

# UQ *Unwrapped*

A guide for on-campus retailers



# UQ Unwrapped



## What is it and how does it work?

UQ Unwrapped is a sustainability initiative to reduce UQ's plastic footprint. To achieve this, we will engage directly with food outlets, events, markets and catering providers to switch from single-use plastics to better alternatives.

We will also encourage UQ students, staff and visitors to take up a plastic-free lifestyle and support UQ retailers that have committed to reducing their plastic use.

We are seeking a reduction of seven single-use plastic items which represent the most problematic and prolific sources of the litter stream.

The identified items are;

- coffee cups
- takeaway containers (plastic/polystyrene)
- food ware (plastic cutlery, cups, plates)
- plastic straws
- plastic bags

- single use water bottles
- balloons

We have set out some guidelines in this booklet for you to work towards eliminating these items.

Members start receiving promotional benefits once they have eliminated at least one item. If you eliminate all items, you will be elevated to the status of 'UQ Plastic Free Champion'. Champions receive special promotional benefits.

While we focus on seven items, we encourage you to take it further and reduce any other single-use plastic items you are using. We're always on hand to help, and we will recognise your efforts and let people know what Champions you are!

Special thanks to the Boomerang Alliance for their guidance and the use of their 'Plastic Free Noosa' resources.

## Member Benefits

Members who eliminate at least one of the seven target items will receive:

- A listing in the 'Member Directory' on the UQ Sustainability website
- A 'Member' symbol placed on the map on the UQ Sustainability website
- Direct promotion on the UQ Sustainability and UQ Food Facebook and Instagram pages.
- Promotion of the campaign by the Office of Marketing and Communication, encouraging the UQ community to support members.

Plastic Free Champions who eliminate all seven items receive the following additional benefits:

- A specially designed and printed 'UQ Plastic Free Champion sign'
- A featured listing on the 'UQ Plastic Free Champions' page on the UQ Sustainability website
- A 'Champion' symbol placed on the map on the UQ Sustainability website
- Promotions on our social media pages and through the social media pages of our partner networks, including, but not limited to UQ Food, UQU clubs and societies.



# Getting started

## Eliminating your single-use plastic



We are here to assist you to eliminate the seven identified plastic items. On the next page, we have provided a guide that will help you identify and source the right alternative products.

It is always better to choose **REUSABLE** alternatives wherever possible. This is better for the environment and will cost you less in the long run. Of course this is not always feasible, so we

recommend using 100% certified compostable products for takeaway where needed.

*Note: Be wary of products labelled only as 'biodegradable'. This does NOT mean the same thing as compostable, and may be a plastic product. Additionally, some products labelled 'compostable' may contain a mix of compostable and plastic materials. Always ensure you are purchasing 100% certified compostable products.*

## Organics Collection

Once a critical mass of retailers have shifted to compostable packaging, organics bins will be installed at the food outlets. Our waste contractor will service these bins, transporting the organic material, including food waste and compostable packaging, to a composting facility.

The benefits of composting relate not only to the outputs it produces, such as fertiliser and mulch, but also the inputs it diverts away from landfill such as food waste and compostable packaging.

# Guide to eliminating single-use plastic

## Coffee cups and lids

Approximately 8,000 disposable coffee cups are used at UQ every day. The plastic lining in the cup means these cups are not recycled, instead ending up in landfill. If mismanaged they have the potential to end up in our oceans.



### Reusable Options

- Provide washable cups for dine-in customers.
- Offer a discount to dine-in customers as an incentive to stay.
- Encourage customers to BYO reusable cups and provide economic disincentives for purchasing non-reusable cups i.e. customers pay extra for using a non-reusable coffee cup.
- Sell reusable cups (these can be branded) and encourage customers to purchase them.
- Provide a return service for regulars. This could be through a 'mug wall' where regulars borrow and return a mug. Mugs can be donated by locals or sourced from op shops.

### Takeaway Options\*

A cup without a lining is preferred, but difficult to find, so look for 100% certified compostable cups with PLA (bioplastic) lining. PLA is plant derived and compostable, so it is a better alternative to plastic.

Similarly lids should be made with 100% certified compostable material such as biocane/bagasse. Ensure lid is not PS (polystyrene) - these lids will have 'PS' and the number '6' on them - avoid!

## Food ware (plates, cups, cutlery and napkins)

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### Reusable Options

Use washable reusable items such as stainless steel cutlery and ceramic plates.

### Takeaway Options\*

Preference wooden/ paper/ cane or other 100% certified compostable items.

