Waverley Sustainable Packaging Guidelines

A project of the Bondi Junction Circular Economy Roadmap

second nature

WAVERLEY COUNCIL

Contents

1. Introduction

Packaging is a necessary component to everyday life. Its primary purpose is to contain and protect a product from the point of manufacture, through the supply chain, to the end user. It also provides vital information about the product and may share the story, values, and personality of the company through branding, imaging and colour. Unfortunately, in Australia, most conventional packaging options are made using fossil fuels or other non-renewable and toxic materials which are harmful to the environment and human health.

Sustainable packaging safely transports products and food, while having a lower environmental and social impact in than conventional packaging.

Waverley Council's Sustainable Packaging Guideline has been developed to provide support to local businesses on how to procure, use and provide more sustainable packaging, and contribute to National Packaging Targets.

Throughout this Guideline, food and beverage packaging is covers:

Packaging used by customers to transport food and/or beverages away from a business prior to consumption, including cups and lids, takeaway boxes, wrapping (foil or paper), straws, napkins, paper bags

Packaging materials that are in direct contact with the product and/or is surrounding the product, including chip packets, chocolate bar wrapper, glass bottles and cans, a box surrounding the product.

National Packaging Targets

The Australian Packaging Covenant Organisation (APCO) was appointed by the Federal Government to facilitate the delivery of the National Packaging Targets, a key commitment from Australian industry and government to transition toward a circular economy for packaging. The circular economy aims to keep materials in use for as long as possible to eliminate waste and pollution, and reduce our reliance on finite virgin materials.

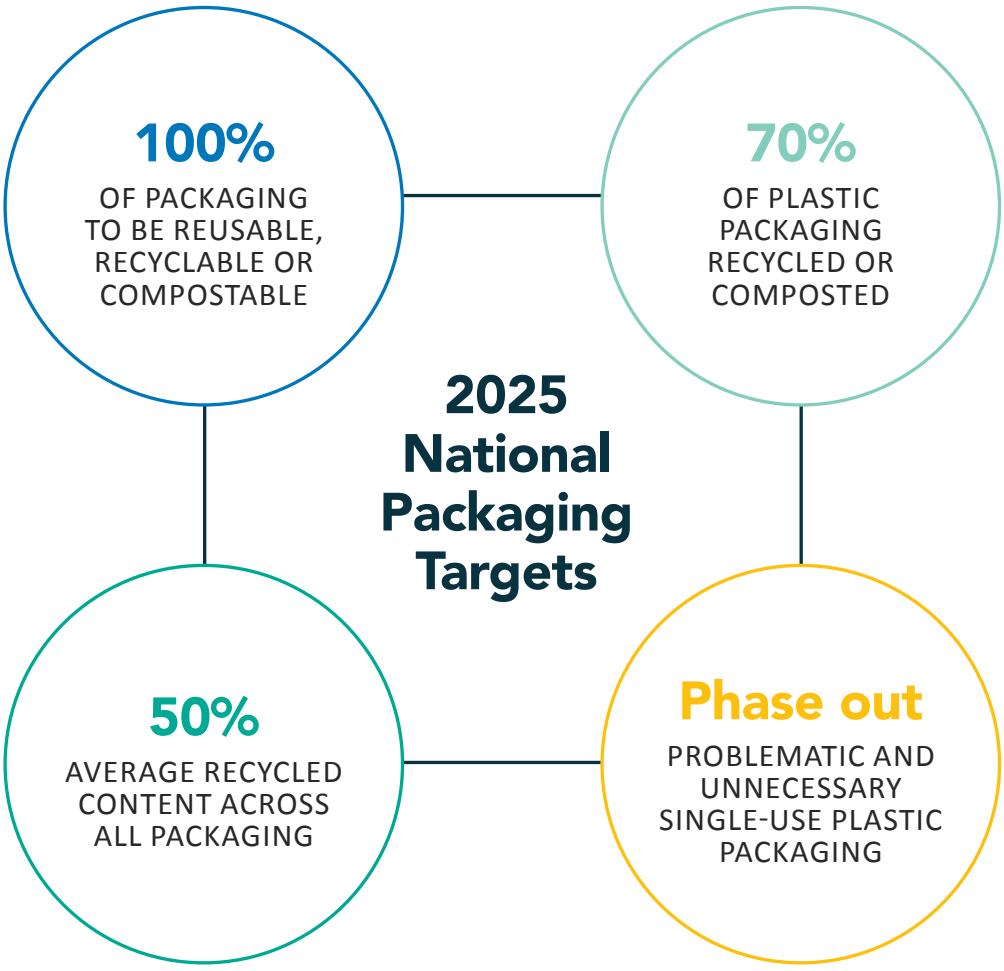


Figure 2: National Packaging Targets

These Targets are reflected in the 2019 National Waste Policy Action Plan and 2021 National Plastics Plan, and have been endorsed by Federal and all State and Territory Governments. Waverley Council is committed to supporting our local businesses to contribute to these targets by adopting sustainable packaging practices and help facilitate Australia's transition to a circular economy.

