

# IMPACT REPORT 2020



Never has there been  
a more important time  
to share hope and action,  
and combine them for  
our Mother Earth.

MELISSA JOAN HART, ACTOR AND  
PLASTIC FREE JULY PARTICIPANT



Photo: Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils

# CHAIR’S MESSAGE



| BOARD MEMBERS       |                    |
|---------------------|--------------------|
| Gunther Hoppe       | Director, Chair    |
| Rebecca Prince-Ruiz | Executive Director |
| Ben Martin          | Director           |
| Andrea LeGuier      | Director           |
| AMBASSADOR          |                    |
| Jack Johnson        | Musician           |

**As the Plastic Free Foundation rounds out its first decade, we have the opportunity to pause and reflect on our achievements to date, and plan for the future.**

2020 has been challenging on many fronts, particularly due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It’s had an impact on all facets of our lives, including the use of single-use plastic.

Even with this backdrop, we’ve yet again been amazed by the uptake in Plastic Free July®, with an estimated 326 million participants worldwide in 2020. This support from the global community and the extensive media coverage we’ve received this year shows that this issue continues to escalate everywhere. Even when enormous challenges are thrown in our path, people want to take steps to be part of the solution to the growing plastic waste problem.

The Plastic Free Foundation has weathered the crisis well and the small team continues with their good work.

As we look to the future, we’re excited by the positive change made by the many millions of people who take the challenge. Through small, incremental behavioural changes, their impact is felt around the world.

Increasingly we saw numerous  
businesses, industry  
associations and not for profits  
leveraging the Plastic Free July  
momentum to take action  
on plastic waste.

This included announcing significant initiatives to reduce waste across supply chains, collaborating for change through global panel discussions and webinars and hosting local efforts.

It is pleasing to see collaborations continuing to grow and July becoming an established month on the calendar for action on plastic waste.

Gunther Hoppe  
CHAIR



# FOUNDER'S MESSAGE



## 2020 IN ACTION



**In 2011 when I first tried to avoid single-use plastic for a month, I never imagined how Plastic Free July® would grow.**

As we celebrate our 10-year anniversary, the challenge has become one of the world's biggest environmental movements. It's amazing to reflect on the rapid worldwide uptake of the challenge, with people making positive changes in their own lives and in their communities, schools, and workplaces. It inspires real impact, and continues to influence businesses and governments to make systemic changes.

To mark the 10th Plastic Free July challenge, I was delighted to write the book 'Plastic Free: The Inspiring Story of a Global Environmental Movement and Why It Matters', with writer and journalist Joanna Atherfold Finn. The book shares the story of a decade of people making small changes that add up to a collective impact.

Due to COVID-19, our plans for celebrating this major milestone were restricted. Avoiding single-use plastic was also more of a challenge than ever. Still, there has been much to celebrate during Plastic Free July 2020. More people joined in, discovering the joy in reducing plastic at home, making things from scratch, gardening, using what they have, and only shopping when needed.

**Not just an inspiring story and a practical resource, this is evidence that grassroots actions by ordinary individuals and communities can make a material difference to the most wicked of environmental and social problems. Hats off.**

TIM WINTON, AUTHOR

I have no doubt the next 10 years will continue to grow and become even more relevant with Plastic Free July being a critical pathway for change, making a difference in working towards a world without plastic waste. A heartfelt thanks to our participants, staff, volunteers, pro bono advisors and partners who work tirelessly to make this campaign happen.

Alone we are a drop, but together an ocean!

Rebecca Prince-Ruiz  
FOUNDER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**This year saw unique challenges for Plastic Free July®, as the global pandemic made its impact. However, participants, businesses and communities rose to the task.**

### NEW CHALLENGES

In 2018, Collins Dictionary declared 'single-use' as the word of the year. It seems obvious what the word for 2020 will be. COVID-19 has affected our daily lives in unprecedented ways, causing worldwide disruption.

The response to COVID-19 saw a rise in single-use plastic. Cafes and restaurants offered "hands-free" takeaways in disposable packaging, and the demand for single-use personal protection equipment (PPE) in the health system grew. Against this backdrop, and with so many people experiencing hardship, it seemed 2020 might not be the right time for the challenge.

