

Waste Wisdoms

Second edition

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Welcome! In this issue we focus on *Eliminating Plastic Waste*. We identify the problem of managing plastic waste stockpiles and the need to stop producing it. We provide some home tips on alternatives to plastic and more!

PLASTIC: THE ETERNAL STORY

Today's plastic system enables uncontrolled growth of plastic while waste management initiatives are failing. Our plastic waste will double by 2030.

Current recycling and waste management practices are not addressing the end-of-life stage, instead focusing on consumers taking responsibility through recycling and behavioural change. No accountability is borne by global producers or businesses using plastic on masse in their products and packaging.

The plastics supply chain produces five times more virgin (first time) plastic than recycled plastic. This is due to the low cost of producing plastic which increases profits for the petrochemical industry. There is no incentive for industry to use secondary recycled plastic or find sustainable alternatives. Meanwhile the waste trade system shuffles plastic around the globe.

Very few governments are making the plastic converters, manufacturers, and mass users responsible for their downstream impacts - making it cheaper to discharge plastic into nature through landfill, dumping and incineration rather than effectively managing it to the end-of-life stage. Hence nature and our health bear the costs.

Plastic is manmade so it cannot be decomposed and recycled by nature through biological forces. Plastic degrades and breaks down into smaller and smaller pieces, known as micro and nano plastics.

Such particles can never be entirely broken down and reused – left unregulated they are ingested by wildlife, absorbed into clean air, water and soil and digested by humans – we still do not know the full impacts.



Recycling has been misrepresented. News outlets often report on the stockpiling of collected plastic in warehouses across Australia. Whilst we may be encouraged by Councils collection services, plastic is only recycled when it is being reused or re-purposed into a new form. The integrity of plastic is compromised in each reuse, which does not make this a long-term solution.

Our problem is twofold – how to stop producing plastic, and managing the plastic we already have. The Polluter Pays option is one model we could adopt.

Our plastic waste will double by 2030.

THE WORLD WIDE FUND (WWF) REPORT

The WWF for Nature's *"Solving Plastic Pollution through Accountability"* Report in 2019, found,

- Nearly half of all plastic waste in the world was created after 2000
- Over 75% of all plastic ever produced is waste
- Closing the loop of plastics is hindered by an unprofitable recycling industry unable to scale, and limited consumer choices for environmentally sound alternatives
- Increased production and incineration of plastic waste is increasing carbon emissions and risking other pollutants like mercury.



Over 270 species have been harmed by entanglement in discarded fishing gear and plastic rubbish, and 240 species have been recorded living with ingested plastic

A recent bottled water study found microplastic contamination in 93 per cent of bottles, sourced from 11 different brands across nine countries.



Australians create more single use plastic waste per person, than any other country except Singapore – According to WWF's Kate Noble

THE TRUTH ABOUT COMPOSTABLE PLASTICS

Most certified compostable plastics are only for industrial composts, which reach very high temperatures. This means they're unlikely to break down sufficiently in home composts. Even those certified as "home compostable" are assessed under perfect laboratory conditions, which aren't easily achieved in the backyard.

While certified compostable plastics are increasing, the number of industrial composting facilities to accept them or collection systems to get them, isn't. Currently most kerbside organics and recycling bins don't accept compostable plastics and regard them as contamination.



ALTERNATIVES TO USING CLING FILM PLASTIC AT HOME

- Use glass jars for storing leftovers in the fridge or freezer
- Wrap food in foil for freezing and remove foil if microwaving to reheat.
- Use a plate or bowl or clean tea towel to cover food.
- Store bread in a paper bag.
- Store fragile fruit and vegetables (like berries, mushrooms) in brown paper bags. Can compost bags after use.
- Use baking paper to wrap food. Can reuse by cleaning it off first. Can't be recycled because of its wax coating but can if you use a soy-based biodegradable brand.
- Use cloth napkins to wrap sandwiches, fruits and vegetables for quick temporary storage.

*** FREE ***
REUSABLE BAGS



Get a free Boomerang Bag from the Unison office. Handmade by local volunteers using recycled materials to last. Better for your shopping than plastic! First in first served.

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