

Australian Screen Production Industry COVID-Safe Sustainability Guidance 16 February 2021 Version 1

There is an increasing understanding of the connection between human health and the natural world, and the importance of minimising environmental impacts and reducing resource use in the workplace are widely recognised. Health and safety can still be maintained while implementing environmental measures.

This guidance has been created to enable screen productions to integrate sustainability into work practices without compromising the health and wellbeing of the cast and crew. It should be used in conjunction with the Australian Screen Production Industry [COVID-Safe Guidelines](#)¹ and current guidance provided by the state, territory and federal governments on management of COVID-19 risks in workplaces. It is not intended to replace or supersede the COVID-Safe Guidelines or government public health orders and directions.

As new procedures and work processes are developed to respond to the challenges posed by COVID-19, it is essential that we continue to improve on sustainability practices in the workplace to reduce the industry's impact on the environment. A study in the UK [has shown](#)² that an average day of filming equates to more than one person's annual carbon footprint. While much of this is related to energy and transport, measures should be taken to reduce and manage waste generated and improve efficiency and environmental performance wherever possible. Globally and locally, there is recognition that reusable systems can be used safely with appropriate hygiene processes in place.³

Comprehensive planning of a production can directly impact the success of a sustainability strategy. With this in mind:

- Details of the strategy should be communicated to all cast and crew.
- Assign a crew member to oversee the sustainability measures and address as many points as are relevant to you.
- All departments should be involved in managing inputs, use and outputs, and communicate to suppliers the expectations of the production.

Decisions based on this guidance should be made in accordance with applicable federal, state and territory-based law and protocols, and reviewed to adapt to any changes in public health law and advice. Many of these measures, including choosing compostable products over single-use plastic, responsible waste management, specialty recycling, digital systems and purchasing recycled items are actions that should be practiced at all times and not limited to a pandemic situation.

Please refer to the glossary at the end of this document for definitions of technical terms and processes.

This guidance includes references to, and information about, third-party organisations, products and services. These are included for convenience only and are not an endorsement of any organisations, products or services. No representation is made about the accuracy or any other aspect of any information supplied by third parties or contained in third party websites and you understand you are to exercise your own skill and care in their use.

General

- Provide a sustainability briefing to all crew to outline measures and encourage participation.
- Continue to conduct meetings digitally, use remote work processes and allow working from home where possible to reduce transport carbon emissions.

¹ Australian Screen Production Industry, 2020, 'COVID-Safe Guidelines.'
<https://www.screenaustralia.gov.au/getmedia/d8ec53c2-5a19-4651-a0da-65abf0577837/COVID-Safe-Guidelines.pdf>

² We Are Albert, 2020 'Screen New Deal'. https://wearealbert.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/200901_FinalDraft.pdf

³ See Health Expert Statement Addressing Safety of Reusables and COVID-19, 2020.
<https://storage.googleapis.com/planet4-international-stateless/2020/06/26618dd6-health-expert-statement-reusables-safety.pdf>

- Support local businesses and products manufactured close to production locations.

Water

Reusable systems can be used safely by employing basic hygiene⁴. Disposable does not mean safe or hygienic, with the potential for multiple points of contact in the supply chain. Strive to avoid single-use bottles, and ensure that water stations and surfaces are sanitised frequently.

- Reusable water bottles can be used safely when basic hygiene measures are followed.
- Water bottles must not come into contact with water dispenser nozzles. Display clear signage at water refill stations to communicate this.
- Consider contactless water refill stations if available.
- Frequently sanitise and clean drinking water taps and dispensers with food safe sanitiser.
- Using your own bottle can reduce external points of contact as disposable bottles may have multiple contacts in the supply chain.
- Unmarked plastic bottles can increase the chances of people touching others bottles in search of their own.
- If single-use water must be provided, seek to provide aluminium bottles or cans as these have a lower carbon footprint and are easier to recycle. Supplier examples include Enjoy Water, Wallaby or Custom Water.
- Purchase from a local water supplier to reduce carbon emissions from transport while also supporting small business.
- Remind crew, cast and extras to bring their own bottles every day.

Single-use

There is the perception that single-use items are more hygienic, however, disposable products present similar issues to reusables and may have had more points of contact in the supply chain. Reusable products can be cleaned according to strict food and safety standards and can provide greater traceability. Additionally, single-use plastic and other items may create environmental risks once discarded.

- Avoid single-use plastics, including disposable coffee cups which are not generally recyclable due to the plastic lining. Separate specialty recycling may be available in your area.
- If disposable cups are required, provide compostable cups made from FSC⁵ or PEFC⁶ certified paper or other natural renewable fibres. Examples of brands include Pak 360, BioPak or Castaway. Avoid lids where possible or preference lids made of bagasse or other natural material.
- Consider reusable cups for hot and cold drinks for larger productions, Examples of brands include Bettercup, Globelet, or Huskee and Green Caffeen for coffee runs.
- Avoid all single-use plastic. This includes PLA plastic as it can be problematic to compost.
- Do not purchase or provide polystyrene items when possible.

