments, we ask you to

please consider the value and importance of the land on which you are holding your event. Ensure you are aware of any sensitive plant and animal species within your event area and outline any mitigation strategies to avoid harm. Remember that events and event participants are not to interfere or disturb any wildlife. For further information contact Parks Victoria on 131 963 and we can facilitate communication with the relevant local staff.

# Case Studies

## Yarra River Blitz – Yarra Riverkeeper Association

The Yarra River Blitz is a community event that engages the public to clean the reed beds around Melbourne using kayaks and canoes.

To date, 24.5 tonnes of rubbish have been removed from the Yarra; primarily polystyrene, plastic bottles and plastic food packaging.



Photo Credit: Yarra Riverkeeper Association

## Lost Lands – Werribee Park

Lost Lands is a festival that aims to eliminate single use plastics. Through establishing 3 waste streams at their event, Lost Lands set out to restrict the amount of material destined for landfill. The result – only half a bag of disposable waste was generated throughout the 8000+ people strong event. 200kg of waste was diverted from landfill despite a 58% increase in patrons from the previous year.



Copyright: Parks Victoria

# Avoiding Plastic & Paper Waste

## Why

Australia currently produces approximately 3 million tonnes of plastic annually. Less than 9% of this is recycled. With almost 130,000 tonnes of plastic ending up in the ocean every year, a plethora of the marine life that Parks Victoria aims to protect are killed from choking or entanglement.

Many plastics don't biodegrade, they break down into microplastics that continue to impact waterways and wildlife. It is important to note that even degradable plastics can be harmful to the environment. Oxydegradable plastics that deteriorate through exposure to sunlight and oxygen become easier for sea life to digest, who are poisoned prior to the plastics degrading<sup>1</sup>.

## How

### Food & Drink

- Eliminate plastic straws, cutlery, plates and cups and replace with reusable alternatives (such as paper straws, metal cutlery, ceramic plates) or compostable items.
- Encourage any caterers you are engaging for your event to package food in reusable containers that you can return. Alternatively, provide caterers with your own sustainable packaging prior to your event for them to use.
- Prioritise catering that uses fair trade, local, seasonal, carbon neutral and any other sustainable food options.

### Eliminate plastic balloons

- Reconsider the need for selling or distributing plastic balloons at your event. Instead, promote alternatives to balloons such as recycled bunting or lanterns.

### Restrict single use plastic water bottles

- Organise a portable, mobile or fixed water trailer/tank with reusable cups available for use.
- Encourage vendors to promote a reusable bottle/cup culture/deposit scheme and inform event attendees ahead of your event that single use plastic water bottles will not be available for purchase.
- Add extra cost to single use items and encourage/discount reusable alternatives.

### Engage with sustainable sponsors

- Prevent any sponsors of your event from distributing samples and/or promotional materials made from single use plastics (including the release of promotional balloons).
- Encourage sponsors to circulate items that are reusable or made from responsible materials.

### Eliminate unnecessary printing

- Rather than printing information forms, brochures or programs, encourage digital access to event information via emails or your event website.
- Avoid wristbands or hard copy tickets for your event and instead opt for a digital ticketing system



