

SINGLE-USE PLASTIC ITEMS BAN

Queenslanders are taking positive steps to reduce plastic pollution and improve our environment.

Over the next 5 years, the Queensland Government will implement bans and other measures to help minimise waste and protect our environment. The National Retail Association has been engaged to help businesses learn more about these initiatives and how to move towards more sustainable choices.

FROM 1 SEPTEMBER 2023, THESE ITEMS WILL BE BANNED:



Plastic shopping bags which do not meet new requirements



Expanded polystyrene loose-fill packaging



Cotton buds with plastic stems



Plastic microbeads



Balloon releases

Important: alternatives made from biodegradable and compostable plastic are included in the 2023 ban.

› WHAT IS BANNED?

Some single-use plastic items have already been phased out in QLD.

From 1 July 2018, lightweight plastic shopping bags with handles and a thickness under 35 microns, including those made from compostable or biodegradable plastic, were banned.

From 1 September 2021, single-use plastic straws, cutlery, stirrers, unenclosed bowls, plates, expanded polystyrene (EPS) takeaway food containers and EPS cups were banned.

From 1 September 2023, plastic shopping bags which do not meet new requirements, EPS loose-fill packaging, cotton buds with plastic stems, plastic microbeads and release of a lighter-than-air balloon will be banned.

› WHO DOES IT APPLY TO?

All organisations must stop supplying banned items in Queensland. Types of organisations include:

- **Retailers and service businesses** (such as food outlets, supermarkets, markets, pharmacies, events, and online stores)
- **Manufacturers and suppliers** (such as packaging suppliers, product brands and online marketplaces)
- **Not-for-profit and government organisations** (such as community groups, charities, schools and other non-commercial organisations)

Balloon release restrictions will apply to all individuals.

Exemptions under previous bans do not apply to the 2023 ban.

› HOW IS IT ENFORCED?

From 1 September 2023, banned items cannot be sold, supplied or provided free of charge, **even if they were purchased before this date.**

From 1 September 2023, a business may face a maximum fine of 50 penalty units for:

- supplying a banned single-use plastic item;
- providing false or misleading information about a banned plastic item.

The Queensland Government will pursue an education-first approach to support businesses to comply, however penalties may apply.

PLASTIC SHOPPING BAGS

Plastic shopping bags are defined as bags with handles, that are used to carry goods from a business or organisation.

The ban does **not** apply to bags without handles used for produce, waste bags, nappy bags, or other types of sealed packaging such as bread bags. The new requirements do **not** apply to bags made of synthetic fabrics or other materials.

EXISTING REQUIREMENTS

Lightweight plastic shopping bags were banned in QLD in 2018. Any plastic shopping bag must be 35 microns or more in thickness to meet the existing law.



NEW REQUIREMENTS

From 1 September 2023, shopping bags made from plastic film will need to meet TWO additional requirements to be supplied in QLD.

From 1 September 2023, plastic shopping bags must:



Be made from a **minimum of 80% recycled content** verified by a recognised program or certification.

AND



Be durable and big enough to **carry 10 kilograms** for **at least 125 uses** verified by a recognised reusability, durability or endurance test.

› Alternatives

First, consider if you need to supply a shopping bag for every purchase. If most customers only buy a few items, they may not need a bag at all. Customers should also be encouraged to bring their own reusable bags. You could also reuse stock boxes to avoid waste.

Then, if you do need to supply shopping bags, consider what type of bag is the **most sustainable option** for your business based on your product type and size, and if customers are likely to reuse the bag.

Examples:

- **DISPOSABLE:** If you supply takeaway food or drink, the bag is likely to be contaminated during use and it is unlikely to be reused long-term, so the best option may be sustainably-sourced paper.
- **REUSABLE:** If you supply fashion, electronics, grocery items or other goods, the best option may be charging for a well-designed durable bag made from fabric, jute or plastic that meets the new requirements.

We encourage businesses to implement strategies to encourage people to bring their own bags (such as bag fees, discounts or loyalty points). This helps to reduce consumption and encourage reusable behaviour.

› Why not ban all plastic bags?

Evidence now shows that **the most sustainable bag is the one that is reused the greatest number of times.**

Switching to a disposable option like paper is less harmful as litter, but can increase carbon impacts and continued single-use behaviour fails to reduce the volume of natural resources consumed. Fabric bags like cotton and polyester can contribute to resource depletion and are currently difficult to recycle. Plastic bags can be the most sustainable option when they are reused and recycled many times as part of a circular economy.

Ultimately, not using a bag at all or reusing a bag for hundreds of times are the most sustainable choices.

HOW TO COMPLY

For more detail on sustainable shopping bags and ways to test your bag for compliance, come along to a free information session or visit the website: www.qldplasticsban.com.au



OTHER ITEMS

EPS LOOSE-FILL PACKAGING

Takeaway food containers and cups made from expanded polystyrene (EPS) were banned in QLD in 2021.