### INCREASED UPTAKE AND INTEREST

Despite these concerns, we experienced an increase in interest. Participants, organisations and the media wanted to know how to continue reducing plastic waste despite restrictions.

Many people dealt positively with the uncertainty of the pandemic by focussing on activities that gave them back some control. Some of these changes had a positive flow-

**We can do two things at once – take care of our health and reduce our impact on the environment. There is simply no excuse.**

PROFESSOR MARY-LOUISE MCLAWS, EPIDEMIOLOGIST AND MEMBER OF THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION EXPERT ADVISORY PANEL ON COVID-19

on effect for reducing single-use plastic, even if that wasn't the original intention. People shopped less and were more resourceful. Getting back to basics reduced the layers of plastic that many convenience purchases are renowned for.

### BEYOND THE TOP FOUR

The pandemic also provided an opportunity to share ideas on making swaps beyond the top four (plastic bottles, plastic bags, plastic beverage containers and straws). Moving to online events enabled us to reach a wider audience, and to draw on the expertise of presenters across the country and globe.

The Plastic Free Foundation also developed tailored partnership and membership programs. This helped us work with partners to reduce plastic waste (see pages 12–13).



Plastic free cooking webinar with Jude Blereau



Photo: Mural artist Patrick Hunter (Inkhunter)



Photo: PFJ participants Astrid and Jack's Sydney Harbour dive clean-up



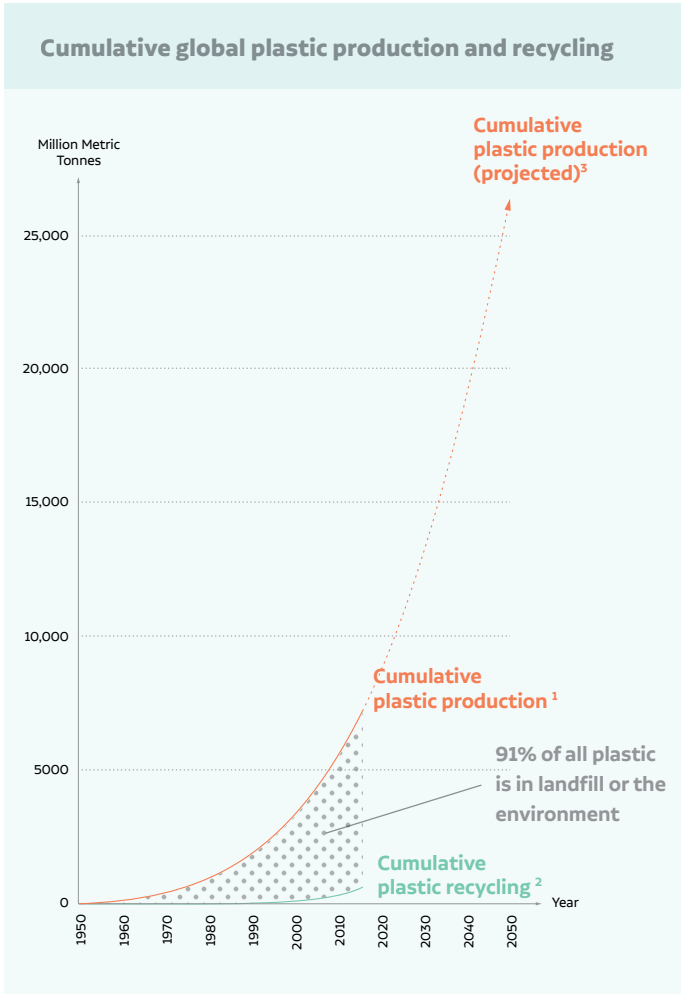
Photo: New York Times 'Another Reason to Cut Down on Plastics'

# THE PLASTIC FREE JULY® DIFFERENCE

**Plastic production is set to almost quadruple by 2050 – we can't recycle our way out of this problem.**

**To create a world without plastic waste we need to turn off the tap, not mop the floor.**

REBECCA PRINCE-RUIZ,  
PLASTIC FREE JULY FOUNDER



1 Data based on PlasticsEurope  
2 Data based on Geyer et al 2017  
3 World Economic Forum, 2016, The New Plastics Economy, Rethinking the future of plastics

**Over the last 10 years awareness of the plastic waste problem has grown rapidly. Plastic pollution is now a mainstream issue.**

We've become aware of the limitations of waste management systems and recycling challenges, with only 9% of all plastic ever produced having been recycled. That means a staggering 91% of all plastic is now in landfill or the environment.

