

**WRITTEN SUBMISSION
TO THE**

**ENVIRONMENT SELECT
COMMITTEE**

ON

**PETITION OF
HANNAH BLUMHARDT:
TAKE AWAY THROWAWAYS
FOR FOOD AND DRINK, AND
REQUIRE REUSABLE ALTERNATIVES**

Submitted on 28 June 2022 by
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Takeaway Throwaways

#TakeawayThrowaways

I have written this submission as the Policy Spokesperson of Takeaway Throwaways. Along with the **10,000+ members of the public who have signed the online Takeaway Throwaways petition**,¹ I request:

that the House of Representatives call on the Government to ban single-use disposable food and drink serveware, and use waste legislation and targeted investment to require and support the implementation of accessible, reusable alternatives instead.

In addition to this written submission, I would like to request the opportunity to make an oral submission.

THIS SUBMISSION IN A NUTSHELL:

- **There is no economic or environmental future in single-use takeaway packaging.** Takeaway Throwaways would like the Government to support the development of reusable serveware systems. Unlike single-use, reuse helps to protect our planet's resources, minimise emissions, waste and resource use, create circular economy jobs and connect communities.
 - **Government action is needed** to move away from solely relying on a voluntary behaviour change approach to encouraging reusables towards a regulated approach that removes the single-use option (or makes it more expensive) and that drives business and consumer practice towards reuse. Government can consider a range of policy, legislative and regulatory tools to implement this petition's request.
 - **The problem isn't limited to plastic - the problem is single-use.** Our petition is calling for action to phase-out all single-use serveware items, regardless of what they are made of, because all types of single-use serveware have environmental and financial impacts. Government is taking action to ban some single-use serveware made of plastic, which we support. But, on its own, this approach risks "regrettable substitution" where businesses swap single-use plastic with single-use something else, which doesn't solve the problem.
 - **The solution isn't only about bans.** Bans are an important part of the picture, but we also need creative policymaking that combines bans with other regulatory and policy levers that actively disincentivise single-use, while supporting and incentivising the reusable alternative. Examples include targeted investment, public procurement policies, reuse targets, mandatory provision of reusables in certain contexts, and consumption reduction targets and levies on any disposable serveware items that aren't banned straight away.
 - **We need reuse systems** - when we talk about the reusable alternative, we aren't just talking about BYO keep cups. Policies that encourage individuals to BYO are part of the solution, but to provide a viable alternative to single-use in all settings and scenarios, we also need to set up reuse systems, e.g. borrow-and-return reusables and/or third-party packaging providers that specialise in reuse services like commercial sanitisation.
 - **Transitioning to reusables should be a just transition.** We are asking the Government to ensure that the reusable alternatives and the systems they operate in are well-designed and accessible for all people in our communities.
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- ¹ <https://community.greenpeace.org.nz/petitions/takeaway-throwaways-for-food-and-drink-end-single-use-return-to-reuse>

THE PROBLEM

Every year, New Zealanders use **hundreds of millions** of single-use disposable food and drink serviceware items, including (but not limited to):

- Cups and lids for hot or cold drinks
- Containers for food, e.g. sealable containers or clamshells
- Wrappings, e.g. for burgers or kebabs
- Cutlery
- Single-serve condiment pottle or sachets, including soy fish

These items can be made of all kinds of materials, including plastic (whether fossil or plant derived), fibre (e.g. paper, cardboard, bagasse etc.), metal/foil, wood/bamboo, or some combination of various materials, e.g. paper cups with plastic linings.

Most of these items become landfill or litter because **they are designed to be thrown away after just one use**. This makes them a hallmark of the 'take-make-dispose' linear economy that fuels both waste generation, climate change and resource depletion,² and which the government has indicated we need to replace with a circular economy.³

Why worry if we send disposable serviceware to landfill or litter?

New Zealanders care deeply about the build up of plastic in the environment, the amount of waste and rubbish we generate, and overpackaging, non-recyclable packaging and landfill. **All three of these issues ranked in New Zealanders' top ten concerns in this year's annual *Better Futures* report.** The report also revealed New Zealanders' strong expectation that Government and businesses will lead on addressing pressing environmental issues.⁴

New Zealand is already one of the world's most wasteful countries, per capita,⁵ and we keep getting better at wasting. Between 2009 and 2019, waste to landfill increased by 47 percent.⁶ As our landfills fill up and communities fight back against building new ones, it makes no sense to keep importing, manufacturing and using food and drink containers that are chucked after just one use.