For cold cups, unlined paper is preferred. If lined, ensure all material is 100% certified compostable.

For cutlery, bamboo/ wood is the best option. Be wary of products labelled only as biodegradable, ensure they are labelled as compostable. Try to source sustainable products if possible.

Please also ensure napkins are compostable.



## Water bottles

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Plastic bottles form a large component of the litter stream. In the marine environment, they have the potential to survive forever. Once there, they begin to fragment into bite size microplastics, killing marine life that mistake them for food.

### Reusable Options

- Provide table water in glasses.
- Install an on-tap water system and offer filtered/ carbonated options to dine-in customers

### Takeaway Options\*

Sell reusable bottles and encourage customers to fill them at the "Drink Me" water refill station located on campus.

*Note: With the introduction of the Queensland Container Refund Scheme, all beverage containers will have a 10c refund upon return.*

## Takeaway containers

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Takeaway containers are littered frequently because they are usually used away from home. They are often made of polystyrene, which is toxic, and pose many health concerns for not only our wildlife, but us as well. We recommend that polystyrene is NEVER used for food packaging.

### Reusable Options

- Allow customers to BYO container.
- Provide or sell customers a reusable container and offer a discount on next purchase (upon return of container).

### Takeaway Options\*

Provide wooden/paper/cane or other 100% certified compostable containers. Be wary of products labelled only as biodegradable, ensure they are also labelled as compostable.



## Straws

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Straws are an often frivolous plastic item that causes significant ingestion hazards for our wildlife. Plastic straws are used for an average of 20 minutes, however, they can last in the environment for years and they are one of the top 10 items picked up in beach clean ups. Plastic straws cannot be recycled and eventually fragment in our oceans, making it far easier for wildlife to ingest plastic.

### Reusable Options

- Don't use them! Stop automatically putting straws in drinks.
- Stock reusable steel or bamboo straws.
- Encourage customers to BYO reusable straws.

### Takeaway Options\*

Remove plastic straws from sight and only provide upon request.

Paper and PLA (bioplastic) straws are compostable options, but PLA are not preferred as they take a long time to biodegrade and require high heat, so are a problem if littered. Avoid oxo-degradable/biodegradable straws, these are plastic and when they break apart, they contribute to the worldwide microplastic problem.



## Plastic bags

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Plastic bags are quite often the cause of wildlife entanglement and ingestion. They are shown to be immediately targeted by species that mistake them for their food sources (e.g. jellyfish) and can cause intestinal blockages, starvation and asphyxiation.

Degradable and biodegradable bags are NOT a good alternative. Degradable bags break into small pieces quickly and are readily ingested by wildlife. Biodegradable bags take up to 2 years to biodegrade in the environment, and by that time they have often done the damage.



### Reusable Options

- Don't provide plastic bags, instead offer reusable cloth bags (these can be branded and sold). Try to source bags made from sustainable materials, or stock locally made Boomerang Bags (and support local employment and recycling at the same time).
- Encourage customers to bring their own bags.

### Takeaway Options\*

- Provide paper bags (sustainably sourced).

*Note: Lightweight plastic bags (including degradable/ biodegradable and compostable bags) have been banned in Queensland.*



*\*NOTE: While disposable packaging has become a convenient way of life, we should be striving to REDUCE waste wherever possible. While compostable items eliminate the use of single-use, nonbiodegradable plastic, they do not necessarily prevent litter or waste. Remember: REUSABLE items remain the best option.*

# Average Price Comparison

## Examples: Plastic vs Alternative Products

We understand that cost is a factor when making product decisions. So, to reduce costs to you, UQ has partnered with Planet Friendly Packaging and BioPak to provide a bulk discount rate for all UQ retailers. We recommend you contact Planet Friendly Packaging to discuss this deal and to learn about which compostable products may suit you.

Remember when sourcing products ensure you are always getting 100% compostable.



## Data Collection



One of the main ways we will be assessing the success of UQ Unwrapped is by collecting data on the amount of plastic items removed from use, as done through audits of participants' procurement of products.

To this end, we would like your permission to obtain ordering data from your supplier, which will be used as part of a cumulative figure. We will not be using your individual data.

Allowing us access to this information is not required, however it will greatly assist us in giving validity to the project and help us improve our services to you, and to the UQ environment and community.

## Contacting Us

We are excited to be a part of this journey with you and look forward to working with you to create a cleaner, greener UQ! Together we are protecting the environment, enhancing UQ's reputation, and showing other communities how it can be done.

Office Hours 8:30am - 4:30pm, Monday to Friday

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## UQ Sustainability

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