**Instead of focusing on the problem, Plastic Free July invites people to be part of the solution.**

The result? A global movement with an estimated 326 million participants worldwide choosing to refuse single-use plastic waste in July and beyond. And it's no accident that the campaign is having a significant impact.

**Join millions of people reducing their plastic waste**



**Behaviour change leads to the spread of ideas, which shift our social norms and change our community expectations of business and of government – behaviour change is the seed of cultural and system change.**

COLIN ASHTON-GRAHAM, BEHAVIOURAL ECONOMIST

As participants make positive changes and realise the benefits of reducing plastic waste, many take the challenge into their communities.

Participating businesses leverage the challenge to review single-use plastics used in their operations, seek more sustainable alternatives, put pressure on suppliers and create demand for plastic-free alternatives.

**Plastic Free July works by**

1. **Empowering and supporting individuals** to make personal changes, which often expands into communities and workplaces.
2. **Sharing positive stories** of solutions and impact to engage a wide audience and influence change. People do what they see others do.
3. **Driving systemic change** through a groundswell of community action. Being part of a change for the better is rewarding and contagious for consumers and businesses.

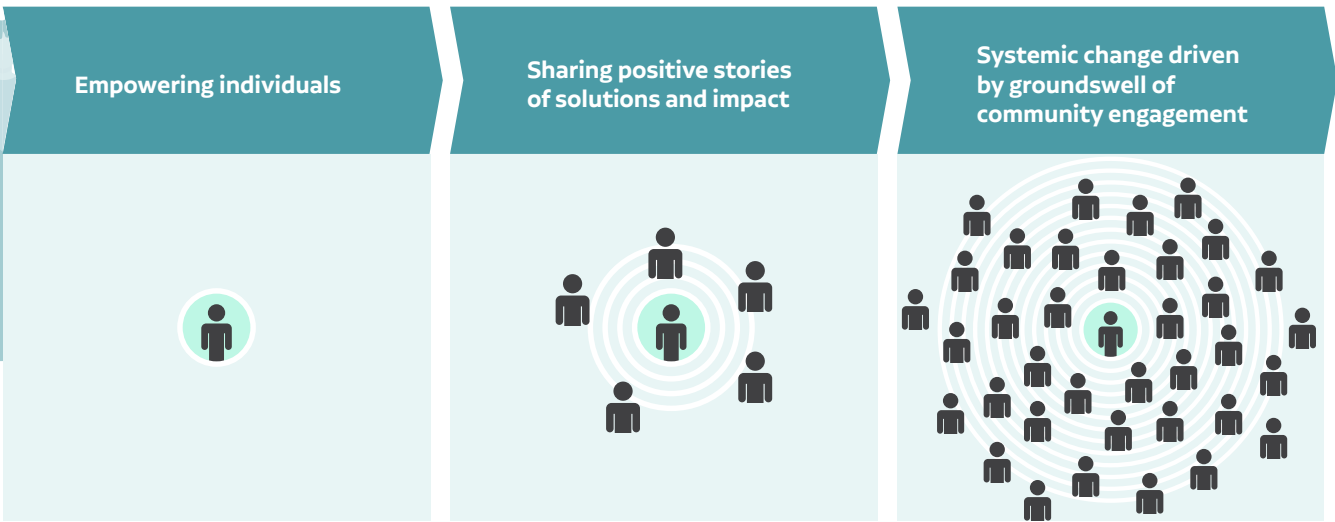
Small changes add up. In 2020, amidst a global pandemic, participants avoided using 904 million kg of plastic waste.

Across the world, as jurisdictions develop waste reduction targets and plans to tackle this crisis, it's clear there is no single solution. Changes in packaging, bans, clean-ups, improved waste management and better recycling infrastructure are all important, however, moving to a circular economy requires us to address our wastefulness and rethink our use of resource.

To create a world without plastic waste we need to change our culture and address the problem by turning off the tap, not simply mopping the floor.