It makes even less sense given that a lot of single-use serviceware contains materials that create methane in the landfill's anaerobic conditions (e.g. paper, cardboard, wood, bamboo, bagasse or plant-derived plastics). In its Emissions Reduction Plan, the Government has committed to substantial reductions in methane from waste.⁷ Continuing to allow single-use serviceware will undermine this commitment.

To make matters worse, a lot of throwaway serviceware never makes it to landfill and instead escapes waste management systems to pollute the natural environment. Disposable serviceware makes up a sizeable proportion of commonly littered items, by volume, item count, and weight both locally and overseas.⁸

For example, one international study found that takeaway items for food and drink "dominates global litter".⁹ While in New Zealand, another study found takeaway packaging makes up about 7.8% of branded litter.¹⁰ This litter causes a host of harmful impacts, including visually degrading living spaces and environments, harming wildlife, and introducing hazardous contaminants to soil, groundwater, waterways, beaches and the sea, e.g. microplastics, endocrine disrupting chemicals and persistent organic pollutants.

2. Circle Economy (2022) *The Circularity Gap Report 2022* (Amsterdam: Circle Economy). <https://www.circularity-gap.world/2022>.

3. Ministry for the Environment (2022) "Chapter 9: Circular Economy and Bioeconomy" in *Te hau mārohi ki anamata: Towards a productive, sustainable and inclusive economy* (Wellington: Ministry for the Environment). <https://environment.govt.nz/publications/aotearoa-new-zealands-first-emissions-reduction-plan/circular-economy-and-bioeconomy/>.

4. Kantar and Sustainable Business Council (2022) *Better Futures 2022*. <https://www.kantarnewzealand.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Kantar-Better-Futures-Report-2022.pdf>.

5. OECD (n.d.) 'Municipal waste indicator'. <https://data.oecd.org/waste/Municipal-waste.htm>; Hoornweg, D. and P. Bhada-Tata (2012) *What a Waste: a global review of solid waste management* (urban development series knowledge paper 15, Washington, DC: World Bank).

6. Ministry for the Environment (n.d.) 'Estimates of waste generated in Aotearoa New Zealand'. <https://environment.govt.nz/facts-and-science/waste/estimates-of-waste-generated/>.

7. Ministry for the Environment (2022) "Chapter 15: Waste" in *Te hau mārohi ki anamata: Towards a productive, sustainable and inclusive economy* (Wellington: Ministry for the Environment). <https://environment.govt.nz/publications/aotearoa-new-zealands-first-emissions-reduction-plan/waste/>.

8. For example: Miriam Gordon (2020) *Reuse wins: the environmental, economic, and business case for transitioning from single-use to reuse in food service* (UPSTREAM). <https://upstreampolutions.org/reuse-wins-report>; Keep New Zealand Beautiful (2019), *National Litter Audit*. <https://www.knzb.org.nz/download/national-litter-audit-2019/>; Waste Not Consulting, *National Litter Survey Litter Field Count, 2017/2018*; Greenpeace New Zealand Plastic Free NZ Action Plan. <https://storage.googleapis.com/planet4-new-zealand-stateless/2018/08/c633584d-full-report.pdf>; Ocean Conservancy (2017) *International Coastal Cleanup 2017 Report*. https://oceanconservancy.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/2017-ICC_Report_RM.pdf; Better Alternatives Now: BAN List 2.0. https://www.breakfreefromplastic.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/5Gyres_BANlist2.pdf.

9. Caren Morales-Caselles, Joshua Viejo and Andres Cozar (2021) "An inshore-offshore sorting system revealed from global classification of ocean litter" 4 *Nature Sustainability* 4. <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41893-021-00720-8>.

10. Ministry for the Environment (2022) *Transforming recycling—Te panoni i te hangarua: consultation document* (Wellington, Ministry for the Environment). <https://environment.govt.nz/news/transforming-recycling>, p.12.

Beyond landfill and litter, the whole premise of throwaway serviceware is unsustainable

The production of single-use disposable serviceware is based on an unsustainable business model whose profits rely on products that require continual replacement. This business model locks us into repeating the most carbon intensive part of the production-consumption process - extracting raw material resources from the Earth and turning them into stuff.

