

NSW Plastics: Next Steps paper – Consultation summary

On 29 October 2023, the Minister for the Environment released the *NSW Plastics: Next Steps* paper seeking feedback on proposals to address a range of plastic items that are frequently littered, release microplastics into the environment, contain harmful chemical additives, and are currently regulated or are proposed to be regulated in other states and territories.

The NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) consulted on the paper over 14 weeks, encouraging NSW to have a say in the future of plastics.

In response, the EPA received 5,258 unique submissions. This included 471 written feedback responses and 4,787 survey responses.

What did we hear?

Feedback from all forms of consultation showed stakeholders supported NSW taking further action on plastics.

There was strong support from survey respondents on NSW taking action on plastics and for the specific items of the *NSW Plastics: Next Steps* paper.



Support for action in survey responses

Item	Individual support (%)	Organisation support (%)
Takeaway beverage and food packaging	94.3	87.4
Plastic beverage container bottle lids	84.6	80.7
Cigarette butts	89.6	88.9
Harmful chemicals such as perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS)	97.4	95.6
Plastic microbeads in all cleaning products	97.7	95.6
Oxo-degradable, photo-degradable and landfill-degradable plastics	96	93.3
Microplastic fibres released from washing machines	92.6	91.9
Heavyweight plastic film shopping bags (thickness greater than 35 microns)	88.1	85.9
Single-serve plastic condiment packages (volume less than 50 ml)	93.4	90.4
Balloon releases	94.5	91.1
Balloon accessory items	93.4	92.6
Expanded polystyrene food trays	95.4	90.4
Barrier/produce bags	87.4	80.5
Stickers on fruit	92.4	91.9
Pizza savers	89	91.1
Bread tags	90.9	91.1

Feedback we heard from stakeholders in written submissions

Support for NSW to act was further highlighted in the written submissions. Feedback indicated that NSW should take further action for the following reasons.

- **More regulation is needed for plastic entering the market**

Many written submissions called for greater regulation of plastic entering the market, including banning plastic products and packaging (such as polystyrene) that are not recycled in NSW.

“[F]ocus should be placed on certain types of plastics that are more difficult to recycle or replace. This has the potential to make considerable improvements to the relatively small percentage of plastic currently being recycled.” – Northern Inland Regional Waste

- **NSW needs to reduce plastic consumption**

Written feedback highlighted the need to reduce how much plastic is used in NSW. Feedback called for more support for communities and businesses to transition to alternatives that have a better circular economic impact, such as encouraging reusable products over single-use products.

- **A strong circular economy for NSW needs investment in recycling infrastructure**

Many written submissions called for greater recycling in NSW, including expanding the *Return and Earn* Container Deposit Scheme, expanding NSW’s recycling infrastructure capacity and capability, and encouraging the responsible disposal of recyclable plastics.

While there was strong support for NSW to act, some feedback indicated that if NSW does take further action, it should:

- **Align with other states and territories and ensure that NSW action complements Commonwealth actions**

Submissions called for NSW to take action that also considers other jurisdictions’ actions and, where possible, align to ensure consistency and avoid fragmented or contradictory approaches across Australia.

- **Consider all potential unintended consequences and mitigate those risks**

Feedback identified the risk of potential unintended consequences. For example, food service providers noted that any actions should ensure that food and beverage packaging alternatives can meet health and safety requirements.

- **Support businesses to transition**

We heard from many sectors that they support tackling plastic waste, but may need support and time to undertake research, re-design and re-tool to implement any action on plastic. Small business representatives noted that the NSW Government should attempt to minimise the impact of costs and capital expenditure.

“[A] truly circular economy requires a more comprehensive approach... accountability across the supply chain will support circularity” – National Retailers Association

Further action to tackle plastic waste

The feedback heard through this consultation process informed the development of *NSW Plastics: The Way Forward*. To read this paper and have your say on its proposals, go to [Have Your Say](#).

NSW Environment Protection Authority

Email: info@epa.nsw.gov.au

Website: www.epa.nsw.gov.au

EPA 2024P4544

August 2024

The EPA [disclaimer](#) and [copyright](#) information is available on the EPA website.