

Take-away Coffee Cups

the Facts!



Can take-away (disposable) coffee cups be recycled?

The simple answer is it's complicated, but unfortunately **NO**, not in Shoalhaven

Shoalhaven City Council cannot recycle any takeaway coffee cups, therefore they *cannot* go into your yellow recycling bin, they must go into the red landfill bin.

Most disposable coffee cups are made from some type of plastic, non-recyclable material. The types of cups include:

- **Polystyrene** - not recyclable so end up in landfill
- **Paper based cups**
While the cardboard may be recyclable, these cups are lined with a polyethylene (plastic) membrane which cannot be recycled. The cardboard and the plastic lining cannot be separated at the recycling facility.
- **Compostable/biodegradable cups**
These require industrial composting conditions. Materials put into the yellow bin go on to mechanical re-processing, not composting. So, they will end up in landfill.

Alternatives to a disposable coffee cup

- ✓ A BYO reusable coffee cup is the best environmental option for coffee lovers. If you are a serious daily coffee drinker, invest in a few and have them in convenient locations such as your car, home and office. Support your local [Responsible Cafes](#) that offer discounts to customers who supply reusable cups.
- ✓ Refuse a lid — if you don't need the lid don't take one
- ✓ Go old school. Take a moment to sit in a cafe and enjoy your coffee in a ceramic cup.

Facts about take-away coffee cups that are hard to swallow

It is estimated that Australians dispose of 1 billion take-away coffee cups every year. *These all end up in landfill.*

A disposable cup spends about 15 minutes in our possession but the plastic lasts 1000s of years in landfill.

Disposable coffee cups are the second biggest contributor to litter after plastic bottles. They can often end up in waterways and oceans which are a major threat to marine life.

Are you sure take-away coffee cups can't be recycled??

You may have seen or heard of coffee cups being recycled elsewhere eg: at various events (such as Floriade in Canberra) or in-store programs (eg 7 Eleven service stations).

These are specialised recycling programs requiring specific technology that separates the inner plastic lining from the cardboard exterior. This technology is not available to most recycling facilities, and is not available in the Shoalhaven.

Planet Ark explains on its website why it is problematic to recycle single use paper cups: "How the cardboard and plastic behave in the recycling process – particularly during pulping – is the source of all the controversy. If the cardboard fibres remain attached to the plastic they can't be turned back into paper products and therefore become a waste product."

To avoid all this confusion, the simple solution rests with us, the consumer, to adopt new habits. Just like we BYO bags to the supermarket now, so too we need to BYO our coffee cups!