The technical term for this type of business model is the “**linear economy**”. The linear economy is an extractive, waste-producing machine that accelerates carbon emissions and resource depletion. In its Emissions Reduction Plan, the Government has accepted the need to move towards a circular economy.¹¹ The continued use of disposable serviceware directly contradicts this goal. In contrast, reusables enhance circularity, as will be discussed in the next section of this submission.

HOW CAN REUSE HELP, AND WHAT ARE REUSABLE SERVICWARE SYSTEMS?

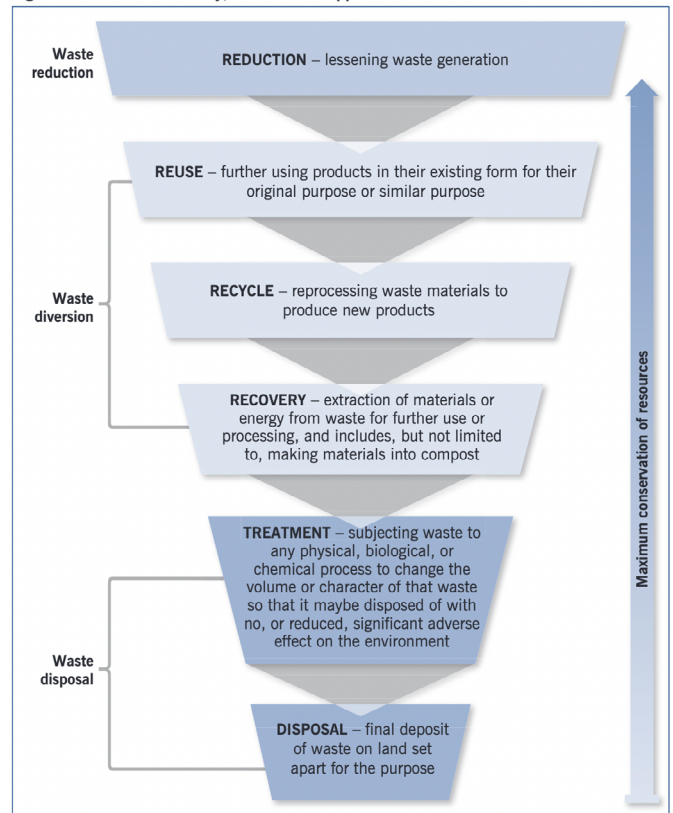
“Reuse eliminates waste before it starts”¹²

Every time a piece of reusable serviceware is used, a single-use item hasn’t needed to be created, let alone wasted. This reduces emissions and pollutants “upstream” and has the flow-on downstream effect of removing a source of methane from our landfills, and a source of plastic pollution from our soil, waterways, beaches and oceans.

This way of thinking follows the waste hierarchy, which is the tool waste minimisation practitioners use to decide how best to act on waste issues, and features in the current Waste Minimisation Act (see **fig 1**). **The waste hierarchy prioritises taking action to prevent and reduce waste in the first place, with reuse sitting above recycling and composting because it’s much more effective**

for reducing waste, emissions and costs. To see more reasons why recycling and composting aren’t solutions to the problem of single-use serviceware, see **Appendix 1** of this submission.

Figure 1: The waste hierarchy, based on the approach in the Waste Minimisation Act



Source: Ministry for the Environment (2009), p.19



Handing over the Takeaway Throwaways petition in Parliament, with table of reusables from NZ reuse schemes

¹¹. Ministry for the Environment (2022) *Te hau mārohi ki anamata: Towards a productive, sustainable and inclusive economy* (Wellington: Ministry for the Environment). <https://environment.govt.nz/publications/aotearoa-new-zealands-first-emissions-reduction-plan/>

¹². Miriam Gordon (2020) Reuse wins: the environmental, economic, and business case for transitioning from single-use to reuse in food service (UPSTREAM). <https://upstreamolutions.org/reuse-wins-report>, p.xvi.



Artwork by NZ artist, Rachel Benefield

While it's always possible for us to resist innovation and take a 'bottom of the cliff' approach to single-use packaging waste issues (e.g. by doing beach cleans, putting stronger lids on bins, capturing and treating landfill methane and leachate, or telling people off for littering), it's far more efficient, by almost any metric, not to make the rubbish in the first place.