Packaging in Waverley

In 2023, a Materials Flow Analysis was undertaken for Bondi Junction to better understand the types and quantity of materials that were flowing through Waverley's busiest business precinct.

The most common materials flowing through the businesses, homes and restaurants of Bondi Junction comprised paper and cardboard, organics, plastics, glass and metal, and the Food Services sector contributed one fifth of all waste generated. Sadly, this data revealed that over 70% of materials moving through these waste streams are going straight to landfill.

Council waste data also indicates that a large proportion litter in the Waverley Council area is food and beverage packaging.

20%

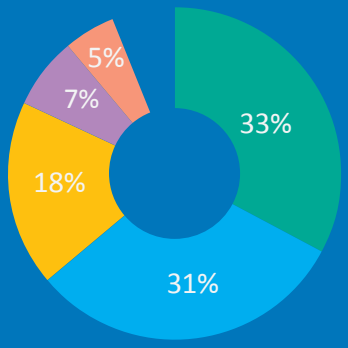
OF WASTE GENERATED IN BONDI JUNCTION IS FROM THE FOOD SERVICES SECTOR

72%

OF THE WASTE IS LANDFILLED

Top 5

WASTE STREAMS FOR FOOD SERVICES ARE:



1. ORGANICS
2. PAPER & CARDBOARD
3. PLASTIC
4. GLASS
5. METAL

Figure 3: Findings from Material Flow Analysis

96%

OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS ARE CONCERNED BY INCREASING LEVELS OF WASTE GENERATION

88%

ARE INFLUENCED BY THE REUSABILITY OR RECYCLABILITY OF PRODUCTS WHEN PURCHASING

The major barriers preventing people from reusing or recycling their items are knowing where and how to do so and lack of accessibility and convenience.

Therefore, providing sustainable packaging options and promoting how to reuse or recycle the items can help divert waste from landfill, reduce greenhouse emissions and other environmental harm, meet local customer expectations and help grow a stronger and more circular packaging industry in Waverley.

Data from a 2023 Waverley community survey

2. Sustainable Packaging

What is Sustainable Packaging?

Sustainable packaging is designed to minimise environmental and social impact throughout its entire lifecycle. It follows the waste hierarchy, which emphasises reduction and reuse before potential end-of-life pathways such as recycling, organics recycling, energy recovery, with landfill being the last resort.

This Guideline is designed to support small to medium food-based businesses select and prioritise packaging options in the following order:

- **Best:** Reusable packaging and items such as jars, tubs, containers, coffee cups, cutlery, bottles, etc.
- **Good:** Kerbside recyclable packaging, including paper, cardboard, some rigid plastic, aluminium cans and foil wrapping.
- **Not so good:** Bioplastic and compostable packaging – which may claim to be more sustainable but often require specialised downstream processing which is not readily available. They may also break down into micro plastics, which can leach into our environment and waterways.
- **Avoid:** Mixed materials, such as plastic lined beverage containers and tetra packs, soft plastic, coloured plastic
- **Worst:** Single-use items, polystyrene, other banned plastic packaging items (lightweight plastic bags, plastic cutlery and straws, expanded polystyrene containers and cups, integrated plastics)

