

Plastic-Free NZ

#BreakFreeFromPlastics

An action plan to end plastic pollution



by Greenpeace and allies

Plastic Free NZ

A plastic pollution action plan for Aotearoa

After the bag ban

It started with turtles and the humble plastic bag. Now, New Zealanders are waking up to the full implications of the plastic crisis in our oceans.

This vast unseen mass of marine plastic is entering the food chain at every level from plankton to whales, including the fish we eat.

Beach audits show the vast majority of plastic pollution on kiwi beaches¹, 77% is single-use, stuff we use once and throw away without thinking.

The companies which sell this stuff to us, call it convenience. This outdated, disposable thinking lies at the heart of the problem.

We call on the Government to adopt a national action plan to turn the tide on plastic pollution.

Playing catch up

The public outcry about single-use plastic shopping bags shows us that New Zealanders care enough about our seas to make significant change.

Our government's ban on bags² is a good start, but here on our clean green islands we are playing catch up with the rest of the world.

Other countries like France, Costa Rica, Vanuatu and Taiwan, to name a few, have already come up with national plans for single-use plastics³ We don't have one. It's time we did.

Emphasis worldwide is beginning to shift from consumers to producers. From those who use plastic to the corporations which make and profit from it.

¹ <http://sustainablecoastlines.org/about/impact/>

² <https://www.stuff.co.nz/environment/106160806/new-zealand-to-ban-singleuse-plastic-bags>

³ . (append list of international plans)

What are corporates doing?

People round the world are asking why corporates are planning to increase the production of single-use plastics by 40 per cent.⁴ We're already dumping one truckload in our oceans every minute⁵

We've tried voluntary measures, this reckless behaviour is crying out for regulation of the so-called Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) industry. Companies like Coca-Cola, Nestle and Unilever.

Despite what these plastic-producing companies might claim, recycling alone is not the answer. More than 90% of plastics ever produced have never been recycled.⁶

Mountains of plastic bales are building up at dumps round the country as councils search for places like Malaysia and Indonesia to send it to, since China refused to take it.

Crisis, what crisis?

These are all clear signs of a crisis. We urge the Government to treat it as such.

With data analysed from two different independent sources⁷, Greenpeace has come up with a list of the ten most common categories of single-use plastics found on New Zealand beaches.

In no particular order they are:

Greenpeace - top TEN plastic offenders

1. Disposable cutlery
2. Straws and coffee stirrers
3. Bottles lids and caps.
4. Food wrappers
5. Foam packaging
6. Cigarette butts and filters
7. Coffee Cups and other takeaway packaging
8. Balloon and lollipop sticks
9. Fishing gear
10. Plastic bags

⁴<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/dec/26/180bn-investment-in-plastic-factories-feeds-global-packaging-binge>

⁵ http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_The_New_Plastics_Economy.pdf

⁶ <http://advances.sciencemag.org/content/3/7/e1700782>

⁷ Sustainable Coastlines and Be A Tidy Kiwi (2018 datasets).

Today Greenpeace joins a coalition of other environmental organisations⁸ to offer up a four point action plan to tackle these top ten offenders - a vision to end plastic pollution.

Plastic Free NZ - the FOUR point plan:

1/ Ban the avoidables

The NZ ban on lightweight shopping bags is a valiant beginning.

Now we've got to urgently move on to other single-use plastics, starting with the "avoidables."

Plastic straws, coffee stirrers and disposable cutlery.* Non-essential items we simply don't need that are polluting our coasts. These need to be banned. Just like the bags.

*This list is not exhaustive and will be updated based on a regular independent audits of plastic pollution on our beaches.

⁸ Signed up to the plastic pollution action plan are:

Jane Goodall Institute New Zealand
Para Kore
The Non-Plastic Maori
Zero Waste Network
Kiwi Bottle Drive
The New Zealand Product Stewardship Council
Plastic Diet
Tipping Point
Wastebusters
Global Action Plan Oceania

2/ Put a price on their head

Plastic drink bottles, caps and lids are among the worst offenders on our beaches.

Putting a price on their head, a deposit refundable to consumers when they return the bottles for recycling, would go a long way towards curbing this plastic menace.

We'd like to see the Government to adopt the [Kiwi Bottle Drive's](#) plans for a national container deposit scheme.