What is a reusable serviceware system and is this realistic?

A reusable serviceware system is when outlets serve prepared food and drink into containers that are:

1. physically capable of being refilled multiple times; and
2. combined with a formal arrangement that ensures that, in practice, the containers are consistently returned after use for sanitisation and refill.

In-house crockery fits this criteria. For takeaways, a reuse system allows vendors to loan reusable serviceware to their customers that is returned after use, commercially sanitised and then dispensed to the next customer. Vendors would typically have a fleet of reusables on-hand, and a mechanism for ensuring loaned items are returned, e.g. trust, a redeemable deposit or tracking technology like an app. Reusable serviceware systems sit alongside active encouragement of BYO reusables, to enable vendors to serve those customers who forgot to BYO, don't have time to 'have here', or who require lightweight or lidded serviceware in order to eat and drink safely.

Reusable serviceware systems might sound space-age, but they aren't that different to borrowing library books or renting a car. And they already exist, both locally and internationally.¹³

In New Zealand, companies like Again Again, CupCycling/SwappaNZ, Wanakup, Reusabowl and MiKuppi already operate reuse systems. See **Appendix 2** of this submission for an excerpt of the *Reuse Aotearoa Reusable Packaging in Aotearoa* report, which provides a list of New Zealand's reusable serviceware schemes and a description of how they operate.

In addition to these schemes, New Zealand already has a number of hospitality outlets (e.g. 50+ cafes), institutions (e.g. 3 university campuses) and other precincts (e.g. Cardrona Mountain) that have completely replaced disposable coffee cups with reuse systems, with great success. These businesses and initiatives demonstrate that our petition ask is **100% possible!**

¹³. For example, see the directory of schemes at home and abroad on the Takeaway Throwaways website: <https://takeawaythrowaways.nz/reuse-schemes-at-home-and-abroad>

WHY WE ARE CALLING FOR GOVERNMENT ACTION AND WHAT WE WOULD LIKE GOVERNMENT TO DO

Although reusable systems exist, Government intervention is needed to support these systems to move from the niche to the mainstream, and to 'demarket' single-use. Current regulatory and economic settings still keep single-use as king. **Reusables must compete on a playing field that is not level**, which drives consumers and businesses to continue using disposables.¹⁴

In 2019, the Office of the Prime Minister's Chief Science Advisor said in its *Rethinking Plastics in Aotearoa* report that to address plastic waste issues, the government needs to **"make best practice, standard practice"**.¹⁵ In the case of serviceware, we know that reuse is best practice – we're requesting the House to call on the Government to make it standard practice. To date, the job of normalising reuse has been treated as a voluntary nice-to-have, driven by civil society, a handful of highly engaged businesses, and piecemeal behaviour change campaigns. There's a limit to what can be achieved with this approach. A lot of grassroots initiatives are already doing what they can to play their part; taking things to the next level requires Government and business support.

Isn't the Government already taking action and banning single-use plastics?

The Government has confirmed bans on several single-use plastic items, including some serviceware, such as polystyrene cups and containers and plastic cutlery. However, these represent a small fraction of the disposable serviceware on the market. Furthermore, the Government's approach is limited to targeting single-use items made of plastic, and to using bans as the sole tool for change.

The Takeaway Throwaways petition is calling for a **multi-pronged legislative and policy approach** that disincentivises all single-use serviceware, and proactively incentivises the growth and normalisation of reusable serviceware. This approach would include bans on single-use plastic items, but goes far beyond this.



In Australia, ReturnR set up reuse systems for workplaces.

Focusing only on plastic bans creates the risk of "regrettable substitution", where single-use plastic products are replaced by single-use products made of something else. While single-use plastic serviceware is undoubtedly harmful, other materials also cause harm (albeit in different ways) when put in a linear, single-use format, including creating needless emissions, pollution and waste. The systemic problem that needs fixing is single-use and that can't be addressed by honing in on one material alone.¹⁶

¹⁴. See Hannah Blumhardt (2022) "Chapter 1.2: Current barriers to reusable packaging, and the case for supportive action from industry and government" in *Reusable Packaging in Aotearoa - getting back to the future: The state of play today, barriers to growth, opportunities for innovation, and recommendations for action* (Reuse Aotearoa: June 2022). <https://reuseaotearoa.org.nz/reusable-packaging-aotearoa-report-june22/>.