Plastic Free July is just 10 years young, and already the impact is far reaching. Plastic Free July has changed the way global communities and businesses view the problem

**We invite you to be a part of the solution with us.**





# OUR IMPACT IN 2020

**Even though 66% of participants found it harder to make changes due to COVID-19, participants still managed to reduce waste and recycling by a staggering 21kg per person per year.**

## The Plastic Free Foundation is working towards a world without plastic waste.

A key part of our success is our commitment to measuring impact and conducting research to track the trends in the common plastics that households use. An Evaluation Framework informs our programs, which helps us achieve long-term behaviour change and waste reduction at scale. This independently devised methodology allows the Plastic Free Foundation to measure success and enables us to implement continuous improvement of campaigns and services.

This impact statement presents the results of the 2020 Plastic Free July campaign, drawing upon a global general population survey, Australian general population survey, benchmarking surveys from previous years and a pre and post survey with a sample of Plastic Free July participants from around the globe.

The reach and impact of Plastic Free July continues to significantly reduce waste, despite the challenges of the global pandemic. In 2020 an estimated 326 million participants adopted new waste avoidance behaviours, saving hundreds of millions of kilograms of waste and resources.

## We asked participants 'What was the biggest change that you made this year?'

- » switching to bar soap and shampoo
- » making my own nut milk
- » learnt to make bread
- » growing my own food
- » organised a zero waste festival
- » switching to reusable nappies
- » became the recycling coordinator at work
- » going back to Tupperware instead of freezer bags
- » speaking out to retailers offering plastic bags and packaged products
- » using a reusable face mask

For organisations, businesses, industry groups and not for profits, July was a month to take action to reduce plastic waste. Our online presentations ranged from NASA employees at the Johnson Space Center in Houston to panel discussions with LOOP in New York, the Australian Packaging Covenant Organisation and communities in the UAE. Organisations as diverse as the Ministry of Tourism in ST. Kitts and Nevis, the US postal service, HP, Pernod Ricard, Tommy Hilfiger and Akzo Nobel took part.

No matter the size or influence, what is evident is that reducing plastic waste is on the agenda across the world.



Plastic Free July Panel Discussion – Ministry of Tourism and the St. Kitts Sustainable Destination Council in the Caribbean

# 326 Million participants

adopted 228 million 'choose to refuse' behaviour changes



# 8.5 out of 10

participants made changes that have become habits and a way of life with many sharing stories with others

# 15% more likely to reduce waste

Plastic Free July participants are ahead of the global trend, being more likely to adopt plastic waste avoidance behaviours



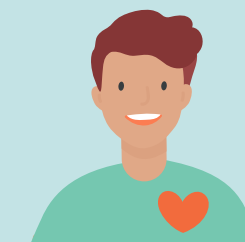
**Yusuf / Cat Stevens is one of many people of influence around the world who actively promoted Plastic Free July**

# ↓ 21kg each

The participants reduced their waste and recycling by 21kg per person per year (almost 5%)

# 900 Million kg of plastic waste avoided

including millions of single-use drink bottles, coffee cups, packaging, straws and plastic bags



# Well-being

They have a positive sense of well-being and maintain it better during COVID-19 than non-participants

# 7.2 billion global reach

Even in turbulent times, news outlets chose to report on Plastic Free July generating 1.7k pieces of media coverage with potential global reach of 7.2 billion people



# 92% support action to reduce plastic waste

by consumers, producers, retailers and government (an increase of 12% from 2019)



# PLASTIC FREE JULY® AROUND THE GLOBE



## Laos

### MEKONG ELEPHANT PARK

Laos faces many plastic pollution problems, including a lack of recycling centres. Mekong Elephant Park tackled this issue by making changes within their park.

“One of the first things [we did] was forbid plastic bags,” said Park Manager Wendy. “The cook was always coming back from the market with fresh produce in plastic bags. We just had to find an alternative bag! This was easy thanks to our weaver.”

Other changes Mekong Elephant Park implemented included making products themselves, such as bamboo bowls and spoons, growing their own crops, and setting up a water refill station for staff and customers to use.

