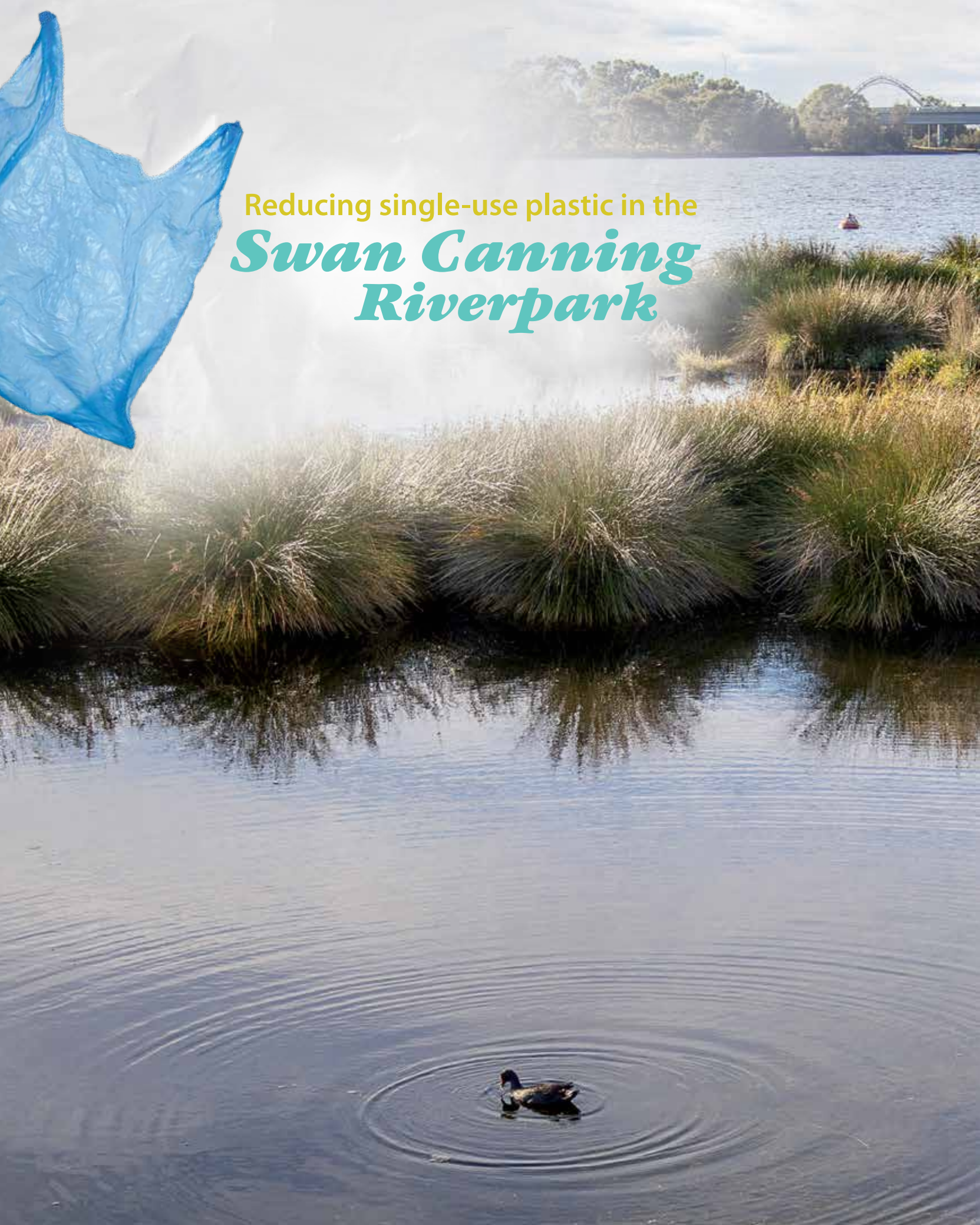




Reducing single-use plastic in the
*Swan Canning
Riverpark*





Derbal Yerrigan (Swan River) and Djarlgarra or Dyarlgarro (Canning River) are known and loved by many. Home to more than 80 bird species, more than 200 recorded species of fish and around 24 Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphins, the Swan Canning Riverpark is an ecologically and culturally significant attraction. However, the river faces a variety of stressors from contaminants, including plastic pollution.