¹⁵. Office of the Prime Minister's Chief Science Advisor (2019) *Rethinking Plastics in Aotearoa New Zealand* (Auckland). <https://www.pmcsc.ac.nz/topics/rethinking-plastics/>, p.3.

¹⁶. Miriam Gordon (2020) *Reuse wins: the environmental, economic, and business case for transitioning from single-use to reuse in food service* (UPSTREAM). <https://upstream.solutions.org/reuse-wins-report>.

Furthermore, while bans are one important tool in the toolbox for addressing single-use serviceware, a ban-only approach limits our horizons. The shift from single-use to reuse requires policy measures to be invoked in packages, with the exact mix of tools used varying based on the product/material being regulated. This reflects a more modern approach to policy design, where complex policy problems are addressed by “bundles or portfolios of tools”, rather than single instruments in isolation.¹⁷ As noted by the OECD in a recent report on The Circular Economy in cities and regions:¹⁸

“Regulatory, financial and economic instruments are needed to transition to the circular economy. It is crucial to set the right policy and regulatory frameworks in place at all levels.... It is important to correct misleading incentives, remove harmful subsidies and count environmental externalities in the pricing... The OECD calls for applying mixes of policy instruments to ensure a coherent set of incentives for resource efficiency along the product value chain.”



What are the policies, regulations and targeted investments that we are requesting the Government consider to disincentivise single-use and incentivise reuse?

Takeaway Throwaways is a people’s campaign run by volunteers, which limits our capacity to come up with law and policy solutions. Implicit in our petition request is that Government dedicates time and resources to undertake the necessary research on effective policy and regulatory interventions to drive down single-use serviceware and drive up reusable serviceware.

However, we are aware that our petition could be dismissed as ‘unrealistic’ unless we list some examples. So, **Table 1** offers a (non-exhaustive) list of possible policies, regulatory levers and investment priorities that Government could consider to realise our petition request. These are predominantly based on the sources listed in **Appendix 3**. All measures would need to be supported by robust compliance, monitoring and enforcement. Government should also create minimum standards and requirements for reuse systems to ensure they follow best practice.¹⁹



¹⁷. Michael Howlett, Ishani Mukherjee and Jun Jie Woo (2015) “From tools to toolkits in policy design studies: the new design orientation towards policy formulation research” *Policy & Politics* 43(2). <https://doi.org/10.1332/147084414X13992869118596>.

¹⁸. OECD Urban Studies (2020) “The role of national governments in supporting the transition to a circular economy” in *The Circular Economy in Cities and Regions: Synthesis Report*. <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/724e5c45-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/724e5c45-en#section-d1e22491>.

¹⁹. See Blumhardt, H (2022) *Reusable Packaging in Aotearoa – getting back to the future: The state of play today, barriers to growth, opportunities for innovation, and recommendations for action* (Reuse Aotearoa: June 2022). https://reuseaotearoa.org.nz/reusable_packaging_aotearoa_report_june22/, pp.1.1 5–10.

Table 1: Non-exhaustive list of suggested policies, regulatory levers and investments to realise our petition request