Copyright: Parks Victoria

---

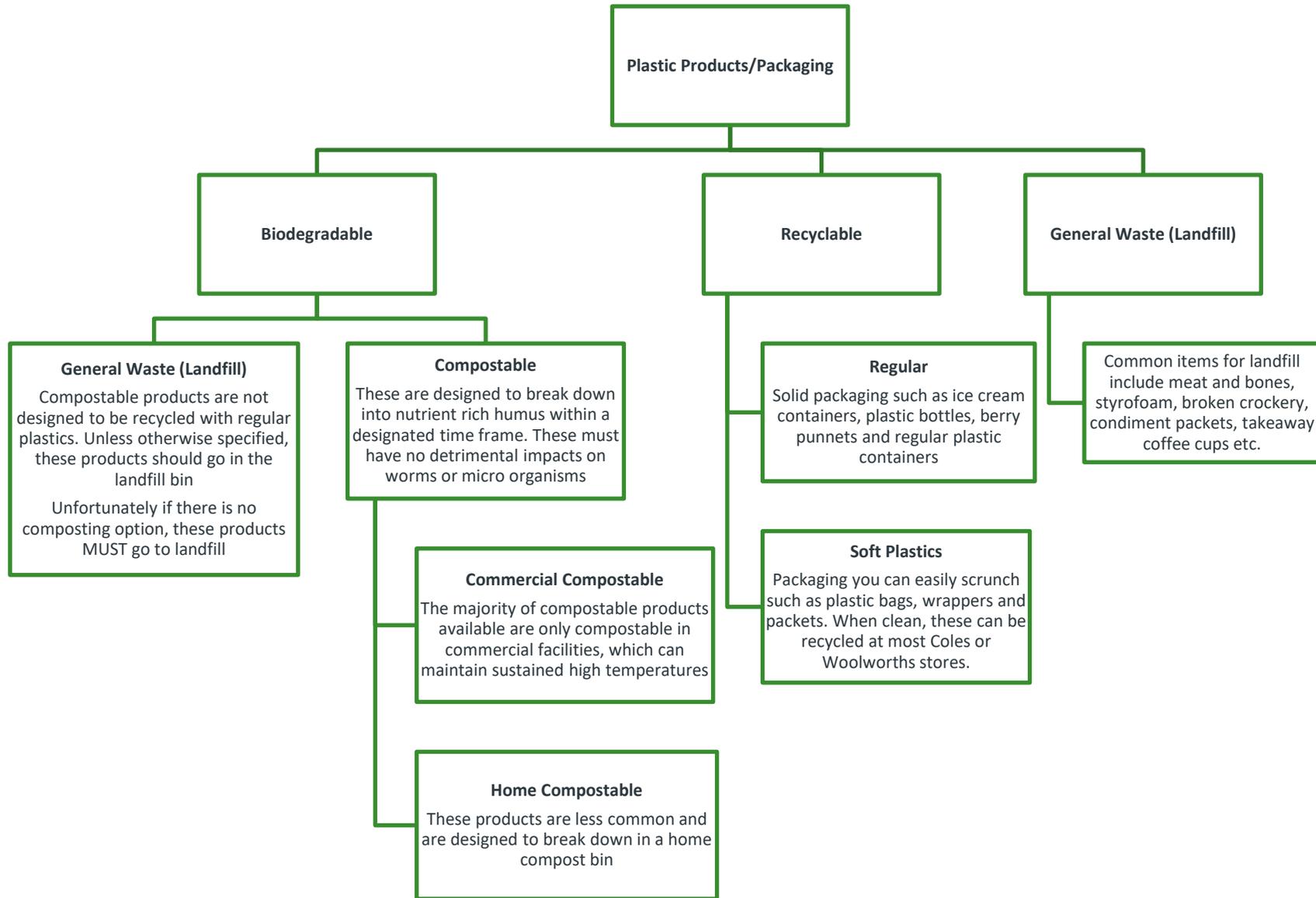
<sup>1</sup> <https://plasticfreesea.com.au/plastics-fact-sheet/>

# Managing Plastic Waste – Alternatives

| Product   | Option 1  | Option 2   |
|---|---|--|
| <b>Plastic Bottles</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drinking water from fixed or mobile water stations available on site</li> <li>• Patrons to bring own reusable bottle</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water sold in vessels made from recyclable or compostable materials (e.g. recycled cardboard)</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Disposable Cutlery/Crockery</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reusable plates used at event</li> <li>• Patrons bring own cutlery and crockery</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cutlery or crockery made from bamboo or sugarcane bagasse (compostable)</li> <li>• Cutlery or crockery made from recyclable materials</li> </ul>                |
| <b>Plastic Cups/Cups for Hot Drinks</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Patrons BYO bottles or hydration packs</li> <li>• Provide reusable cups at a cost, using a deposit scheme or using a wash up station</li> <li>• Vendors provide reusable mugs</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paper cups with wax instead of plastic lining (need to be put into general waste due to the waterproof lining)</li> <li>• Certified compostable cups</li> </ul> |
| <b>Bags</b><br><i>Please note single use plastic bags are banned in Victoria.</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Patrons bring own bags</li> <li>• Promote reusable bag merchandise</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distribute 100% Post-Consumer Recycled (or compostable), FSC Certified bags</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Single Serve Condiments</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vendors serve condiments from large containers and eliminate the distribution of single serve items</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• N/A</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Straws</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discontinue straws at event (unless for medical purposes)</li> <li>• Sell reusable straws</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distribute paper or bamboo (compostable) straws</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Balloons</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prohibit balloons at event</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote alternatives such as bubbles, recycled lanterns or recycled bunting.</li> </ul>   |

