



# DITCH THE DISPOSABLES

## SAY NO TO SINGLE-USE PLASTIC

PLASTIC DEBRIS CAUSES MORE THAN 100 000 MARINE MAMMAL DEATHS YEARLY.\*

The **Ditch the Disposables** program is a truly nationwide program as it is rolled out across the CQUniversity campus networks at 18 locations around Australia. The campaign is the University's attempt to create institute-wide awareness about environmental sustainability and to promote the adverse effects of single-use plastic products. The program is accommodating multiple sustainability agendas under one umbrella.

The **Ditch the Disposables** program is designed with the following four strategies

- 1. Education and Awareness:** empowering our student and staff community to embrace reduce, recycle and recover
- 2. Advocacy and Collaboration:** lead strategic alliances and partnerships to support best practices
- 3. Secure Our Future Needs:** provide infrastructure needs in accordance with capacity and capability
- 4. Waste Management:** enable staff and student cohorts to take responsibility for resource recovery including upcycling, composting, reusing, etc.



## Ditch the Disposables

In this program, we have set out the University's commitment to eliminate single-use plastic on our premises by the end of 2020.

Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, we have had to adjust this goal and are now aiming for the end of 2021. The major focus is given on the 'engagement of the stakeholders (staff, student) in a robust awareness campaign that is clear, consistent and innovative'.

This broader awareness campaign had a different approach by highlighting the everyday use of plastic and provided solutions to recycle those plastic products. We also educated staff and students about the harmful effects of single-use items and encourage them to ultimately '**Ditch the Disposables**' and 'do more with less.' As part of this, a staff competition was carried out, encouraging staff to send in their best waste-management tips for their chance to win an environmentally friendly prize. At the same time, the #DitchTheDisposables social media lead hashtag campaign was launched to attract student participation. The staff and student engagement activities will run year long.

The campaign is designed to rely heavily on internal communication channels which will help us to monitor engagement and participation.

To extend the success of this program, we actively collaborated with external partners, including local councils, to leverage their waste education experience and partnered with Clean Up Australia to host clean up events and support the organisation as a Circular Economy Corporate Changemaker (Advocacy Partner).

The initiative's focus is also kept on the broader waste management strategies which will lead to reducing our carbon emissions. It will reflect our new way of thinking about waste and the use of resources. Under this

program, we are introducing new infrastructure such as water fountains to reduce plastic bottles, compostable takeaway coffee cups and containers, multiuse glassware for dining-in areas. We are also providing waste recycling services to all campuses. Results are promising and a recent waste audit confirmed that the activity has substantially diverted landfill waste. It is early days, but we have taken a big first step in our sustainability journey.

## FIND OUT MORE



## Environmental & Social Benefits

The primary focus of the program is to benefit the environment by educating our regional communities. As the program is rolled out across our multiple campuses, we are realising many operational benefits. The waste recycling across all our campuses is now streamlined, saving time and resources. The campaign has started to reduce our landfill waste, as a university, we have diverted more than 200 tonnes to recycling just last year. Many CQUniversity entities have modified their purchasing habits and are now using plastic-free products in their core business.

The program has been creating awareness among the student cohort about the environmental impacts of plastic usage and as a result, the University's Student Representative Council is now using multi-use or compostable promotional products and running stationery and clothing donation drive.

CQUniversity's metro campuses are home to many international students from different countries. We created waste awareness posters with Australian slang to bridge the communication and cultural differences.

As the most engaged regional university, we are working with our local councils to create long term plans based on the circular economy. We are hosting workshops at primary and secondary schools to teach upcycling plastic products, home composting methods and showcasing adverse effects of single-use plastics on the environment.

## Leadership & Engagement

At CQUniversity, we are proud to be Australia's most engaged university and to support the development of regional sustainability through our partnerships with the local communities the University serves. CQUniversity operates more than 18 campuses across the nation in all mainland states.

The collaborative approach to sustainability with an aim to find solutions is creating interest in these sustainability initiatives. The innovative approach to bring the economy of scales in regional campuses will provide us industry support and solutions.



## Wider Societal Impact

The **Ditch the Disposables** campaign reflects CQUniversity's new way of thinking about waste and the use of resources by applying the basic principles of the circular economy: reduce | reuse | recycle.

The campaign is extending our commitment to regional social engagement. Under this banner, we are running school outreach workshops and have collaborated with local schools on waste education.

We are aligning with local regional councils to educate our communities about the circular economy principles and bring commercial capabilities to regional towns. We are planning to work with community-led enterprises such as the Boomerang Alliance to create plastic-free places. We will promote and help to create a plastic-free ecosystem in the areas we operate.

## Top 3 Learnings

Bringing change at the organisational level is very difficult but continuous perseverance and a good communications plan will make it happen

We sought inspiration from others and thought outside the square to implement a unique solution to fit the extended CQUniversity campus footprint

Focus on the big picture: it helps staff and students to get involved and solve complex issues at a local level