Type of approach	Legislative, regulatory or policy measure
Bans, phase-outs, phase-downs	Create power to ban single-use applications of certain products (e.g. serviceware) rather than limiting the power to ban products to the presence of “specified materials” (as s 23 of the Waste Minimisation Act is currently written), which reinforces plastics-only ban approaches.
	Set binding consumption reduction targets/sinking lids on single-use serviceware items that the Government isn’t ready to ban yet. For example, the EU Single-Use Plastics Directive requires EU member states to limit their use of non-banned items through national consumption reduction measures.
	Introduce a moratorium on new single-use serviceware manufacturing in New Zealand.
	Introduce new public procurement policy that phases-out the purchase and use of single-use serviceware items by government agencies and any other party operating from a building that hosts public services, by a specified date.
	Implement a moratorium on public funding to projects designed to create new types of single-use serviceware, or process single-use serviceware.
Disincentivise single-use	Introduce a customer-facing levy on all single-use serviceware. For example, the ‘latte levy’ on disposable cups, implemented in many jurisdictions around the world, including the City of Vancouver and in Ireland. The latte levy has also been proposed in Scotland’s Circular Economy Bill. Meanwhile, Ireland’s existing latte levy may be extended to food containers and cold drinks cups.
	Require producers and/or commercial dispensers of single-use serviceware to pay a fee to cover the costs associated with managing end-of-life single-use serviceware (e.g. clean-up costs, landfill fees, processing). For example, the EU Single-Use Plastics Directive creates this responsibility for food containers, and cups and their lids.
	Introduce a deposit-return system for any single-use serviceware that is not banned, with return/redemption points being the point where the serviceware was passed on to the consumer (e.g. hospitality outlets).
	Introduce laws that only allow the dispensing of certain single-use serviceware items ‘on-request’ (e.g. accessories like cutlery or napkins). For example, this is law in some jurisdictions in California and Vermont.
Incentivise/require reuse	Set binding reusable serviceware targets for the hospitality industry.
	Mandate that any outlet selling takeaways or home delivery must offer a reusable takeaway option. For example, in Germany, from 2023, restaurants, bistros and cafes will be required to offer reusable containers for their takeaway products, at a price equal to or cheaper than the product in disposable serviceware.
	Mandate that reusables must be used for all ‘have here’ or ‘dine in’ customers. This has been legislated in France, and several jurisdictions in California.
	Mandate a discount for customers that BYO reusables. This is law in France and a specific policy measure in the national Irish Waste Action Plan.
	Introduce public procurement policy that requires the use of reusable serviceware within government agencies and any other party operating from a building that hosts public services, by a specified date.
	Invest in/subsidise key initiatives or infrastructure to support the growth of accessible reusable serviceware systems. For example: • The design of reusable containers and supporting systems that follow universal design principles (e.g. easy to use, lightweight, affordable to participate in) • Infrastructure for reusables collection, sanitisation and redistribution. • Subsidies or tax breaks for start-ups/businesses offering reusable serviceware collection and washing service (suggested by Irish Joint Committee on Environment and Climate Action during pre-legislative scrutiny of the Irish Circular Economy Bill). • Subsidise the purchase of initial reusable container fleets and/or the development of streamlined systems for reintroducing suitable cups and containers from the resource recovery system into fleets (this would help to scale existing reuse systems like Auraki, MugCycle, Mugly or Nonstop Solutions that use rescued tip shop crockery).

APPENDIX 1:

CAN'T WE JUST GET BETTER AT RECYCLING OR COMPOSTING SINGLE-USE SERVICEWARE?

Trying to recycle or compost single-use serveware aren't solutions to the problem we're trying to fix, which is single-use. Promoting recycling and composting of single-use serveware as a solution presumes it is sustainable to continue extracting raw materials to manufacture into single-use products. This does not address the upstream damage of the linear business model, nor the inevitable downstream risk that a proportion of single-use products will escape recycling, composting or even rubbish collection systems and end up as landfill or litter.

Ultimately, most single-use serveware isn't designed to be recyclable or compostable. Even if it were, recycling and composting still wouldn't be appropriate or practical solutions for dealing with disposable serveware for the reasons outlined in [Table 2](#).

"If recycling is the answer, you're asking the wrong question."

Table 2: Some problems with trying to recycle or compost single-use serveware

Problems with <u>recycling</u> disposable serveware	Problems with <u>composting</u> disposable serveware
Serveware is often made of multi-layer materials, which makes it difficult to recycle and virtually impossible to recycle back into another piece of serveware.	Collection services/infrastructure for compostable packaging are few and far between.
Serveware is usually food/drink contaminated, which usually renders it unrecyclable.	Compostable serveware often needs to be commercially composted. Most NZ composters do not accept compostable packaging because it adds no nutrient value to the soil, can be difficult to break down, can introduce contaminants to the soil, and/or reduce the value of their final compost product.
Serveware is usually used 'on-the-go' where consumers don't have access to recycling bins	Compostable serveware relies on treating soil as a waste disposal system for synthetic products. Mounting research shows that compostable serveware (even some of those that are certified compostable) can introduce microplastics, persistent organic pollutants (like PFAS), and other harmful contaminants to the soil, which can get into waterways or food, and negatively impact human health. ²⁰
Even if takeaways are consumed at home, most commonly used single-use serveware items and materials are not accepted in household kerbside recycling collections.	The Ministry for the Environment released a position statement on compostable packaging that has outlined that compostable products are not the way to go and that reusables are a better option. ²¹

²⁰. Michael Howlett, Ishani Mukherjee and Jun Jie Woo (2015) "Fro Takeaway Throwaways (2021) "Is compostable serveware actually safe for people and planet? Part 1: A focus on fibre" *Takeaway Throwaways*. <https://takeawaythrowaways.nz/blog/is-compostable-serveware-actually-safe-for-people-and-planet-part-one>.