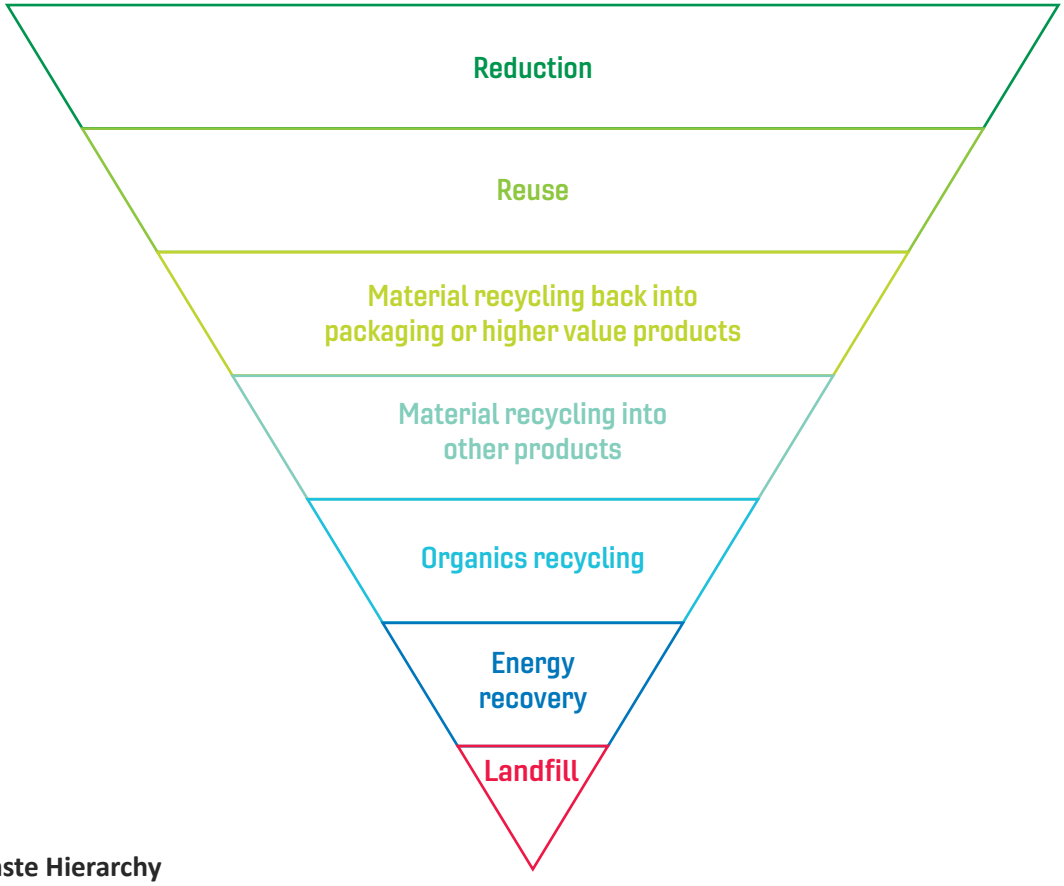


Figure 4: Waste Hierarchy

Reusable Packaging

Reusable packaging is the most sustainable packaging option because it avoids or significantly reduces waste, cuts down resource use, and builds stronger customer engagement.

Reuse options are becoming more widely available, and can help reduce costs over time. Businesses can consider co-branded reusable packaging, discounts for customer return systems, or local reuse partnerships, such as the Waverley mug library.

To be considered reusable, packaging should meet the following criteria:

- Fulfill its primary purpose multiple times
- Be mostly comprised of reusable components
- Be comprised of recyclable materials with accessible end-of-life pathways
- Have accessible and local collection and refill systems in place
- Packaging could be reused at home, in store, or by another local business

REUSE SYSTEM

1

Refill at home

Customer refills packaging item at home

EXAMPLE

Glass jars reused for leftovers or to store dry goods

2

Refill in-store

Customer refills packaging in-store or away from home

EXAMPLE

BYO container to deli counters or bulk food grocers, reusable coffee cup

3

Return to store

Customer returns packaging for professional cleaning and reuse

EXAMPLE

Reusable takeaway containers or coffee cups returned to venue to be reused, such as a Mug Library

4

Return to third-party provider

Packaging is collected, cleaned, and redistributed by an external service

EXAMPLE

Packaging is collected either from the customers home or from the store to be reused

Figure 5: Reusable Packaging System

Some examples of companies that offer reusable packaging systems include:

Replated

Reusable takeaway containers made from recycled materials that can be used by a customer for takeaway meals and returned to store or other participating stores

Huskee Cup

Reusable coffee cup made using coffee husks from wasted coffee product. Through the Huskee Swap and Borrow programs, customers can swap Huskee cup at any participating café for a clean one or drop off to any Huskee collection point.

Returnr

Stainless steel bowls, containers, and cups that can be borrowed by the customer for a small deposit, which will either be refunded upon return or used for next purchase

The Boomerang Alliance has a great resource to help business owners find an alternative reuse system that is right for their needs. You can also encourage customers to bring their own reusable items from home, such as carry bags, produce bags, jars, cutlery, and coffee cups.

