

Position Statement on reusable foodware

June 2020

Boomerang Alliance supports the use of reusable foodware wherever possible

The most effective way to reduce waste is to not create it in the first place. After avoiding and reducing packaging, reusing is the next best option.

Whenever an item is reused, it:

- Prevents a new one from being purchased and saves valuable resources from being wasted
- Saves energy and reduces greenhouse gas emissions
- Reduces the likelihood of the item ending up as litter
- Minimises the amount of waste having to be sent for recycling or to landfill
- Allows products to be used to their fullest extent and kept circulating in the economy



Reusable packaging is a critical part of the solution to eliminate plastic pollution. As part of the [New Plastics Economy Global Commitment](#), over 350 organisations have recognised that, where relevant, reuse business models should be explored to reduce the need for single-use plastic packaging¹.

Boomerang Alliance supports:

- The use of reusable crockery and utensils for the consumption of food and drinks at cafés, restaurants and food vendors (including at events) and in public places and at functions.
- The use of reusable returnable foodware and containers for food and drink from cafés, restaurants and food vendors (including at events) and in public places and at functions.

Legally, food safety matters relating to packaging are contained in the [Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code](#). It requires food businesses only use packaging material that is *fit for its intended use, will not contaminate food, ensure food is protected from contamination during all stages and must not re-use single-use items*. Therefore, accepting reusable cups and containers from customers is allowable under the code, providing these are suitable for use and clean.

Boomerang Alliance supports reusable foodware becoming more common practice. Under our Plastic Free Places program, it is our policy to always recommend reusable options over single-use disposable products, wherever possible.

We have identified four scenarios that represent the most obvious opportunities to increase the use of reusables. These are:

- At events
- At takeaway outlets
- At supermarkets/retail
- At specific controlled environments (e.g. university campuses, corporate buildings, government offices, institutions such as Parliament House, museums and art galleries, and sports grounds etc)

¹ <https://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/our-work/activities/new-plastics-economy/global-commitment>

Events

Public events and markets are managed, usually by a central organiser. This enables an opportunity to introduce reusables. Examples include:

- Refillable cups for bars and reusable coffee/teacups at the event
- Vendors accepting BYO containers from consumers
- Events providing reusable foodware for the use of all vendors, and a wash up service

Takeaway Outlets

Options include:

- Permitting customers to bring BYO cups and containers
- Offering a container take-back service
- Reusable cups and container 'swap and go' networks

Supermarkets/Retail

Some retailers, such as bulk buying outlets, already offer reusable container options, and provide good examples of this practice. Options could include:

- Use of BYO produce bags and offering these for sale by the retailer
- Permitting customers to use BYO containers for delicatessen/meat and other putrescible products
- Provide a take-back container service for customers for fresh food

Specific Controlled Environments

Controlled environments provide opportunities to manage reusable systems more effectively as any customer-interface networks tend to be isolated and separate. For example, it is easier to manage vendors and transactions within a campus or office block, than at a more public retail precinct. Options include:

- Reusable cup and container services for the whole site or location
- Container take-back systems provided by vendors
- Public and institutional events and markets providing reusable service and networks

The [Reuse Rethinking Packaging](#) handbook provides details of 69 refill/return/reusable examples from around the world.