From 1 September 2023, loose-fill packaging made from expanded polystyrene (EPS) will be banned in Queensland. Examples of loose-fill packaging include ball, peanut or S shape pieces of EPS loosely packed around products.



The 2023 ban does **not** apply to:

- EPS trays (such as those used for produce or meat)
- EPS that is part of a product and not used as packaging (e.g. EPS beanbag fill, craft products)
- EPS packaging which is moulded, or used as a sheet or film.

› Alternatives

First, consider whether you need to use any loose-fill packaging within your product range if the product is not fragile. If you do need protective packaging, there are a wide range of alternatives available, such as recycled paper, pulp, wool fill, textiles, or plastic air pillows.

Retailers are encouraged to take reasonable steps to communicate with their suppliers and manufacturers to ensure products you supply to customers (even if they are not your brand) do not contain EPS loose-fill packaging.

Please note that more types of EPS packaging are being considered for future QLD bans and some are being phased out nationally over the next few years.

PLASTIC COTTON BUDS

Most manufacturers have phased out disposable cotton buds with plastic stems as they are problematic to the environment.

From 1 September 2023, cotton buds with plastic stems will be banned in Queensland.



The ban does **not** apply to:

- Plastic cotton buds used for scientific, medical or forensic uses (such as antigen tests or first aid kits).

› Alternatives

You can use cotton buds with stems made from paper, wood or bamboo or purchase reusable stems with replaceable buds.

PLASTIC MICROBEADS

Most manufacturers have already phased out plastic microbeads in personal care and cleaning products in line with the voluntary industry code, BeadRecede, which has successfully proven over 99% compliance.

From 1 September 2023, plastic microbeads in rinse-off personal care and cleaning products will be banned in Queensland.



The ban does **not** apply to:

- products that are not designed to be rinsed off or removed with water immediately or shortly after application (e.g. deodorant, makeup)
- plastic products that are not defined as microbeads (such as craft glitter).

› Alternatives:

Consider using reusable scrubbing brushes, loofahs or other exfoliants. Non-plastic products, such as those containing salt, sugar or pumice grounds are available and provide similar functions of abrasion and exfoliation.

BALLOON RELEASES

Balloons are problematic in the environment and damaging to wildlife when they escape or are released into the air, whether accidentally or on purpose.

From 1 September 2023, the release of a lighter-than-air balloon will be banned in Queensland.



The ban applies to:

- any person who causes/permits the release/escape of a lighter-than-air balloon into the environment.

Important: the sale, supply or use of balloons is not banned.

› Alternatives:

There are no obligations or restrictions on the sale of balloons, but we encourage retailers to remind customers of the ban on releases. Customers, businesses, event organisers, charities and other organisations should ensure balloons are secured or choose alternatives, such as paper confetti or bubbles.

TIPS FOR BUSINESS

COMPOSTABLE PLASTICS

Alternatives made from compostable, biodegradable, degradable, renewable, or bio-based plastics are **not** allowed as replacements for items in the 2023 ban. This includes plastic items with composting certifications.

Certified compostable plastic shopping bags are allowed if they pass the existing thickness and reusability tests, but do not need to contain 80% recycled content if they are completely made from certified compostable plastic film.

Compostable plastic items can still harm wildlife and the environment in the same way conventional plastic items do if they are littered. Most compostable plastics require extended periods of time or processing at a special composting facility in order to break down.

When ordering alternatives, ask your supplier to confirm in writing that the items do **not** contain any form of plastic polymer, including compostable plastic or bioplastic. Logos, labelling or product claims are not proof of compliance.

MANAGE STOCK

We recommend that businesses stop ordering banned items now, check your stock ranges and look at ways to use up existing stock before the ban commences.

If you have excess stock, you can:

- Check with your supplier as they may accept returns or exchanges of unopened stock.
- Contact a local recycler to see if they can accept any of your items.

You cannot supply banned stock in QLD after 1 September 2023, even if you purchased it before this date.

INFORM YOUR TEAM & CUSTOMERS

Help your staff and customers prepare for the ban and inform them of the changes you have decided to make. You may want to distribute this factsheet to your supplier network or display signage to help inform customers.

Download factsheets, signage and other resources in multiple formats and languages at: www.qldplasticsban.com.au

SUPPORT FOR BUSINESS

The Queensland Government has engaged the National Retail Association to assist businesses to understand and comply with the regulations.

The National Retail Association team is providing:

- a dedicated website with resources, signage and translated material;
- a tollfree hotline for businesses;
- online information sessions; and
- thousands of store visits across QLD.

Visit the **website** for detailed guidance on existing and upcoming bans, factsheets and signage for businesses, including translated information.

FREE INFORMATION SESSIONS

Free information sessions are being held online from June 2023. These sessions are designed for all businesses (of any size or type) to receive an overview of the ban, ask questions, receive practical advice, and hear what other businesses are doing.

Register for a session via the website.

MORE INFORMATION

Website: www.qldplasticsban.com.au

Tollfree business hotline: **1800 844 946**

Email: sustainability@nra.net.au



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