**Plastic Free July fits perfectly with the sustainability philosophy at Mekong Elephant Park.**

MEKONG ELEPHANT PARK



**It's good to know we're leaving things a little cleaner for the next generation.**

RESIDENT OF THE BUPA ACCADIA MANOR CARE HOME

## New Zealand

### A COUNTRY'S EFFORT

Despite the challenges facing businesses during lockdown, organisations across Aotearoa New Zealand increased initiatives to reduce plastic waste. Some great examples include:

- New World supermarkets introduced recycled paper bags for bulk food sections.
- Countdown supermarkets encouraged customers to BYO containers to their in-store meat, deli and seafood counters.
- Bupa Accadia Manor Care Home replaced individual packets of spreads, such as jam, with large jars. They then served the spreads in small washable sauce bowls.
- Z Energy service stations offered customers using reusable cups a free coffee.
- Anderson Lloyd law firm introduced comprehensive recycling in their offices, ethical procurement practices, and gave reusable cups and water bottles to staff.
- A Waste Free Fair inspired the community of Wanaka



## USA

### Ryan Lo

Ryan Lo is an incredible sixth grader from California whose podcast “A Change is a Chance” aims to help young listeners understand major issues we face today and how to help. This year, it included an episode on Plastic Free July.

It was Ryan's third year of doing the challenge. He's taken steps to reduce plastic waste that include refusing plastic straws, switching to reusables and using beeswax wraps for snacks instead of plastic sandwich bags.



**I just want people to know that change in our behavior is easier than you think. Start small.**

RYAN LO



## United Kingdom

### PRIOR'S COURT

Prior's Court, a charity in Thatcham, England, held a plastic-free picnic. Their young people (who all are affected by severe autism) and staff enjoyed a beautiful day in the sunshine, bringing together healthy snacks that generated the least waste possible. There was even a prize awarded for the snack that best fit these criteria.

Some creative (and winning) solutions included fruit bowls that used scooped-out oranges as bowls, and edible cutlery and plates made from flour, water, herbs, salt and pepper.

“There were some fantastic ideas – it was great to see what can be done without any plastic waste!” they shared.



## Australia

### CREATING A CLEANER WESTERN AUSTRALIA

In the Plastic Free Foundation's home state, there's been a wave of change to reduce plastic waste including:

- The City of Karratha in the Pilbara installed water refill stations, with one helping avoid 77,062 single-use plastic bottles.
- Owners of the Surf Point Resort in Margaret River eliminated all non-recyclable single-use plastic products, including switching to locally-made soap bars for their guests to enjoy.
- The Anglican Church in the Diocese of Perth created a July calendar with daily hints and tips to reduce plastic use.
- The Jackson family from Victoria Park took the challenge for the first time this year. Starting small, they focused on reusable bags and affordable switches. “Our family does what it can and we try our best to spread the word. The inconvenience, for us, is definitely worth it.” said mum Chelsea.

**Our family does what it can and we try our best to spread the word.**

CHELSEA, PFJ PARTICIPANT





# MEMBERSHIPS

## An innovative program to enable businesses and local governments to reduce plastic waste.

Many businesses and local councils have participated in Plastic Free July over the years. In 2020, the Foundation launched a new Challenge Membership program, designed to guide, support and help grow the impact of members.

Through the program, businesses and councils invested in becoming sustainability leaders and influencers. Oftentimes this was in response to staff, customers and community members elevating the issue to them. Many also leveraged the challenge to work towards achieving sustainability goals.

The response from members in this first year was incredibly positive. Plastic reduction initiatives were launched in workplaces, and communities were engaged and inspired. COVID-19 meant new resources were required, and these were quickly created to help businesses support staff avoiding single-use plastic while working from home.

Through exclusive webinars and resources, members expressed the huge benefit of gaining additional insights into behaviour change practices. Many said it helped to propel their campaign activities and how they approach engagement for the future.

**Whilst it was a little more difficult this year not being physically present in the office, what the Plastic Free July Business membership did do is [push] us to proactively implement a mindset change. We updated our Global Environmental Policy and are on a path to eliminate single use plastics across Asia Pacific by the end of 2020.**

JEAN-BAPTISTE AUBRUN, MARKETING MANAGER – SAP, 2020 BUSINESS MEMBER

The collective impact on waste reduction that can be achieved when large groups make change is incredibly important, and our shared vision is to lead the way.

