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Single Use Plastics Regulations Consultation  
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## ARA SUBMISSION REGARDING PROPOSED 2023 SINGLE-USE AND OTHER PLASTIC PRODUCTS AMENDMENT REGULATIONS

The Australian Retailers Association (ARA) welcomes the opportunity to comment on South Australia's proposed 2023 *Single-use and Other Plastic Products Amendments* regulations (the regulations).

The ARA is the oldest, largest and most diverse national retail body, representing a \$400 billion sector that employs 1.3 million Australians – making retail the largest private sector employer in the country. As Australia's peak retail body, representing more than 120,000 retail shop fronts and online stores, the ARA informs, advocates, educates, protects and unifies our independent, national and international retail community.

We represent the full spectrum of Australian retail, from our largest national and international retailers to our small and medium sized members, who make up 95% of our membership. Our members operate in all jurisdictions and across all categories - from food to fashion, hairdressing to hardware, and everything in between.

In South Australia, we represent the interests of small retail businesses as well as our large, national members who operate extensive store networks across the state in supermarkets, speciality retail, pharmacy, hospitality and quick service restaurants.

The ARA has been an active participant in the South Australian Single Use Plastics Stakeholder Taskforce and has had the opportunity to share industry perspectives on the impact of the phase out of single-use plastics in that forum.

In terms of proposed regulations, the ARA specifically notes that:

- The next tranche of bans, due to take effect from 01 September 2023, covers plastic pizza savers, plastic-stemmed cotton buds, single-use plastic bowls without lids and single-use plastic plates. We believe the timeframe for this scope is appropriate and reasonable.
- The decision to include a time-limited exemption for plastic-lined plates and bowls until 31 October 2024. We support this exemption, noting that this aligns with other jurisdictions.

We make the following comments in relation to the proposed phase outs for September 2024. At this stage, the ARA has no issue with the items proposed to be phased out in 2025.

### COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Plastic produce bags

The ARA is generally supportive of a shift away from plastic produce bags but retain some concerns about weights and measures compliance, and adequate time to deplete stock holdings.

Government and regulators need to resolve the risk of weights and measures non-compliance as a result of a transition away from the current range of plastic produce bags. Retailers also need sufficient lead-time to source and test alternatives that are compliant with weights and measures laws.

Retailers will need sufficient time to run down stock to avoid unintended environmental impacts and financial costs of disposing of banned items through landfill. A one-year grace period should be enacted to provide retailers with sufficient time to run down stock without adverse impacts.

### Single-use plastic cups (including coffee cups)

Retailers will need sufficient lead-time to design, test and source safe alternatives to the current range of takeaway coffee cups and lids. ARA members advise that this development pipeline is 12-24 months and note that a large-scale transition to alternatives will be impacted by the lack of cost-effective replacements currently available locally and constraints along the global supply chain.

While we acknowledge that the South Australian government is aligned with this timeline, allowing for a one-year grace period in the regulation would be welcome.

A national approach and timeline to takeaway coffee cups and lids would also be welcome. So too would government-industry collaboration in researching and developing innovative solutions so that takeaway coffee cups can be appropriately composted or recycled by existing facilities, at scale.

### Expanded polystyrene (EPS) packaging

The ARA is generally supportive of a ban on EPS but further clarification is needed around the types of EPS included in the ban.

<b>EPS food trays</b>	<p>Whilst a number of larger retailers have already commenced the transition to alternatives to EPS food trays, issues remain for smaller retailers who are struggling to find a compliant, safe and cost-effective alternative to EPS trays.</p> <p>The South Australian government should consider the need to provide smaller retailers more time to find cost effective alternatives that are safe and compliant from a food safety perspective.</p>
<b>Moulded EPS</b>	<p>It is unclear whether moulded EPS is included in the September 2024 bans. However, we note that the phase out of moulded EPS should align with the Australian Packaging Covenant Organisation (APCO) EPS Roadmap, which is due for completion by July 2025.</p> <p>Any future ban on moulded EPS needs to consider packaging for brown and white goods, which includes a variety of large, bulky items such as barbeques, smokers and outdoor fire pits, kitchen appliances and other electrical products.</p> <p>A typical development timeline for this type of product is one year, which includes the development of packaging. Any alternative to EPS must be tested under all conditions, as a damaged or unusable product ending up in landfill has greater environmental implications than the use of EPS in packaging or the final product. This would be in addition to any financial loss incurred by the business.</p> <p>Furthermore, the transition to an alternative requires new and or additional equipment down the supply chain, as well as the training of suppliers on both the alternative product, and the equipment.</p> <p>It is worth noting that some members are actively trialling alternatives to EPS, with varying degrees of success with honeycomb cardboard and other materials.</p>

## NEED FOR A NATIONAL APPROACH

Addressing the challenge of plastic pollution remains a critical issue for the retail sector. We need well considered, carefully planned policy to guide the phase out of single-use plastics in a way that delivers strong compliance and positive environmental results, at the lowest cost to business.

While we applaud the South Australian Government for its proactive approach to the phase-out of single-use plastics, including close alignment with other jurisdictions, the lack of national framework has made these changes harder and more costly to deliver. As evidenced by Attachment A.

The ARA will continue to advocate for a nationally consistent approach with the South Australian government and with other government's around the country.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide a submission to the Green Industries SA and we look forward to further engagement through the Taskforce as the three stages of bans are implemented across South Australia.