⁴ The Victorian Government makes various references to using reusable products, for example, reusable cups and cutlery: Victorian Government, 2021, 'Hospitality – food and beverage services sector guidance' <https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/hospitality-food-and-beverage-services-sector-guidance>;

See also Health Expert Statement Addressing Safety of Reusables and COVID-19, 2020. <https://storage.googleapis.com/planet4-international-stateless/2020/06/26618dd6-health-expert-statement-reusables-safety.pdf>.

⁵ FSC Certification Details, 2021. <https://au.fsc.org/en-au/for-business/fsc-certification>

⁶ PEFC Certification Details, 2021. <https://pefc.org/what-we-do>

- Washing with soap and water and disinfecting surfaces may be sufficient to ensure safety and hygiene measures are met.

Catering

The challenges for catering in response to COVID-19 to maintain hygiene and safety may mean that additional waste is generated. Prioritise the use of reusable products that can be properly cleaned in appropriate dishwashing facilities. When single-use items are required, choose options with the lowest environmental impact and provide waste management systems to facilitate composting and recycling.

- Use reusable plates and cutlery that are sterilised in commercial washing facilities. There is no requirement to use disposable serving ware if reusables are used with appropriate hygiene, and cleaned and disinfected appropriately (for example, see [Victorian Government advice](#)⁷).
- All disposable food containers and cutlery should be made from renewable material, such as sugarcane or bamboo, and be certified compostable.
- Encourage cast and crew to bring their own reusable cutlery that has no points of contact other than their own.
- Avoid single-use plastic items as they are made from fossil fuels, are not renewable and often cannot be recycled.
- If single serve drinks are provided, preference aluminium cans as they are widely and readily recyclable. Plastic has a low recycling rate⁸ and tetra packs may not be recyclable in all areas⁹.
- Choose locally made and grown options to reduce risks from a long supply chain and multiple points of contact.

Cleaning and Hygiene

Health and safety should never be compromised, and appropriate hygiene measures should be followed at all times. The below are suggestions to be considered if they are available to you.

- Maintaining good hygiene and washing hands with soap and water can be a greater protective barrier to infection than wearing disposable gloves¹⁰ Only use disposable gloves if required for your role including for tasks such as food handling and cleaning.
- Use refillable hand sanitizer and wash stations or refillable bottles in lieu of single-use bottles. Purchase hand wash, disinfectant and sanitiser in bulk.
- Where possible, use eco-friendly products. Examples include disinfectants, detergents and handwash free from triclosan.
- The Australian Department of Health has published resources on the protection reusable face masks provide and how to clean them.¹¹ Reusable face masks can be worn and should be fitted closely to cover the nose and mouth¹². Reusable masks can be used instead of disposable alternatives where possible.

⁷ Victorian Government, 2020 'COVID-19 Advice and FAQs'.

https://16bec440-361f-46d5-9362-76f9485cf8dc.filesusr.com/ugd/6a1af1_ecbc9e07c2e24a2983dd65853aa53183.pdf

⁸ National Waste Report, Australian Government, 2020.

<http://environment.gov.au/system/files/pages/5a160ae2-d3a9-480e-9344-4eac42ef9001/files/national-waste-report-2020.pdf>

⁹ Know Your Recycling, Sustainability Victoria, 2021. <https://www.recycling.vic.gov.au/vi/can-i-recycle-this/long-life-cartons>

¹⁰ Safe Work Australia, 2020, 'Gloves'. <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/covid-19-information-workplaces/industry-information/energy-utilities/gloves>

¹¹ Australian Government, Department of Health, 2020, 'Face Masks: How they protect you and when to use them', , 'How to make a cloth mask' and 'Coronavirus (COVID-19) - Are cloth face masks likely to provide protection against COVID-19'.

<https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert/how-to-protect-yourself-and-others-from-coronavirus-covid-19/masks>

¹² Face Masks - types of Face Masks, Victorian Government, 2021. <https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/face-masks-types-face-masks>

- If single-use PPE is required, cut the straps before disposing of it in a closed bin to protect wildlife¹³. Unless contaminated, PPE in regular settings can be disposed of in general waste¹⁴, preferably with a closed lid.
- If feasible, opt into the pre-paid specialty recycling box service for PPE provided by TerraCycle. This is currently the only such service widely available in Australia.
- If using wipes to disinfect surfaces, microphone packs, headsets, and radios etc choose biodegradable products made of natural fibres e.g. bamboo, or use washable cloths with disinfectant.
- Regular laundry wash cycles are suitable including for PPE and washcloths on warmest settings¹⁵. Use detergent and dry items completely. Consider using eco-friendly laundry detergent. If handling used PPE, wear disposable gloves.