by Zoe Beeson

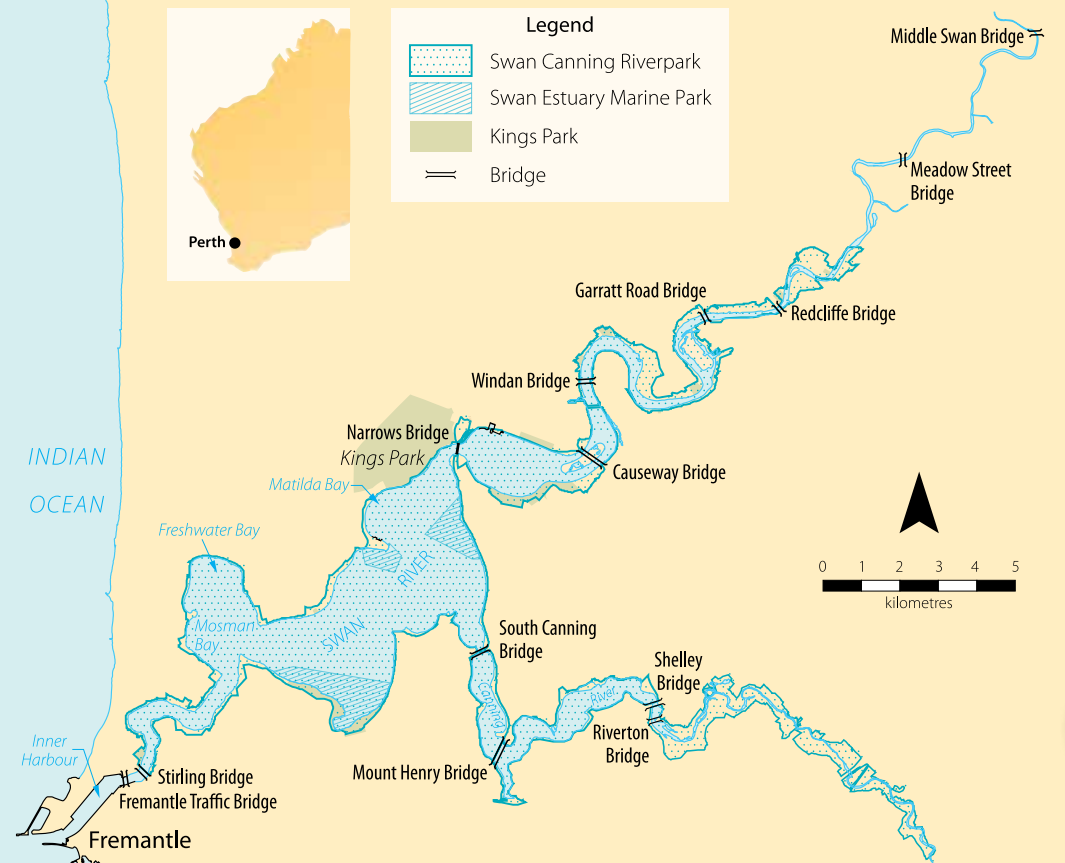
Awareness around plastic pollution is increasing, as are community efforts to reduce single-use plastic. Now with *Western Australia's Plan for Plastics* banning the sale and supply of selected single-use plastic items, business and industry have begun a major transition.

Through the Plastic Free Riverpark program, it is anticipated more than \$95,000 in grant funding will support projects that reduce single-use plastic packaging within cafés, restaurants, bars, charter operator vessels, sporting organisations and at major foreshore events in and around the Swan Canning Riverpark. In many cases reusable

alternatives have been adopted to help reduce the amount of waste generated.

In 2022, the Plastic Free Riverpark program supported 46 projects to reduce single-use plastic packaging. From cafés introducing reusable cup exchange programs to events providing reusable serve-ware, Perth's riverfront businesses trialled initiatives to reduce single-use plastic waste.

