

# IMPACT REPORT 2023





# CHAIR'S MESSAGE



BOARD OF DIRECTORS	
Geoff Donohue	Chair
Rebecca Prince-Ruiz	Founder, Executive Director
Dan Dragovic	Director
Leesa Muirhead	Director
AMBASSADORS & PATRONS	
Jack Johnson	Musician
Her Excellency Mrs Linda Hurley	Patron, Plastic Free Schools challenge

Making a small change together will make a huge difference in our communities. And it starts with us.

ESCUELA TÉCNICA DE LA UNIVERSIDAD DE MENDOZA, ARGENTINA

As a father and grandfather, I have cherished every moment of watching my family grow, celebrating their triumphs and guiding through challenges. These experiences have not only shaped great meaning in my life, but also my deeply informed commitment to the efforts of the Plastic Free Foundation.

This report presents the global reach of Plastic Free July® in 2023, with participants from over 190 countries engaging with small changes to reduce single-use plastics. We share our impact quantified in terms of plastic waste avoided, changes in consumer behaviour, to numbers of participants involved. These metrics also represent something much greater - they signify our children and future generations inheriting a greener, healthier planet.

This year, we've seen remarkable achievements against the odds of mounting plastic pollution, which is projected to triple by 2040 if we do not intervene. We are all encouraged to participate in small changes, from schools in Argentina, to corporate offices in Europe. I am

grateful for all of our participants in a united call for Government intervention, and thank the invaluable contributions of every one of our partners, donors, and supporters.

It is our shared commitment to action that creates positive impact year after year. Thank you to everyone involved in the Plastic Free Foundation's year round initiatives: to each and every school, community group, workplace, council, and individual for sharing in meaningful responsibility over today's choices on tomorrow's planet.

I encourage you to join me and the Plastic Free Foundation in making small changes, so that we can all make a big difference for a cleaner future for generations to come.

Geoff Donohue  
CHAIR

# FOUNDER'S MESSAGE

Your dedication and efforts in protecting the environment are truly commendable. Thank you for making a significant impact and inspiring others to join the cause.

HON. MICHAELLE C. SOLAGES, ASSEMBLYMEMBER NY STATE, USA



# OUR PARTNERS

We are excited to partner with Plastic Free Foundation for the first time, a global movement for positive change, aligning our values and commitment to making a positive impact on the planet.

ASHLEY DAVIES, SUSTAINABILITY ADVISOR, ENDEAVOUR GROUP



As I reflect on our journey and theme for 2023, “small steps, big difference”, I am reminded of the profound impact our small steps have for our global futures. This message is deeply personal for me, now writing in my twelfth year since founding Plastic Free July, as I remember the inspiration I’ve found from our participants who, each in their unique places, cultures, and ways, are contributing to a cleaner, plastic free environment.

Making change and sharing stories from our diverse communities - schools, workplaces, cafes, councils - has grown this approach into a global invitation. We’ve shown that change doesn’t have to be overwhelming: it’s about making better choices in our own lives, no matter how small, and inspiring others to do the same. I feel privileged to meet some of these participants around the world, read so many of their stories, and share them with you here - I often find the greatest challenge is how to select a few stories from literally thousands!

This inspiration continues to create measurable behaviour change. This year our annual evaluation highlights how strong the dedication of our participants continues to be - we have proudly seen a 4.1% reduction in their total household waste generated.

Small steps add up: we have seen their big difference across the last five years, with global participation in Plastic Free July avoiding 10 billion kilograms of household waste and recycling - more than our world’s biggest cleanups efforts, combined.

We present this report to chronicle our year and the endeavours of those involved in innovation, awareness-raising and alternatives, leadership and policy, research and measurement, diversity and inclusivity, sustainability and health, and, above all, a continuous commitment to change. This impact has been made possible through the incredible partnerships and collaborations in our global network of NGOs and changemakers.

I extend a heartfelt invitation to you to join us on this journey. Our flagship Plastic Free July campaign continues to inspire global citizens to reduce plastic waste. It has been a privilege to guide the Plastic Free Foundation’s growth into a global social movement, as we work throughout the year to drive incredible change. Let’s continue making a difference and inspiring others to do the same. Our actions are creating a groundswell of community change, so that we can call on our leaders and policy-makers to also act, and make an impact.