Recyclable Packaging

Recyclable packaging is the next best option when reuse isn't practical. To be truly accessible for the customer, packaging must be made of materials that are accepted in Council kerbside recycling systems or have readily available drop-off systems in place and within close vicinity, such as Return and Earn stations in Bondi Junction.

Recyclable packaging should not contain materials or components that contaminate the recycling process, and information on how to appropriately recycle the packaging should be readily available, ideally on the packaging. Common items that are mistakenly put in kerbside recycling bins include:

- **Plastic-coated paper:** single-use coffee cups and some food containers
- **Small items:** plastic and aluminium lids
- **Mixed materials or bioplastics:** tetra packs

The following table provides guidance on packaging material that is preferred and what to avoid when choosing recyclable packaging items.

Preferred	Avoid
Rigid plastics with PIC 1*, 2*, and 5* – preferably non-coloured plastic	Rigid plastics with PIC 3*, 6* and 7* (including polystyrene and expanded polystyrene)
Corrugated cardboard, cardboard, paper without plastic lining	Soft plastics PIC 4*
Glass – preferably non-coloured glass	Bioplastic, not accepted within NSW composting facilities and will be landfilled
Aluminium	Biodegradable and compostable packaging materials, not accepted within NSW composting facilities and will be landfilled

**More information on the Plastics Identification Code (PIC) description is provided in Appendix 1.*

Table 1: Preferred materials guidance table

Look for the Australian Recycling Label (ARL) when purchasing packaging items, the only evidence-based system in Australia. Operated by the APCO, this labelling system is designed to remove confusion and reduce contamination by providing consumers with easy-to-understand recycling information.