From 2021 to 2025, it is expected that funding from the Plastic Free Riverpark program will support more than 100 Riverpark venues and 20 major foreshore events. The program is delivered by the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation



Hear more about the impact of plastics in our waterways

Scan this QR code or visit Parks and Wildlife Service's podcast.

and Attractions (DBCA) in partnership with the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (DWER), Boomerang Alliance's WA Plastic Free program and Perth's riverfront local governments and is on track to remove over 500,000 single-use plastic items from Riverpark venues and organisations as part of the program.

REDUCING PLASTIC USE

Since joining the Plastic Free Riverpark program in May 2021, the team at Royal Perth Yacht Club has worked with its members, the restaurant and function centre to eliminate single-use plastic packaging.

Previous page
Main Dusky moorhen (*Gallinula tenebrosa*) at Claisebrook, Swan Canning Riverpark.
Photo – Cliff Winfield
Insets Single-use plastics.
Photos – Adobe Photostock

Above Map showing Swan Canning Riverpark.

Above right Dr Peter Novak works with Curtin University students to analyse plastic samples collected in a net.
Photo – Zoe Beeson/DBCA

"A few years ago, we installed a water refill station and have already avoided more than 18,000 plastic bottles thanks to members bringing their own refillable bottles," Marketing Manager Kelly Scott said.

"Using reusable serve-ware instead of single-use alternatives for events, even with cleaning cost, will save money, reduce waste, and decrease the risk of contamination across recycling and landfill bins and reduce waste near the Riverpark."

"The grant we received from the Plastic Free Riverpark program allowed us to supply members with collapsible bins for their boats. Due to lack of storage, a boat may only have one bin for general waste where everything, including valuable recyclables, is collected and sent to landfill."

"Now our members are collecting recycling including Containers for Change. It's been hugely popular, and we're looking forward to making our first donation to charity from containers collected. We're also encouraging members to reduce the plastic they use on board their boats and ensure it's secured so it doesn't come off the vessel."

"Making changes was easier than I anticipated," café owner Nigel Warne said.

"At La Patisserie South Perth, we're eliminating all plastic beverage containers in our fridge and are trialling reusable cup exchange programs such as Green Cafeen and Renome with our customers,"

"COVID meant a lot of our customers stopped bringing their own reusable cups. I hope with community education and more businesses joining this program that we can see that reusable culture come back even stronger."

Stephanie Ross, lessee for the DBCA Kensington Café, wanted to lead by example and has hosted some noteworthy behaviour change initiatives.

"Earlier in 2022, around 70 per cent of the hot drinks we sold were in single-use cups," Stephanie said.

"We then introduced a mug library and cup exchange program and started asking DBCA staff if they really wanted their drink in a single-use cup."

"In October 2022, we hosted a reusable cup day in the café and were amazed at the result. In 2023, we have completely eliminated single-use cups—a reduction in 350 cups and lids per week.



“COVID meant a lot of our customers stopped bringing their own reusable cups. I hope with community education and more businesses joining this program that we can see that reusable culture come back even stronger.”

(Nigel Warne)

Above DBCA staff member borrows a mug library cup for coffee at Stephanie’s Café.

Top right Plastic straws, lids, plastic resin pellets and fishing line collected at Jenalup Beach.

Above right La Patisserie South Perth owner, Nigel, with plastic-free alternatives.

Photos – Zoe Beeson/DBCA

Above far right Royal Perth Yacht Club member Mark collects Containers for Change.

Photo – Royal Perth Yacht Club

Inset right Alternatives to single-use plastic.

Photos – Adobe Photostock

Reducing plastic waste in the Riverpark

- More than \$95,000 in grant funding has supported projects reducing single-use plastic packaging across Riverpark businesses and events.
- 163,065 pieces of single-use plastic were avoided across Riverpark businesses and events in 2022.
- 98 per cent of Western Australians surveyed by DWER in 2019 supported further action to reduce single-use plastics.
- 2500 pieces of plastic per square metre were found at some of the 38 shorelines sites surveyed by DBCA in 2021.
- Fragments of soft and hard plastic appeared in more than 90 per cent of the 152 surveys conducted.
- In May 2022, Keep Australia Beautiful WA found food packaging to be within the top three highest items by volume collected in Australian litter measure surveys.
- In 2022, nine of the top 10 items collected in clean ups and recorded in the Australian Marine Debris Initiative database were comprised of plastic. *Source: Tangaroa Blue Foundation*



An individual can avoid hundreds of single-use items per year by choosing to reuse.