Rebecca Prince-Ruiz  
FOUNDER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

We partner with leading organisations that are committed to achieving and scaling positive environmental impact and behaviour change, and collectively contribute to a world without plastic waste.

## MINDEROO FOUNDATION ALLIANCE

Our Principal Partner, Minderoo Foundation, has been instrumental in the growth of our message’s reach and impact. Together, we are committed to community wellbeing and the health of our planet through amplifying the global conversation on the environmental and health implications of plastic waste.

## ENDEAVOUR GROUP COLLABORATION

We are delighted to welcome Endeavour Group as an Impact Partner. Their commitment resonates with our mission to foster sustainable practices across communities and businesses.

Beginning with an engaging ‘lunch and learn’ event, we sparked conversations on reducing plastic waste and exploring sustainable alternatives. Our Employee Engagement toolkit created for 30,000 team members, sparking widespread participation and awareness to reduce plastic waste year round. Steve Donohue, CEO, led by example, rejecting single-use coffee cups and advocating for similar commitments across the corporate landscape. This initiative

extended to providing reusable cups at Dan Murphy’s stores and removing disposable options at their headquarters’ coffee cart.

## PROGRAM PARTNERSHIPS

Our Program Partners are the cornerstones of our community initiatives. Collaborations with WWF-Australia have bolstered capacity, and NSW EPA has catalysed behaviour change, our partnership with CSIRO is raising awareness and providing communities across the Philippines with support and behaviour change tools. The Pledge Campaign, with the support of KeepCup, has seen leaders and influencers worldwide commit to forgoing single-use cups.

## COMMUNITY AND DONOR SUPPORT

The dedication of small businesses is felt from their contributions during, and beyond, the Plastic Free July challenge. These partnerships foster positive brand recognition whilst driving tangible change in our communities.

After all, reducing plastic waste is a challenge that demands year-round attention. The generosity of our partners and supporters is essential in maintaining annual momentum, ensuring that we can continue to share solutions, support communities, and extend our impact. We invite you to join us on this journey - together, we can make a big difference.



# OUR IMPACT

Every year I witness the growing global impact of Plastic Free July. What this organisation does is not only unique, it is also effective. PFJ focuses on the critical reduction, refusal and substitution opportunities, empowering people to create change in their lives and their communities.

DR DENISE HARDESTY, SENIOR PRINCIPAL RESEARCH SCIENTIST, CSIRO

### LONG-TERM ACHIEVEMENT

The annual Plastic Free July campaign has been a catalyst for change since 2011, combining reach with action to create a measurable difference to our plastic pollution crisis. Our long-term impact is validated through rigorous research, including behaviour change surveys among participants and global trends analysis. These surveys, commissioned with Ipsos in 2018 and 2021, alongside our annual measurements offer a data-driven insight into our growing impact:

### BIG PICTURE IMPACT

Over the last 5 years, participants have collectively avoided 10 billion kgs of waste, including 1.4 billion kgs of plastic.

The campaign has inspired 223 million behaviour changes, setting a benchmark for behaviour change projects.

An average reduction of 18 kg in waste and recycling per person per year has been achieved, meaning an incredible 4.1% decrease in waste generation.

### 2023 HIGHLIGHTS

- An estimated 89 million individuals participated globally.
- Engagement reached over 190 countries.
- Workplaces (14,224), communities and schools (7,248), and cafes and retail stores (5,835) actively participated.
- 87% of participants made at least one lasting change.
- In 2023, participants reduced their households':
  - Non-recoverable waste by 900 million kg.
  - Recyclable waste by 700 million kg.
  - Plastic consumption by 240 million kg.
- Participants were 25% more likely to adopt plastic-reducing practices than the global average.
- Strong public support for plastic reduction policies was evident, with 85% backing such initiatives.
- The top 6 countries in participation were China, India, USA, South Korea, Italy, and Brazil.
- The website saw over half a million unique visits.
- We celebrated a social media following of 250,000 followers on Facebook and Instagram.

Over the last 5 years participants have avoided 10 billion kilograms of waste.

Imagine the number of times

100s of millions Plastic Free July participants over the last 5 years

have avoided

18kg of household waste and recycling each year

together avoiding

1.4 billion kg of plastic



29% of global consumers

were aware of Plastic Free July.

