



8 - 11 August 2022 • Melbourne Zoo
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HYBRID CONFERENCE & WORKSHOPS



SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION, REDUCING LANDFILL, AND INSPIRING THE BROTHER COMMUNITY TO REDUCE PLASTIC POLLUTION: A ZOOS ROLE IN DRIVING SDGS 12, 14 & 15

Presented by

¹Belinda Fairbrother and ¹Bridget Corcoran

¹Taronga Conservation Society, Australia

ABSTRACT

At Taronga we achieve positive environmental impacts towards the Sustainable Development Goals in two key ways. First, by improving our own sustainability performance, we aim to lead by example. Second, through our community conservation program where we encourage and empower our guests and global stakeholders to make meaningful behavioural changes. This amplifies our reach and impact significantly.

One of the key threatening processes that Zoos can play a critical leadership role is to tackle the impact of problematic plastic on our environment.

In this session we will briefly discuss the impact of problematic plastics, such as statistics on litter and how it affects wildlife, and the over-consumption of all plastic types versus the actual recycling rate. We will then cover the Australian context for plastic impact and pollution, including Government policy and community sentiment.

We will provide case studies of changes Taronga has made and plan to make within our own operations to reduce our plastic impact, such as;

- Eliminating an estimated 6.5 million single-use plastic items annually from our operations by introducing corn-starch based alternatives
- Introducing a Milk Juggler system at our café with an estimated 6000 milk bottles removed from our waste stream.
- Life cycle analysis of packaging types (e.g. beverage containers)
- Soft plastics collection and recycling trials.

For the benefit of other conference participants, we will discuss the challenges in removing avoidable plastic from our site operations, and in increasing the recycling rate of unavoidable plastics and compostable alternatives. This will include an overview of our most recent waste audit which showed a high degree of 'user error' despite providing guests with three waste streams and best practice bin signage.

We will also share learnings and outcomes from our Litter Free Oceans and Rivers community conservation program which aims to deliver long term, direct benefits to wildlife and habitats by driving community-level behaviour change through action and advocacy. Litter Free Oceans and Rivers aims to change consumer behaviour by facilitating the choice of re-useable everyday items, reducing the impact and reliance on single-use plastic, disposable items. An educational toolkit for businesses and schools has been developed to facilitate the reduction of single use plastics in the supply chain reaching over 1000 schools and 200 businesses.

We would conclude by briefly discussing 'what's next' in regard to the Australian policy context, for example the changes that some businesses will need to make in line with the NSW Government 'plastic ban'.

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BIOGRAPHY

Belinda is Manager of Guest Learning and Community Impact at Taronga Conservation Society Australia. She has worked on high profile projects and campaigns in the Not-for-Profit sector, with global impact with key milestones including developing the Women's Institutes Carbon Challenge, achieving new protected areas within NSW and leading Taronga's campaign on sustainable palm oil.

Bridget is Manager of Environmental Sustainability at Taronga Conservation Society Australia. She has worked in sustainability roles for 10 years, including strategy, education and environmental management. She specialises in project management spanning waste, energy, water and procurement.