Plastic prevalent in the Swan Canning Riverpark

In 2021, DBCA scientist Dr Peter Novak led a collaborative project with DWER to survey plastic in the Swan Canning Riverpark. Thirty-eight shoreline sites were sampled four times each, with counts at some sites exceeding 2500 pieces of plastic per square metre.

Of the 152 surveys conducted, fragments of soft and hard plastic appeared more than 90 per cent of the time, expanded polystyrene was found more than 80 per cent of the time. These items could have begun life in a variety of ways, including as packaging for food and beverage purposes. Plastic resin pellets used in the manufacture of plastic products were also found in large quantities across the Riverpark. This work has provided baseline data on plastic pollution in the Riverpark. The method can be repeated to measure the effectiveness of mitigation measures in the future.

Single-use items are designed to be used only once before they are thrown into landfill or end up as litter in the environment. Their take, make, dispose nature is wasteful, and plastic debris that is not captured through waste systems can have life-threatening impacts on wildlife including entanglement and ingestion.

Dr Peter Novak is an Environmental Officer with DBCA's Biodiversity and Conservation Science and can be contacted for more information at peter.novak@dbca.wa.gov.au



The reduction of waste and cost is significant, and we have continued making changes to reduce our plastic use."

Lucky Shag Waterfront Bar is a venue directly over the Swan River so staff often see wildlife.

"Thanks to staff support, we got rid of plastic straws and paper coasters for drinks, which were falling through the boardwalk," said Venue Manager, Conor Heaney.

"Now we've joined the program to reduce single-use plastic containers and plastic wrap used in the kitchen. We're also asking our staff to use reusable containers for leftover food, rather than taking single-use compostable options home that may not end up in the right bin."

MAJOR FORESHORE EVENTS

During 2022, local governments and event managers with support from DBCA, have helped showcase reuse in action at four major foreshore events. Nearly 45,000 pieces of single-use plastic was avoided as 21,815 reusable cups, 14,040 reusable dishes, and 7570 pieces of reusable cutlery were provided to vendors and attendees.

The Plastic Free Riverpark program supported Fremantle Ports' Maritime Day, the Rotary Club of Applecross and City of Melville's Jacaranda Festival, City of Canning's Muddy Hands Festival, and Town of East Fremantle's George Street Festival with grants to provide reusable serve-ware, water refill stations, and waste education for attendees.

CHOOSE TO REUSE

In 2019, 98 per cent of Western Australians surveyed by DWER supported further actions to reduce single-use plastics in WA. Community support continues to be an integral part of the solution.

Perth residents and Riverpark visitors can choose reusable items such as a cloth bag or reusable bottle or cup. Keep items near the front door or in the car. It's good to support local businesses that accept or offer reusable items (if you bring your own, always make sure your cup or container is clean before handing it over).

Daily actions, no matter how small they may seem, can make a big difference.

Together we can help reduce single-use plastic in and around the Swan Canning Riverpark, ensuring healthy and beautiful rivers for generations to come.

Above left Plastic litter found washed up on the shore at Point Fraser Reserve.

Top Stephanie from Go2Cup collects serve-ware at the Jacaranda Festival to be washed and re-used again.

Above Devashish from Juice Station sells a mango smoothie in a reusable cup.
Photos – Zoe Beeson/DBCA

Zoe Beeson is the Project Officer for DBCA's Plastic Free Riverpark program. She can be contacted on (08) 9278 0985 or by email plasticfreeriverpark@dbca.wa.gov.au

For the latest Riverpark news including updates on the Dolphin Watch program, Reel It In fishing line bins and Riverwise Gardening workshops, visit the River Guardians website riverguardians.com

And if you'd like to volunteer to keep your patch clean, why not Adopt a Spot with Keep Australia Beautiful Council?