²¹. Ministry for the Environment (2022) *Compostable Products: Ministry for the Environment position statement* (Wellington: Ministry for the Environment). <https://environment.govt.nz/news/ministry-position-on-compostable-products/>.

APPENDIX 2:

EXCERPT OF “CHAPTER 2.1 HOSPITALITY, TOURISM AND ACCOMMODATION” FROM THE REUSE AOTEAROA REPORT *REUSABLE PACKAGING IN AOTEAROA - GETTING BACK TO THE FUTURE*, WHICH LISTS NEW ZEALAND’S EXISTING REUSABLE SERVICEWARE SYSTEMS AND HOW THEY OPERATE

The rest of the chapter and the full report can be found at:

https://reuseaotearoa.org.nz/reusable_packaging_aotearoa_report_june22/

2.1

**Hospitality,
tourism &
accommodation**



2.1 Hospitality, tourism & accommodation

Hospitality outlets, tourism and accommodation providers use a lot of packaged household-type goods, e.g. food and beverage products. They also pass on packaging to customers through single-use serveware or single-serve toiletries or condiment packets/sachets. In the sector, three key activities are helping to replace this packaging with reusables:

1. Reusable serveware systems.
2. Outlets buying goods from suppliers who operate reusable packaging systems.
3. Outlets opting to phase-out single-use packaged options.

REUSABLE SERVICEWARE SYSTEMS

Food and beverage packaging makes up eight of the top 10 most commonly found plastic pollution items during International Coastal Cleanup.¹ Single-use plastic takeaway items for food and drink “dominates global litter”.² In New Zealand, takeaway packaging makes up about 7.8% of branded litter,³ and we collectively consume 295 million single use coffee cups per year. The New Zealand Government recognises the problem and has started phasing-out some single-use plastic serveware items.

In New Zealand, **ten reusable serveware schemes** have emerged to tackle disposable serveware at source. These schemes create a system for hospitality outlets to loan out reusable takeaway cups and containers to customers, instead of using disposables (see **Table 1**).⁴

Eight of these schemes focus on reusable cups, one focuses on reusable food containers, and one offers both reusable cups and containers. All operate slightly

different business models and use different types of containers. Some charge outlets a monthly plan to participate, some charge per transaction in a reusable, some charge the outlets upfront for the reusable containers while others retain ownership of the reusables. Some are purely community-driven.

Reusable serveware systems rely on consumers returning borrowed containers to be cleaned and recirculated, designated places where containers can be dropped-off, and infrastructure for washing. To encourage returns, three of New Zealand’s schemes use an app that facilitates the loaning/swapping of the reusable.⁵ Four use a deposit return system,⁶ four operate on trust (i.e. containers are free to loan and customers are trusted to return them without an incentive).⁷ Two schemes offer a collection, washing and redistribution service for containers, if required. However, most schemes require participating outlets to act as a drop-off and wash point for reusables. In this way, these schemes piggy-back off the washing infrastructure already embedded in the hospitality industry, and seek to onboard enough outlets to create a convenient and wide-reaching drop-off network.



