

# The Facts on Plastic

## PLASTIC

- OUR ADDICTION TO PLASTIC
- ITS EFFECT ON THE NATURAL WORLD
- WHAT CAN WE DO TO CHANGE?

### Some Facts on Plastic

Plastic is now everywhere. **Recent research** indicates that Australians discard 9.7 billion plastic items each year — 2.6 billion coffee cups, 3.3 billion plastic bags, 1.3 billion water bottles — and straws. Lots of plastic straws. Each year 370 million plastic bottles go into landfill. On average, Australians produce 1.5 tonnes of waste per person each year, Of this about 130Kg (or 9%) is plastic. At present only 12% of this is recycled. Up to 130,000 tonnes of this plastic will find its way into the ocean. Plastic takes hundreds of years to break down, and in fact may never fully degrade.

**Packaging** accounts for over 40% of total plastic usage.

### Nappies

In Australia and New Zealand alone 3.75 million disposable nappies are used each day. Up to 4% of Australia's landfill now consists of disposable nappies.

**At sea**, plastic is deadly. Marine animals like turtles can choke on plastic bags mistaken for jellyfish, seabirds and fish get entangled and larger animals like whales can starve because their stomachs are so full of plastic they've eaten. . 85% of Australian seabirds are affected by plastic pollution.

**Nurdles** are pre-production plastic pellets about the size of a pea used in almost all plastic products. But nurdles are also an environmental scourge, making up part of the 8 million tonnes of plastic that flush into our oceans every year. Nurdles are particularly dangerous because marine animals - fish, turtles and birds - often mistake them for fish eggs. When ingested, they can obstruct an animal's digestive system, leading to it becoming malnourished or starved.

**The "great garbage patch"** of plastic waste in the North Pacific is now almost the size of Russia. That is, about 15 million sq km, with an estimated 1.8 trillion pieces of plastic. Another patch in the North Atlantic is the size of Queensland.

**Plastic particles** enter rivers, lakes and the sea. Tiny marine animals ingest plastic. Larger marine animals eat the smaller ones, and swallow plastic. Then humans catch fish and eat them.

Like it or not, we are now eating and drinking plastic because it is in the food chain.

*Sources: UCA WA, WWF, Ethical Super, Australian Ethical Investments Pty Ltd*



THE STORY OF SKYSCRAPER: 5 tons of plastic waste pulled out of the Pacific Ocean, turned into a 4 story tall whale for the 2018 Bruges Triennial - a powerful reminder of the 150,000,000 tons of plastic waste still swimming in our waters.

<https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/studiokca/skyscraper-the-bruges-whale>

## **Leading the Change Away from Plastic**

For the sake of our children, grandchildren, and the natural world which sustains us, we need to reduce our use of plastic overall, and refuse altogether single use plastics.

We can all begin by changing our own personal habits, perhaps long ingrained, to minimise how much plastic we use.

## **Reducing Our Use of Plastic**

How can we reduce our use of plastic in a world where everything is plastic wrapped or packaged?

Here are possibilities and ideas

1. Buy un-stickered and unpackaged fruit and vegetables from bulk bins.
2. Use paper bags or bring our own bags and re-use them many times.
3. Choose products packed in glass or compostable containers.
4. Patronise businesses using compostable packaging and compostable takeaway cups.
5. Actively look for paper bags or cardboard cartons to carry things in and encourage shop owners to provide them.
6. Use a thermos or a KeepCup when you buy takeaway coffee.
7. Instead of cling-wrap use containers with lids or beeswax wraps.

8. Avoid buying water in plastic containers - take your own bottle and refill it as needed.
9. Refuse the straw! Use your lips
10. Avoid using disposable plates and plastic utensils for your party. Use your own or borrow.
11. Use an electric shaver. It saves on hot water and avoids disposable plastic.
12. Buy refills for cleaning supplies, pens etc.
13. Shop at family hardware stores that sell nails and screws unpackaged rather than prepacked in plastic
14. Invest in cloth nappies Your initial outlay for cloth nappies might seem expensive, but in the long run you'll save wads of cash. And if you reuse the nappies for another child, you'll be saving even more.
15. Make best use of the 3 Bin system for rubbish disposal . By recognising what can be put in the green or yellow bins and acting on it we can greatly reduce our general waste and prevent harmful plastic entering the natural world.

Most Local Government Authorities issue guidance for using the bins we have for waste disposal . Here is the web address for the Unley Council's War On Waste.

*<https://www.unley.sa.gov.au/waste-recycling/recycling-waste#hash-slide-the-three-bin-system-133>*

We can measure our progress by seeing less and less plastic each week in our waste disposal bins.

**Support moves to get businesses and Governments to phase out plastic packaging of all kinds as soon as possible.**

**CARING FOR GOD'S CREATION IS OUR CORE BUSINESS**