3/ Plastic pollution levy

The centre of the plastic offenders list contains "problematic" items like coffee cups and lids, food packaging, takeaway containers, cigarette butts, balloon and lollipop sticks.

The cheap cost of plastic makes it hard to dissuade corporates from making and selling them.

A levy is proposed on these kinds of SUP's, making it more economic to produce reusable alternatives or reduce excessive and ridiculous packaging.

The money could be used to fund research on redesigning products and packaging so they don't end up floating around in our oceans for centuries.

4/ National Reduction targets

We need a national target to keep us on course.

The plastic pollution action plan calls for a 50 per cent reduction of SUP's on the top ten offenders list by 2025, and 80 per cent by 2030. Ultimately they would be phased out altogether.

*These targets would be measured using a waste data framework.

FOUR sobering facts:

#There are up to five trillion plastic particles in our seas enough to circle the earth more than 400 times.⁹

#94% of ocean plastic ends up on the seafloor. 1% of marine plastics are found floating and 5% end up on beaches¹⁰

#Up to 9 of 10 seabirds, 1 in 3 sea turtles and more than half of whale and dolphin species have ingested plastic.¹¹

#7 out of 8 of NZ's most common caught fish have been shown to have eaten plastics¹²

FOUR guiding principles

1/ On its own, recycling isn't the solution

Recycling alone has not, and will never solve the problem of rising plastic pollution.

Corporates use the pretence of “recyclable” products to perpetuate “business as usual.”

Per capita, New Zealand is one of the most wasteful countries in the world and the majority of our recyclable plastics are being sent overseas.

Low income communities in these countries disproportionately suffer the burden of our cheap disposable plastic.

We need to find our own solutions to single-use plastics right here with reduction, redesign and reusability.

⁹ <http://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0111913>

¹⁰ <http://www.eunomia.co.uk/reports-tools/plastics-in-the-marine-environment/>

¹¹

[13] <http://www.pnas.org/content/112/38/11899.full.pdf>

[14] http://www.huffingtonpost.com.au/2016/03/17/turtles-marine-plastic_n_9455496.html

[15] S. Baulch, C. Perry / Marine Pollution Bulletin 80 (2014) 210–221

¹²

<https://www.stuff.co.nz/business/farming/aquaculture/94814758/plastic-being-regularly-ingested-by-fish-consumed-in-new-zealand>

2/ Refill Nation

“Compostable” cups, paper straws and thicker-weight plastic bags are simply swapping one single-use material for another.

These false solutions perpetuate the throwaway culture that lies at the heart of our crisis.

To truly drive change, we need to create new systems to deliver products we need with refillable and reusable alternatives.

New Zealand has a chance to become a leader with everything from drinks to shampoo, milk to detergents being delivered in reusable containers, refilled and used over and over.

3/ Polluters pay

Those that benefit from cheap and disposable plastics should be the ones to pay for the mess.

In particular the so-called Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) sector. Companies like *Coca-Cola, Unilever, Nestle, Procter & Gamble*.

For too long the environment, taxpayers, ratepayers and councils have been paying the bill on excessive plastic waste, and it's time the rules changed.

This means the producers, especially the FMCG sector, should cover the cost of collection, transport, processing and clean-up of single-use plastics.

We would like to see an effective Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) scheme for plastic drink bottles and also for food packaging.

The plan should also include an EPR for plastic fishing gear.

4/ Leading the world

Plastic pollution is ultimately a worldwide issue and we have the opportunity to play a leading role.

By working with our fellow Pacific nations, among others, we can help deliver an international legally-binding agreement on marine plastic pollution.

New Zealand should build support for a mandate to begin negotiations on such an agreement at the next UN Environment Assembly in 2019.

Ultimately this could result in a landmark global agreement to protect our marine environment by phasing out plastics that are degrading our oceans and our food chain.

Vision for the future

We believe in a future where Aotearoa is free from plastic pollution. Our beaches are pristine. Our urban environments are clean, our fisheries are protected and safe. We only use plastic where we need to. We can reuse and recycle the plastics we do use here in New Zealand, boosting our economy and adding jobs. A future which brings prosperity without waste. A place our children and grandchildren will be proud to call their home.

Ends