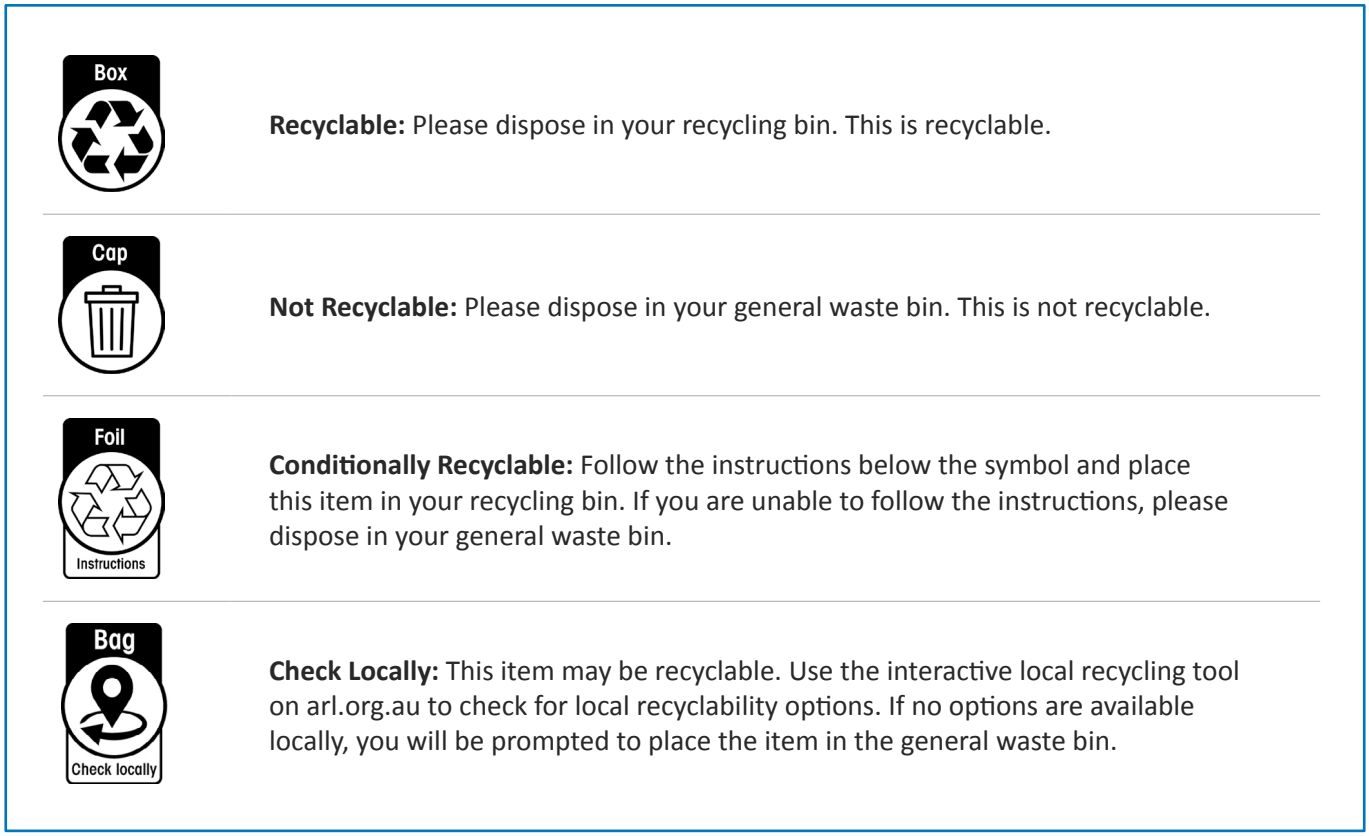


Figure 6: Australian Recycling Label

Alternatively, Council offers a variety of easy-to-use and informative tools to assist businesses and residents recycle correctly, including Recycle Mate, the A-Z Recycling Directory, and the Circular Economy Directory. All of these are readily available on the Waverley Council website under waste and recycling.

Some examples of companies offering recyclable packaging include:

Anchor Earth	**BioPak**	**Detpak**	**Pak360**	**Green Pack**

**Note: be wary of packaging labelled as bioplastic, biodegradable, or compostable when reviewing packaging items.*

3. What to watch out for

Bioplastic, Biodegradable or Compostable Packaging

Bioplastic and Biodegradable or Compostable packaging are not accepted within NSW Food Organics Garden Organics (FOGO) collections, or within the green organic waste streams in most States and Territories in Australia.

While these products may seem like the more environmentally friendly alternative, the market is saturated with unregulated products that have potential to contaminate organics collection with microplastics, PFAS, and other harmful substances. Due to the material makeup of the packaging items, they cannot be recycled either.

In landfill, bioplastic and biodegradable or compostable packaging can take more than a century to break down and generates methane, a potent greenhouse gas. Contrary to popular belief, they do not always disintegrate faster within marine environments, and are equally as harmful to ecosystems as conventional plastic.

Be wary of products that advertise the following:

- Made from 100% plant-based materials or natural materials
- 100% compostable or biodegradable, without official certification
- Vague buzzwords including “eco-friendly”, “green”, “bioplastic”, “compostable”, “bio-degradable”, “good for the earth”, “organic” etc., without official certification or the Australian Recycling Label.

Regulated Compostable Packaging

It is important to note the distinction between regulated and unregulated compostable packaging. For a packaging item to be certified compostable in Australia, it must biologically disintegrate in the relevant composting system within a certain period of time and have no toxic output. Australia has two official certifications to look out for when purchasing compostable packaging items:

AS 4736:
Commercial composting only

Compostable
AS 4736
ABAX 9999

AS 5810:
Home compostable

Home Compostable
AS 5810

As mentioned above, compostable packaging is **not accepted** in the green organics waste stream in NSW, and commercially compostable packaging will not break down in home composting systems.

Home compostable items are safe to use in home composting systems, but these are not widely available to everyone, especially in a densely populated area such as Waverley.

If you do procure compostable packaging, it is important to communicate to staff and customers how to appropriately dispose of it to ensure it does not contaminate the green organics waste stream.

Without local processing capacity for compostable packaging, it will end up in landfill. Waverley Council recommends avoiding bioplastic, unregulated or commercial compostable packaging and instead providing reusable or recyclable alternatives.

4. Simple Steps to Procuring Sustainable Packaging

4.1 Understand Your Packaging

- Stay informed with changes to packaging regulation and the NSW Plastics Packaging Ban
- Audit your packaging type and group by reusability, recyclability, landfill, or banned
  - If you are supplying banned packaging, stop immediately as it is in violation with NSW Environment Protection Authority mandates. For more information, see Appendix 2
- Find a reputable supplier using the ARL marketplace, or use supplier checklists to ensure packaging aligns with goals and regulations. Compare products to ensure they suit your needs
- Assess the savings to switch landfilled packaging types to reusable or recyclable alternatives

4.2 Engage Staff and Customers

- Communicate the benefits of your sustainable packaging with staff and customers, and educate them on their role:
  - **Staff:** how to appropriately reuse, recycle, or dispose of packaging items, how to communicate this information with customers, why this is important
  - **Customers:** whether it is reusable and you are encouraging them to return the item, if it is kerb-side recyclable, if it has another avenue to be reused or recycled outside the home or store
- Ask your waste services supplier how they can support you
- Make sure you are recycling right, and look for opportunities to keep materials out of landfill, for example by taking your soft plastics to a local supermarket offering soft plastics recycling.