Any queries in relation to this submission can be directed to our team at [sustainability@retail.org.au](mailto:sustainability@retail.org.au).

Yours sincerely,



Paul Zahra  
Chief Executive Officer

ATTACHMENT A

CHANGE OVERVIEW  
PHASE-OUT OF UNNECESSARY AND PROBLEMATIC SINGLE-USE PLASTICS



STATUS BY ITEM BY JURISDICTION (AS AT 21-JUN-22)	ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA	HOBART
01 LIGHT PLASTIC BAGS WITH HANDLES (BELOW 35 MICRONS)	● JUL-11	● JUN-22	● SEP-11	● JUL-18	● MAR-09	● NOV-13	● NOV-19	● JAN-19	
02 THICK PLASTIC BAGS WITH HANDLES (ABOVE 35 MICRONS)		○ NOV-24 REVIEW	🚫 BY JUL-25		🕒 SEP-24			● JUL-22	
03 PLASTIC LAMINATED PAPER BAGS WITH HANDLES		○ NOV-24 REVIEW						● JUL-22	
04 PLASTIC BARRIER BAGS FOR PRODUCE AND DELICATESSEN		○ NOV-24 REVIEW		🕒 SEP-23	🕒 SEP-24			🚫 AFTER JUL-23	
05 PLASTIC STRAWS	● JUL-22	● NOV-22	🚫 BY JUL-25	● SEP-21	● MAR-21		🕒 FEB-23	● JUL-22	● JUL-21
06 PLASTIC CUTLERY AND STIRRERS	● JUL-21	● NOV-22	🚫 BY JUL-25	● SEP-21	● MAR-21		🕒 FEB-23	● JUL-22	● JUL-21
07 PLASTIC TAKEAWAY CONTAINERS	🚫 JUL-23			SEP-23	🕒 SEP-24			● JUL-22 (2)	● JUL-21
08 POLYSTYRENE TAKEAWAY CONTAINERS	● JUL-21	● NOV-22	🚫 BY JUL-25	● SEP-21	● MAR-22		🕒 FEB-23	● JUL-22 (2)	
09 POLYSTYRENE CUPS	● JUL-21	● NOV-22	🚫 BY JUL-25	● SEP-21	● MAR-22		🕒 FEB-23	🚫 AFTER JUL-23	
10 PLASTIC CUPS FOR COLD PRODUCTS		○ NOV-24 REVIEW		🕒 SEP-23	🕒 SEP-24			● OCT-22	
11 PLASTIC-LINED PAPER CUPS FOR HOT PRODUCTS		○ NOV-24 REVIEW			🕒 SEP-24			🚫 AFTER JUL-23	● JUL-21
12 PLASTIC LIDS FOR PLASTIC AND PLASTIC-LINED CUPS		○ NOV-24 REVIEW			🕒 SEP-24			🚫 AFTER JUL-23	● JUL-21
13 PLASTIC PLATES AND BOWLS		● NOV-22 (1)	🚫 BY JUL-25	● SEP-21	🕒 SEP-23		🕒 FEB-23 (4)	● JUL-22	
14 PLASTIC-LINED PAPER PLATES AND BOWLS		● NOV-22			○ SEP-22 REVIEW			● JUL-22 (3)	
15 PLASTIC LIDS FOR PLASTIC AND PLASTIC-LINED BOWLS		○ NOV-24 REVIEW			○ SEP-22 REVIEW			🚫 AFTER JUL-23	
16 POLYSTYRENE PLATES AND BOWLS		● NOV-22			● MAR-22		🕒 FEB-23	🚫 AFTER JUL-23	
17 COTTON BUDS WITH PLASTIC STICKS	● JUL-22	● NOV-22		🕒 SEP-23	🕒 SEP-23		🕒 FEB-23	🚫 AFTER JUL-23	
18 PRODUCTS CONTAINING MICROBEADS	🚫 JUL-23	● NOV-22	🚫 BY JUL-25	🕒 SEP-23				🚫 AFTER JUL-23	
19 OXO-DEGRADABLE PLASTICS	● JUL-22	○ NOV-24 REVIEW		🕒 SEP-23	● MAR-22			🚫 AFTER JUL-23	
20 NON-COMPOSTABLE STICKERS FOR FRUIT		○ NOV-24 REVIEW			🕒 SEP-25				
21 POLYSTYRENE PACKAGING (TRAYS, LOOSE-FILL, MOULDED)				🕒 SEP-23	○ SEP-22 REVIEW			🚫 AFTER JUL-23	

NOTES

- (1) BOWLS WITH LIDS NOT INCLUDED IN NSW BAN (NOV-22)
- (2) TAKEAWAY CONTAINERS WITH LIDS NOT INCLUDED IN WA BAN (JUL-22)
- (3) PLASTIC-LINED PAPER PLATES AND BOWLS THAT MEET COMPOSTING STANDARDS NOT INCLUDED IN WA BAN (JUL-22)
- (4) BOWLS NOT INCLUDED IN VIC BAN (MAR-23)

● BANS IMPLEMENTED
🕒 BANS SCHEDULED
🚫 BANS ANNOUNCED - SUBJECT TO CONSULTATION
○ REVIEWS ANNOUNCED