REUSABOWL: IMAGE SUPPLIED

Table 1: Reusable serviceware systems in New Zealand

Company	Main location(s)	Serviceware type	Reusable container material	System for reuse	Washing service?
Again Again	Nationwide	Cups & food containers	Mostly double-walled stainless steel. Silicone or plastic lids. One single-walled cup with cardboard sleeve. System capable of loaning out reusables from other providers	App – free to loan with replacement fee charged if not returned within specified time period Option of cash-based deposit	No
Auraki	Te Herenga Waka—Victoria University of Wellington	Cups	Secondhand mugs donated by local tip shop	Trust	No
Chunky Loan Cup	Queenstown	Cups	Double-walled stainless steel cups, plastic lid	Deposit (\$10)	No
CupCycling/ SwappaNZ	Nationwide	Cups	Plastic cup and lid	App – free to loan with replacement fee charged if not returned within specified time period	No
Good to Go	Waiheke Island	Cups	Upcycled glass jars	Trust	Yes
mikuppi	Tauranga & Christchurch	Cups	Double-walled stainless steel cups, plastic lids	App – customers buy into the system by purchasing the reusable cup in their first order through the app. They are then entitled to swap it for a fresh cup on each successive order.	No
Mugcycle	Wellington	Cups	Secondhand mugs collected by bike from local tip shop	Trust	No
Mugly	Auckland	Cups	Secondhand mugs	Trust	No
Reusabowl	Wellington	Food containers	Bioplastic container, silicone lid	Deposit (\$10)	No
Wanakup	Wanaka	Cups	Double-walled stainless steel cup, silicone lid	Deposit (\$10)	Yes

Snapshots



MiKuppi (launched in Tauranga, 2021) is a mobile ordering app for coffee with an in-built reusable cup library of double-walled stainless steel cups. Customers download the miKuppi app, select any of the participating cafes and order their coffee through the app. The cafe prepares the order into a miKuppi cup. On their first order, the customer pays an initial fee to join the cup lending system, which covers the cup's cost (roughly \$1 because customers get their first drink for free). Cups can be returned to any participating outlet and exchanged for a fresh reusable cup with the customer's next order at no extra charge (provided the previous cup is returned, otherwise customers must buy another cup). Participating outlets wash and sanitise returned cups. The cafes benefit from joining the app, which has lower fees than other mobile ordering apps, and the café doesn't need to purchase the reusable cups. In less than a year, miKuppi diverted over 5000 cups from landfill, and aim to divert 30,000 cups in 2022.

"It's possible for something to be convenient and eco as well. We set out to make something that is easier than how you would use something disposable while getting rid of the disposable component. It saves people from waiting in line and you don't need a reusable cup."



Again Again began in 2018 as a deposit-based provider of a reusable, single-walled stainless steel cup (with a cardboard sleeve). They have ~150 participating outlets on their network nationwide, of which 27 have eliminated disposable cups entirely.⁸ They estimate they have already prevented the use of ~1,000,000 disposable cups. Since the end of 2021, Again Again have evolved their business to focus on developing and implementing app-based technology that can manage any type of reusable container (not limited to Again Again fleets). They have also expanded their own reusable serviceware range to include double-walled stainless steel cups, sushi containers, and hot and cold food containers. Their app enables hospitality outlets to loan out and track reusable serviceware (without needing a deposit), and to recoup the replacement cost of any unreturned containers. Customers join the Again Again system via a smartphone app that they scan when they purchase their takeaways in a reusable. They have two weeks to return the container before they are charged a late fee. If they do not return the container within three weeks, they are charged the full cost of the container and Again Again dispatches a replacement container to the outlet (or reimburses the outlet if they are using non-Again Again containers). Participating outlets are responsible for washing and sanitising returned cups, and for purchasing reusable fleets.

"For disposable containers, the upfront cost is very low compared to reusables... but you do pay that small cost every single time. With a reusable, you can use it hundreds of times, so eventually it becomes more profitable. It's just that it's a bigger risk upfront. So, Again Again takes that upfront risk on, and in return takes a small piece on every order."

APPENDIX 3:

SOURCES DRAWN ON TO COMPILE LEGISLATIVE, REGULATORY OR POLICY MEASURES SUGGESTED IN TABLE 1

Bizjak, D. and Barczak, P (2020) *Explained: Europe's New Waste Prevention and Reuse Laws* (European Environmental Bureau: May 2020). https://eeb.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/No-time-to-waste-Europes-new-waste-prevent_web.pdf.

Blumhardt, H (2022) *Reusable Packaging in Aotearoa - getting back to the future: The state of play today, barriers to growth, opportunities for innovation, and recommendations for action* (Reuse Aotearoa: June 2022). https://reusaotearoa.org.nz/reusable_packaging_aotearoa_report_june22/ (especially Chapter 3.3 "Recommended actions for central government to support the growth of reusable packaging").

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UPSTREAM (n.d.) *Policy Tracker and Model Reuse Policies*. <https://upstreamolutions.org/policytracker>