87% of participants

made at least one lasting change.



Well-being

Participants have strong social connections and a positive sense of well-being.

1,800 online pieces of media

in 2023 generated with potential reach of 4.1 billion people.

# EMPOWERING GLOBAL ACTION

In 2023, the month of July again marked a powerful groundswell of global actions in plastic reduction. Businesses, organisations, NGOs, and governments across continents embraced the Plastic Free July movement to amass a monumental 240 million kgs reduction in plastic consumption. This collective action reflects the growing public call for our leaders to take decisive action against plastic pollution. With WWF, Plastic Free Foundation commissioned the Ipsos' survey for the Rising Tides II report, capturing global voices to inform the UN global plastic treaty negotiations.

## North America

**USA (Senate Resolution)** Designating July as "Plastic Pollution Action Month".

**USA (LAX)** In July, one the busiest airports in the world banned single-use plastic water bottles, with a scope of 80 million passengers annually.

**Canada** Minister of Environment Nils Clarke's pledge and public engagement in the Yukon are driving down the usage of single-use plastics.

**Hawaii** Waikiki Outrigger Resorts created exhibits from plastics collected on Midway Atoll and introduced new water dispensers to reduce plastic use.

## Caribbean

**Antigua and Barbuda** The West Indies Sail Heritage Foundation's programs are raising awareness and providing hands-on solutions to plastic pollution.

## South America

**Paraguay** NGO Paraguay Sin Basura's clever advertising campaign to make the number of single-use plastic items visible and shared solutions.

**Argentina** In July, the first stage of the "Julio Sin Plástica" contest saw students across Escobar encouraged to reuse and collect an astounding 25 tons of single-use plastic.

## Africa and the Middle East

**Namibia** B2Gold's environmental education at their workplace and local schools fostered a community-wide shift towards alternatives.

**Egypt** QNET's collaboration with VeryNile cleaned up waterways in the River Nile, benefitting both the environment and community livelihoods.

**South Africa** Staff at LEO Africa embraced reusables.

## Antarctica

**NZ Scott Base Crew** Banned polystyrene beads and organised an annual plastic waste sorting and education day, extending environmental stewardship to the most remote parts of the globe.

## Europe and the United Kingdom

**Hungary** Bosch Magyarország's employees embraced reusable packaging, significantly cutting down single-use plastics in their facilities.

**Ireland** Killarney marked 31st July with a pioneering ban on single-use cups and its 'bring or buy' reusable cup program, eliminating the use of 23,000 cups each week.

**UK (Mars Petcare)** Developed a new reuse and refill system for pet food using smart technology, providing more options for reusable containers.

**UK (British Airways)** Eliminated 700 tons of single-use plastic annually by wrapping bedding in paper and removing plastic wrapping from in-flight items.

**UK (Wimbledon)** Switched to refillable bottles for players and introduced a reusable cup scheme for juices, reducing plastic waste during the tournament.

## Asia

**Singapore** HP's office-wide participation and sustainability initiatives have led to substantial plastic waste reductions through cleanups and recycling programs.

**China** The Australian Consulate-General in Shanghai, in collaboration with Alibaba Group, hosted a Plastic Free Morning Tea, promoting plastic waste reduction.

**India** The Indian Army's anti-plastic campaign in Ladakh reached out to the community, advocating for sustainable living practices.

**Pakistan** JS Bank, in partnership with WWF, minimised their plastic footprint by educating employees and introducing reusable alternatives.

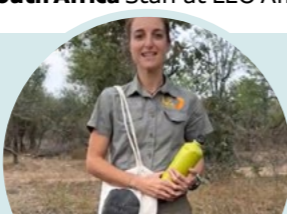
**Japan** Kikuchi City's Plastic Free July events have engaged residents in sustainable waste management practices.

## Australasia

**New Zealand** Announced on the 1st July, the NZ Government's single-use plastics ban is now set to remove 150 million plastic produce bags from circulation each year.

**Australia (South Metropolitan Health Service Hospitals)** Avoided 73,000 plastic bed pads in 9 months, a 17% drop, with the 'Think Before You Bluey' initiative.

**Australia** Installed in ACCONIA's office as part of Plastic Free July, the Udder Way milk refill system popular in cafes will eliminate 700 plastic milk bottles annually.



