



SINGLE-USE PLASTICS BAN

In July 2021, the ACT Government introduced the *Plastic Reduction Act 2021* which is helping to reduce plastic litter in Canberra's landfill, parks and waterways.

The first set of items banned for sale, supply and distribution in the ACT were:

- single-use plastic cutlery
- single-use plastic beverage stirrers
- expanded polystyrene takeaway food and beverage containers.

In 2022 the ACT Government is considering a regulation to ban a second tranche of items from 1 July 2022. Before the regulation, the Minister must give public notice of the proposed regulation and invite public submissions for a 12-week period. We asked for input from the community and key stakeholders on the following proposed items:

- single-use plastic straws (with exemptions for those who need them)
- single-use plastic fruit and vegetable "barrier bags"
- cotton buds with plastic sticks
- all oxo-degradable plastic products such as degradable plastic bags and degradable plastic tarps.

THE CONVERSATION

The consultation ran from 14 October 2021 to 12 January 2022. The community and businesses were invited to complete a survey or provide a written submission through YourSay.

Stakeholder discussions were also held through monthly ACT Plastic Reduction Taskforce meetings (with members from key national and local business, industry, environment and disability advocacy bodies), as well as one-to-one meetings with 27 businesses, disability advocacy groups and industry peak bodies.

We received 136 survey submissions on YourSay and a further 21 written submissions.

87% of survey respondents provided feedback on barrier bags, 73.5% on plastic straws and 62.5% on both plastic cotton buds and oxo-degradable plastics.

An additional 397 emails were received from supporters of an environmental society.

WHO WE ENGAGED

We engaged with major supermarkets, disability advocacy groups, retail and hospitality associations, a range of ACT Government directorates as well as the broader community.

84% of survey respondents were individuals, 10% were businesses, 4.5% community organisations and 1% identified as other.



Key insights

Wide level of support for single-use plastics ban amongst respondents

- 88% of survey respondents were aware of the ACT Government's ban on problematic single-use plastics that began in 2021.
- Respondents showed a strong level of support overall for phase 2 of the single-use plastics ban.
- The majority of respondents have already changed their behaviours to reduce their use of these single-use plastics.

Single-use plastic straws

- For some members of the community, a ban on single-use plastic straws may present a safety issue and impact their ability to fully participate in public life.
- Disability advocacy groups raised concerns as single-use plastic straws are an essential tool for some people and a ban would disproportionately impact their lives.
- Both Queensland and South Australia have already banned single-use plastic straws and included exemptions allowing those with disability or medical needs to access them. The two states used different approaches and we asked the community which was preferred. 58% of individuals and 70% of businesses preferred the Queensland model (where individuals are encouraged to bring their own straws if they require them to hospitality venues, market stalls and not-for-profit organisations, and are still able to buy them from exempt businesses such as medical clinics, pharmacies, etc.) over the South Australian model (where businesses such as cafés, hotels and restaurants may stock and provide a single-use plastic straw upon request).
- Advocacy groups noted that although a ban is not preferred, if it went ahead, the South Australian model presents a better option. To prevent discrimination, a strong accessibility campaign would also be needed and businesses should have plastic straws readily available for people with a disability.

Single-use plastic fruit and vegetable "barrier bags"

- Supermarkets and businesses raised numerous concerns about the proposed ban of fruit and vegetable "barrier bags", including the cost of alternative products, the inability for ACT residents to correctly dispose of alternative compostable bags without a Territory-wide industrial composting service, and logistical challenges in meeting the ban start date due to COVID-related shipping delays.
- 71.5% of businesses responding to the survey foresee issues with the proposed ban and lack confidence in being able to successfully transition away from barrier bags.
- 69% of individuals support certified compostable bags as an alternative to plastic barrier bags.

Cotton buds with plastic sticks

- There is strong support for banning cotton buds with plastic sticks, with over 87% of survey respondents in favour of the ban on this product.
- 91% of respondents indicated that they would switch to using cotton buds made from hard paper, bamboo or sugarcane sticks.
- Businesses were also very confident they could transition to selling cotton buds made from hard paper, bamboo or sugarcane sticks.



Oxo-degradable plastic products

- Oxo-degradable plastic products contain additives that make the plastic break down faster into tiny fragments (microplastics) which do not completely decompose. There was strong support for banning all oxo-degradable plastic products, with 80% of survey respondents supporting banning this item.
- 60% of businesses did not foresee any issues with banning these products.
- Feedback suggests that businesses that do stock oxo-degradable plastic products may need support to find certified compostable alternatives.

WHAT'S NEXT?

The ACT Government will consider all feedback as part of the legislation to come into effect from 1 July 2022.

We will continue to work with community, disability advocacy groups and businesses to facilitate a smooth transition to single-use plastic alternatives, addressing concerns raised during consultation.

More information about the ACT Government's plan to phase out single-use plastics, including future items considered for banning, can be viewed in the [Next Steps 2021 policy](#).

Key Timings

14 October 2021 – 12 January 2022 – Engagement commences with stakeholders and the community

12 January 2022 – YourSay consultation closes and all submissions and responses are provided to the Minister for City Services for consideration

February 2022 – Share what we heard with the community (*we are here*)

March - April 2022 – Development of draft regulation

1 July 2022 – Proposed ban anticipated to commence

THANK YOU FOR YOUR FEEDBACK

136

Survey responses
completed through
YourSay

21

Written submissions
received during the
consultation period

27

Meetings with businesses,
advocacy groups and
peak bodies

2,625

Page views on the
single-use plastics
YourSay page

397

Emails received from
an environmental
society's supporters