2

# Managing Plastic Waste – Where Does It Go?



# Reducing Food Waste

## Why

Globally, approximately 1.3 billion tonnes of food is lost or wasted each year<sup>3</sup>. The decomposition of food waste within landfill creates methane and causes significant environmental and health problems.<sup>4</sup> The waste of food is also a waste of the water, energy and land that is used to produce it. As food waste primarily occurs at the consumption stage, it is important to try and battle this issue at catered events.

## How

- When engaging with caterers prior to your event, consider the number of patrons, the type of event and match quantities with the number of tickets purchased/confirmed attendees
- Encourage caterers not to open or serve all food at once and to preserve any perishable items
- Donate any leftover or unused foods to event volunteers or charity organisations after your event
- Compost food waste in a separate bin and drop off to a local compost depot after your event

# Branding

Consider what is printed on promotional material, uniforms, awards and merchandise so that it has potential to be reused at future events. Avoid publishing dates or specific names on your materials and opt for more generic options that don't render the items as single use.

Consider opting for edible or reusable awards rather than one-off items.

# Transport

By engaging with local caterers and encouraging patrons to carpool to your event the environmental impacts of transportation can be decreased. Promoting public transport or providing attendees with a shuttle service to and from your event will reduce greenhouse gas pollution through decreasing individual car travel. Active transport, such as walking or cycling, provides health benefits and can reduce the stress of potential traffic congestion and parking for attendees. Alternatively, purchasing carbon offsets can balance the impact of carbon emissions from private travel.



Copyright: Parks Victoria

---

3

<http://www.fao.org/docrep/014/mb060e/mb060e00.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.lovefoodhatewaste.vic.gov.au/about-your-food/environmental-impacts>

# Recycling & Composting

## Why

Recycling delivers many environmental and health benefits. Through producing products from recycled items, the amount of raw materials extracted (such as oil and iron ore) from land are significantly reduced, therefore minimising pollution, waste sent to landfill and greenhouse gas emissions.<sup>5</sup> Recycling also works to preserve important natural resources such as fresh water and wood. Choosing to have composting facilities at your event can significantly reduce the amount of organic material sent to landfill. Using composting alternatives to chemical portaloos can save water and energy as well as considerably reduce greenhouse gas emissions in their transportation.

## How

- Ensure there are enough bins
- Empty or replace bins when they are full
- Ensure patrons are checking the markings on products so all that can be recycled is put in the correct bin
- Use colour and standard signage to make sure the recycling and composting bins are distinguishable. Signage templates are available on the Sustainability Victoria [website](#)
- Use event bin caps for identification
- Place a recycling bin at entrances, to make visitors aware that recycling is encouraged and expected<sup>6</sup>
- Consider providing a composting toilet service
- Identify wastes to be generated at your event and adequately plan for their management (by developing a waste management plan for example)

# Prop & Equipment Hire

By avoiding the purchase of new props and equipment for your event, less demand is created to produce items that often emit pollution, waste and energy in their development.

Before procuring any new equipment and/or props, consider second hand alternatives or items that are sustainably sourced.

If your event is likely to have leftover equipment, camping gear etc. consider donating it to charities or social enterprises.

# The Waste Hierarchy



<sup>5</sup> <https://www.sustainability.vic.gov.au/You-and-Your-Home/Waste-and-recycling/Recycling/Why-recycle>

<sup>6</sup> Campaspe Shire Council Waste Wise Events Guide

<sup>7</sup> <http://zerowastemontenegro.me/zero-waste-hierarchy>

**We welcome your feedback. If you would like to suggest improvements to this Guide, or share with us case-studies of your sustainability initiatives, please provide feedback to us at [events@parks.vic.gov.au](mailto:events@parks.vic.gov.au)**