# 2023 CAMPAIGNS

When elected officials show leadership, it encourages people to do the same at home... a coffee cup is a symbolic way of starting that conversation.

JEROME LAXALE MP, MEMBER FOR BENNELONG

Our year-round program of Plastic Free campaigns spotlight an incredible diversity of scale in achievable actions. Highlighting this year's theme was a video compilation of participant-sourced ideas, showcasing how small changes contribute to significant environmental progress.

## SINGLE-USE CUP PLEDGE

Launched by Environment Minister Tanya Plibersek at the Australian Parliament House, this initiative saw over 30 legislators, including Members of Parliament and Senators, commit to rejecting single-use cups. Industry leaders like Ben Page of Ipsos and Steve Donohue of Endeavour Group, along with NY State Assembly member Michaelle Solages and Yukon's Environment Minister Nils Clarke, led by example, inspiring their networks to embrace this change. Our evaluations indicate a remarkable shift in public behaviour, supporting our greater impact.

## PLASTICS AND HUMAN HEALTH

In collaboration with Minderoo Foundation's Plastics and Human Health team, we've presented actionable ideas for reducing contact with harmful plastic constituents, drawing on Minderoo-Monaco Commission findings. By offering practical alternatives for everyday items, from shopping bags to children's toys, we empower individuals to make safer, plastic free choices.



## PLASTIC FREE MORNING TEA

Whether you love a morning tea or a late night dinner, hosting meals has proven to be a delightful and effective approach to engaging people in plastic free discussions. By centring these events around food, participants have found a universal connector that invites broader, and delicious, engagement.

## A snapshot of global events includes:

**UAE** A collective of over 50 artists gathered for a morning tea, integrating creativity with plastic free awareness.

**Water New Zealand** Tackled the challenge of enjoying food without plastic packaging, committing to a switch from plastic to glass milk bottles.

**NSW EPA** Celebrated the single-use plastics ban with a plastic free morning tea, reinforcing the message of sustainability.

**Deane Apparel** Engaged staff with quizzes and discussions on plastic reduction, fostering a culture of environmental consciousness.

**London** A plastic free picnic at Embankment Gardens became a nexus for change-makers to connect and share sustainable practices.

Each event, from corporate settings to casual picnics, plays a vital role in how we can connect with others to weave plastic free choices into the fabric of everyday life.

# LOCAL GOVERNMENT

We held an internal information stall to engage staff in PFJ pledges. Almost 100 pledges received and many conversations about little actions that can reduce their use of disposable plastics in the workplace.

CITY OF WANNEROO, WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Local governments around the world embraced the Plastic Free July campaign as a key initiative in their waste education and reduction strategies.

## MEMBERSHIP IMPACT

Our Local Government membership program, now in its fifth year, has proven to be an invaluable source of collaboration and support. Local Governments are responsible for essential services in waste management and our membership program is designed to support their strategies for sustainable solutions. In Australia alone, 66 local governments signed up to be Official Council Members of Plastic Free July. They received a suite of resources tailored to their communication needs, including educational materials and tools designed to resonate with and effectively engage their communities.

## OUTREACH AND PUBLIC INTERACTION

Councils play an integral role in educating diverse communities about sustainable alternatives to single-use plastic. Plastic Free July tailors every package of digital assets and resources for Members, across multiple languages, to ensure the campaign's inclusivity and reach. These assets, including social media tiles and posters, have been utilised by hundreds of authorities to effectively communicate with their residents and local businesses, as well as to highlight best practices in avoidance and reduction of waste.

We ran two workshops, Plastic Free July Storytimes at our libraries and an interactive display.

CITY OF MAROONDAH, VICTORIA

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Interactive workshops have been a true highlight of this year's activities. Cuyahoga County in Ohio, USA, offered free workshops at local farmers' markets, demonstrating how to repurpose old T-shirts into reusable bags. As always, competitions are a popular way to excite and engage residents with behaviour change.

## LEADING BY EXAMPLE

Members exemplify leadership by initiating internal plastic reduction measures within local governments. Councils reported enthusiastic staff participation in plastic free events, with many pledging to adopt reusable alternatives. These internal initiatives not only cultivate a culture of sustainability, but also help to engage with broader communities.