Organisations wishing to find out more or register their interest for 2021 can do so via [plasticfreejuly.org/memberships](https://plasticfreejuly.org/memberships).



## Council Member

### WSROC

Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (WSROC) joined as a Council Challenge Member in 2020. Their goal was to encourage residents to make small changes and put new habits in place.

Six of its member councils, representing a diverse, multicultural population of over 2 million people, participated in Plastic Free July. Each Council tailored activities and programs, resulting in an array of ways to get involved. Cumberland City Council undertook a Bags from Banners project, transforming old Council event banners into beautiful bags with the help of Women's Creative Hub. City of Parramatta ran a video competition for kids to raise awareness on the use of soft plastics. Hawkesbury Council ran online workshops to demonstrate alternatives to common products.

WSROC Waste Education staff commented that the challenge allowed for a collective regional response to reducing single-use plastics and was well received by residents.

Plastic Free July is a non profit partner of the 1% for the Planet membership program



## Business Member

### KPMG AUSTRALIA

KPMG has been on a waste reduction journey for years and are committed to a zero waste target under their Climate Action Plan. Proactive staff members have helped pave the way for an organisational stance against plastic waste.

Becoming a Business Member of Plastic Free July, KPMG were able to better engage staff, and learn about the principles that underlie Plastic Free July's success. KPMG also launched new communications to support their workforce in adopting low carbon practices while working from home.



## 1% for the Planet

### ARNHEM

Having ditched plastic packaging back in 2017, Australian sustainable fashion label Arnhem celebrated Plastic Free July 2020 by releasing a new range of products. This included reusable house and face wipes made from leftover fabric remnants.

Using compostable post satchels and garment bags, Arnhem avoided the use of 10,707 plastic bags in July alone. The team also committed to personal challenges during the month, ranging from making their own almond milk to shopping at farmer's markets to avoid waste.





# PLASTIC FREE JULY® IN THE MEDIA

During July, at the height of the pandemic when media coverage was firmly focussed on the global crisis, Plastic Free July shone positive news across media networks reaching record coverage and global readership.



The Plastic Free July challenge is here to help you rid your life of single-use plastic waste

1,700 pieces of media coverage globally

7.2B global potential media reach

1,600 digital mentions (81.6B global potential reach)



## OUR PARTNERS

Thanks to the financial backing from Lotterywest and the Waste Authority in WA, our activities, based in Western Australia, continue to make a significant impact both locally and globally. We are incredibly grateful for this support.

Additionally, through the contributions of our partners and individual donors around the world, along with businesses and councils who have participated as Challenge Members, Plastic Free July Foundation is able to support millions of people making simple steps to reduce plastic.

Thank you for making this all possible.

### PRINCIPAL PARTNERS



### CATEGORY PARTNERS



### 1 % FOR THE PLANET

### 2020 BUSINESS AND COUNCIL MEMBERS





**Want to join Plastic Free July®  
and help empower millions across  
the globe to reduce single-use plastic?  
Partnering for impact starts here  
[plasticfreejuly.org/partnerships](https://plasticfreejuly.org/partnerships)**



**Winner 2020 Mumbrella Awards,  
Pro Bono Campaign of the Year**



**Finalist 2020 Mumbrella Awards,  
Best Government Sponsored Campaign**



**Finalist 2019 Banksia Sustainability  
Awards, Minister's Award for  
the Environment**



**Finalist 2019 Banksia Sustainability  
Awards, NFP & NGO Award**



**Winner 2018 Infinity Award,  
Avoid Recover Protect –  
Community Waste Award**



**Winner 2018 Environmental Action  
Award, United Nations Association  
of Australia WA Division**



PO Box 168  
South Fremantle WA 6162  
Australia

**M** (+61) 457 456 081  
**E** [info@plasticfreejuly.org](mailto:info@plasticfreejuly.org)  
**W** [plasticfreejuly.org](https://plasticfreejuly.org)

We wish to acknowledge the custodians of this land, the Whadjuk (Perth region) people of the Nyoongar nation, we pay respects to their Elders past, present and emerging. The Plastic Free Foundation acknowledges and respects their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region.