4.3 Share Your Success

- Communicate about your sustainable actions and the associated environmental benefits
- Join Waverley Council's In The Loop Directory, to profile your business and capture sustainability minded customers

Need help?

Email us at secondnature@waverley.nsw.gov.au to discuss the best sustainable packaging options for your business

Appendix 1 – Plastics Identification Code

The PIC identifies the type of plastic polymer used to manufacture packaging. It is important to note that not all plastic polymers are kerbside recyclable, but this does not mean that they are not recyclable if separated and processed in appropriate facilities. However, to increase consumer accessibility and recycling rates, it is important to provide packaging that is accepted in Council kerbside collection.

CODE	NAME	ABBREVIATION	COMMON USE	KERBSIDE RECYCLABLE
	Polyethylene Terephthalate	PET	Water, soft drink and juice bottles, fruit and vegetable containers, plastic peanut butter and mayonnaise jars	Yes
	High Density Polyethylene	HDPE	Milk bottles, juice bottles, yoghurt tubs, butter containers	Yes
	Polyvinyl Chloride	PVC	Some meat trays, shrink wrap around bottles	No
	Low Density Polyethylene	LDPE	Bead bags, zip lock bags, cling wrap, and soft plastic wrappings (like chocolate and chips)	No
	Polypropylene	PP	Takeaway containers, margarine and yoghurt containers, ice cream tubs	Yes
	Polystyrene	PS	Styrofoam containers, packing peanuts, burger clamshells, coffee cup lids	No
	Expanded Polystyrene	EPS	Food and beverage packaging	No
	OTHER: includes all other resins and multi materials of various composition, including bioplastic and compostable plastic		Baby bottles, water cooler jugs, anything labelled as bioplastic or compostable plastic	No

**Note: Prioritise clear or natural plastics, it is impossible to remove colour that has been bonded to a plastic polymer. This is why recycled plastics often appear darker.*

Appendix 2 – NSW Prohibited Plastics

The following table outlines the plastic packaging items that have been banned in NSW.

Failure to comply will result in financial penalty between $11,000 to $55,000 for an individual, and $55,000 to $275,000 for a business. Maximum penalties are doubled for manufacturers, producers, wholesalers and distributors.

PHASE	PROHIBITED PLASTICS*
One – 1 June 2022	Lightweight plastic bags with handles, other than a barrier bag, that are 35 microns or less in thickness at any part of the bag.
Two – 2 November 2022	Single-use plastic straws, stirrers, cutlery (including chopsticks and sporks), plates, bowls (excluding those with spill-proof lids) and cotton buds
	Expanded polystyrene (EPS) food service ware, including cups
	Certain rinse-off personal care products containing plastic microbeads
Three – 1 January 2025	Commonly called "integrated packaging" these are plastic items that have been packaged through a **machine-automated process** and are: • inside or attached to packaging material used to seal or contain food or beverages (including pre-packaged portions of food or beverages) • an integrated part of packaging material used to seal or contain food or beverages

**Prohibited plastics include any of the above items that are made from biodegradable plastic, compostable plastic (including Australian certified compostable plastics) and bioplastics.*

The next phase of the plastics ban is currently under revision and will be announced shortly. Subscribe to Waverley Council's Second Nature Newsletter to stay updated with the next iteration of the plastic packaging ban in NSW:

Subscribe to our eNews

Appendix 3 – APCO Sustainable Packaging Guidelines

The Sustainable Packaging Guideline was developed by APCO improve sustainability and circular economy outcomes during the design and manufacture of packaging. The Principles provide a framework of reference for industry and government to deliver Australia's National Packaging Targets.

Figure 7: Sustainable Packaging Principles

For more detailed information on the Principles and what to look out for when procuring packaging items, visit: apco.org.au/sustainable-packaging-guidelines

More information

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**The mention of proprietary products in this guideline do not constitute an endorsement from Waverley Council and have been included for illustrative purposes only.*

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