## ENGAGING THE NEXT GENERATION

Members are also supported in partnering with their local schools, through educational workshops and activities such as providing reusable water bottles. These activations have shown brilliant participation by students, instilling the importance of waste avoidance among our future leaders.



# COLLECTIVE ACTION IN PRACTICE



We aim to continue in our quest and fly the plastic free flag in our small community too. Our neighbours are already sharing their home-grown veg offerings in paper bags rather than plastic carriers!

CLARE SHIEL, NEWTON HAVEN B&B



## Community Champions

Dia Mirza Rekhi, an Indian actor, has used her platforms to challenge over 5.5 million followers to switch to reusable cups. "It takes 21 days to form a habit. Would you try carrying your own mug for 21 days? Imagine the number of single use plastics cups/ mugs you would stop from entering the natural world by doing this!"

New Zealand's Wanaka Wastebusters has galvanised local action, making and distributing reusable produce bags to foster plastic free choices at supermarkets.

In Myanmar, Prevent Plastics has catalysed community engagement through the "Plastic Free July Debate Tournament," sparking dialogue and showcasing local changemakers' solutions to plastic pollution.

**We can't wait to see the teams participation in this challenge and their motivation to build plastic free lunch habits.**

NADIA MARTINS, SENIOR DIRECTOR, MARRIOTT INTERNATIONAL



## Plastic Free Hospitality

In Thailand, Six Senses Yao Noi Resort is redefining luxury with sustainability, eliminating nearly 30,000 plastic items through thoughtful initiatives like refillable ceramic dispensers and glass water bottles.

The Maldives' Raffles Hotel has intertwined conservation with guest experiences, leading reef cleaning efforts that also educate on the impact of plastic pollution.

KPA Lawyers joined the growing number of Melbourne offices and cafes switching to the "Returnr" long-lasting reusable packaging scheme for takeaways.

Newton Haven B&B in the UK embraced a plastic free approach by committing to giving guests milk in reusable glass bottles and toiletries in refillable dispensers, inspiring other local businesses to take part.

The Marriott in Hong Kong introduced a "Deplastify Your Lunch!" challenge, encouraging employees to adopt sustainable lunch habits that carry on outside the corporate lunchroom.

## Plastic Free Philippines

Manila's "Kuha sa Tingi" initiative, a collaboration between Greenpeace Philippines and Impact Hub, has helped to provide 'sari sari' stores with refilling stations for common household-cleaning and personal-care products, to offer a sustainable community alternative to single-use sachets.

El Nido Resorts in Palawan has made a vital commitment to refuse single-use plastic, leading to significant operational changes and setting a precedent for the tourism industry's role in a protected key biodiversity area.



## Youth Engagement

A school workshop in Nepal saw Simran Thapa, a year 9 student, and her family adopt bamboo toothbrushes, use cotton bags to shop for groceries and switch to reusable food containers and metal water bottles, showcasing the power of education in influencing family-wide waste reductions. "Once we started, we found so many more options where we could recycle or reduce our plastic waste. Plastic Free July was a real winner at my house, with huge support from our whole family".

Atomic Energy Central School in India engaged young minds with a take-home activity that turned cloth bags into canvases, encouraging parents of the year 3 and 4 students to embrace reusable options over plastic.





**Taking small steps toward plastic free living are all important when it comes to protecting our health, recognising human rights, and conserving our planet.**

PROFESSOR SARAH DUNLOP, HEAD, PLASTICS AND HUMAN HEALTH, MINDEROO FOUNDATION



**Finalist 2023 AIM WA Pinnacle Awards, Environmental Sustainability**



**Finalist 2022 United Nations Sustainability Developments Goals Award, Mobilize category**



**Winner 2022 Fremantle Business Awards, award for Sustainable Enterprise**



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



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



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



**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**



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We wish to acknowledge the custodians of the unceded lands where we live, work, and play, the Whadjuk (Perth region) people of the Nyoongar nation, we pay respects to their Elders past, present, and emerging. We recognise Traditional Owners' connection to land and waters. The Plastic Free Foundation also wishes to acknowledge and pay our respects to all First Peoples across the globe where Plastic Free July takes place, as the Traditional Owners and ongoing custodians of these lands.