



National Plastics Plan— Pathway to more sustainable use of expanded polystyrene (EPS)



EPS phase outs

In March 2021 the Australian Government released the National Plastics Plan. The Plan includes an action for government to work with industry to phase out certain problematic plastics in line with the Australian Packaging Covenant Organisations' (APCO) work with industry to-date on problematic and unnecessary plastics.

Why are certain EPS packaging products identified as problematic and unnecessary single-use plastics?

- **EPS loose fill and EPS consumer food and beverage containers** are problematic because:
 - they are not recyclable
 - if littered, they have a high environmental impact.
- **Moulded EPS** is problematic because:
 - it is not recyclable using kerbside collection systems
 - for consumers, there are limited drop-off services to recycle moulded EPS
 - there is limited active uptake of EPS collection by retailers
 - if littered, it has a high environmental impact.

Which products are in scope for the industry-led phase outs?

Type of EPS	Description	Government review
EPS loose fill consumer packaging	Used for consumer product protection in freight, for example peanut shaped loose foam packaging.	July 2022
EPS moulded consumer packaging	Used for consumer products. Protective packaging for white/brown goods and electronics, including but not limited to computers, TVs, printers, fridges, toasters, furniture and homewares.	July 2022
EPS food and beverage consumer containers	Single-use hot and cold cups, tubs, bowls, plates, and clamshells for food service.	December 2022

Which products are not in scope?

The industry-led phase outs **do not apply** to:

- EPS used for business-to-business packaging, such as fresh produce boxes
- specialist packaging used in medical applications, for example, organ transport or pharmaceuticals
- EPS used in building and construction
- business-to-consumer packaging where there is a demonstrated and effective reuse model in operation, for example bulk cold home-delivered meal services.

Next steps

In July and December 2022, the Australian Government will review industry progress in taking responsibility for the applicable packaging and container types, including phasing them out where required. It will then consider if any regulatory action (for example, a regulated ban, or a co-regulatory or mandatory product stewardship arrangement) is warranted or not. Before any regulation could come into effect it would first need to be considered through the Australian Government's Regulatory Impact Analysis Framework.

This approach will allow industry to demonstrate its leadership, potentially avoiding the need for any regulatory intervention.

What packaging alternatives are available?

Many Australian businesses are already moving to EPS packaging alternatives, such as recycled cardboard, recyclable plastic mouldings and LDPE air pillow padding. APCO is able to provide further advice to businesses on the packaging alternatives available. For more information refer to APCO's [Action Plan for Problematic and Unnecessary Single-Use Plastics Packaging](#).

What if there are no suitable packaging alternatives to EPS?

APCO will work with industry associations to prepare a national roadmap that prioritises packaging applications for EPS phase out and identifies those packaging formats that may require alternative approaches, such as through product stewardship.

What support is available to help industry with this transition?

National Workshop

APCO will host a national virtual workshop on **Tuesday 8th of June 2021** bringing industry and government together to discuss how industry can transition away from loose fill EPS, unnecessary moulded EPS packaging and EPS

food and beverage containers. To register for the national EPS workshop please visit: <https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/146702401833>

APCO will provide additional support to industry after the national workshop including **knowledge sharing sessions** to support industry associations and businesses to take practical action, and will also release the **Sustainable Packaging Program** in mid-2021. More information will be available on APCO's website and at the national workshop.

Australian Packaging Covenant SME Outreach Program

In 2021 APCO will expand its outreach program to include a comprehensive small to medium-enterprise (SME) engagement program. The program will support SMEs to work towards the 2025 National Packaging Targets. Support to SMEs will also address phase outs of problematic and unnecessary single use plastics, including EPS.

Resources

The following resources are free and available from the APCO website:

- [Action Plan for Problematic and Unnecessary Single-Use Plastic Packaging](#)
- [Single-Use Problematic and Unnecessary Plastic Packaging](#)
- [Sustainable Packaging Guidelines \(SPGs\)](#)
- [Quickstart Guide - Design for Recovery; Reuse, Recycling or Composting](#)
- [Packaging Manufacturers and Suppliers Toolkit](#)

Need more information?

Email wastepolicy@environment.gov.au or phone 02 6274 1801.

Officeworks EPS phase out

Officeworks has removed EPS from all packaging for its own brand furniture items, avoiding approximately 800,000 pieces of EPS every year.

Strong relationships with their international partners is also allowing Officeworks to encourage suppliers to remove or reduce the expanded polystyrene in packaging for technology products.