Waste Management

With an expected significant rise in plastic use due to COVID-19, it is more important than ever to reduce the amount of waste created where possible. Improving waste management to divert material from landfill makes use of existing resources and reduces greenhouse gas emissions. The Australian Government 2018 National Waste Policy states that Australia is moving towards a more circular economy, shifting away from 'take, make, use and dispose'¹⁶ with a less waste, more resources approach.

- Recycling and landfill bins should always be provided, as well as compost and specialty recycling where available.
- Contract waste haulers that can be trusted to properly dispose of your waste
- Disposable gloves and masks can be collected in closed lid receptacles for recycling with a pre-paid collection box from TerraCycle. This is currently the only such service widely available in Australia.
- Establish a compost service and bins to properly dispose of organic waste and compostable plates, cups and cutlery. Approximately two percent of Australia's greenhouse gas emissions are generated by waste, primarily methane gas that results from decaying organic material in landfill¹⁷. Composting organic waste is essential in reducing methane emissions that contribute to climate change.

Paper and Digital Systems

Paper and cardboard products are kerbside recyclable and are therefore some of the easiest materials to recycle. The production of paper requires trees to be cut down, as well as large amounts of energy and water.

Reducing paper use can provide significant benefits including cost savings, fewer printers and consumables, and labor efficiencies. Digital methods require less movement of people and lower incidences of exposure to potential transmission points.

- Go paperless for contracting, accounting, call sheets, scripting, creative briefs and any other documentation.

¹³ The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals urged the public to cut the straps of disposable face masks after wildlife were found entangled in masks, reported by the ABC, 2021 'RSPCA issues warning after animals found entangled in disposable face mask straps' <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-01-20/surgical-mask-threat-to-wildlife-as-rspca-says-snip-the-strap/13072038>

¹⁴ PPE, Safe Work Australia, 2021. <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/covid-19-information-workplaces/industry-information/office/ppe>

¹⁵ Cleaning and disinfection, Safe Work Australia, 2021. <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/covid-19-information-workplaces/cleaning-prevent-spread-covid-19>

¹⁶ Australian Government, 2018, 'National Waste Policy'. <http://www.environment.gov.au/system/files/resources/d523f4e9-d958-466b-9fd1-3b7d6283f006/files/national-waste-policy-2018.pdf>

¹⁷ National Waste Policy, Australian Government, 2018. <http://www.environment.gov.au/system/files/resources/d523f4e9-d958-466b-9fd1-3b7d6283f006/files/national-waste-policy-2018.pdf>

- Wherever possible, conduct communications, meetings and recesses digitally or remotely to reduce transport emissions and direct contact.
- Aim for all copy paper purchased to have a high percentage of Australian recycled fibre or be made with fibre content from sustainably managed sources.¹⁸ This supports the local recycling industry and reduces carbon emissions from long distance shipping.
- Aim to purchase paper towels, tissues and toilet paper that are made of 100% recycled paper or bamboo. Examples of brands include Who Gives A Crap, Wipe That or Going Green Solutions.

Transport and Accommodation

Transport and energy are usually the largest contributors to a production's carbon footprint. The following measures can reduce the movement of people and improve local air quality.

- Hire local cast and crew to reduce transport emissions, minimise interstate and/or international travel, and avoid quarantine-related costs.
- Avoid idling vehicles and turn off engines when waiting, as idling for 10 seconds creates more carbon emissions and localised air pollution, and is worse for health¹⁹.
- If hiring vehicles, enquire with the rental provider whether electric, hybrid or fuel-efficient vehicles are available.
- If teams are working in units, consider carpooling options and team transport subject to health order advice.
- If possible, accommodate cast and crew in accommodation that is powered with renewable energy.

Other

- Work outside or with doors and windows open where possible to increase airflow and natural light. Turn off lighting when not needed.
- If using bags for costumes or props etc, consider reusable fabric bags that can be washed or cleaned with sanitiser spray.
- Consider donating leftover food, props and materials to support people in need. Sanitise and clean props and materials appropriately prior to donation²⁰.

¹⁸ Australian Government, Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources, 2021, 'Reducing Waste' <https://www.energy.gov.au/households/reducing-waste>.

¹⁹ U.S. Department of Energy, Idling Reduction for Personal Vehicles, May 2015. https://afdc.energy.gov/files/u/publication/idling_personal_vehicles.pdf

²⁰ Food Standards Australia New Zealand, COVID-19 Advice for Food Businesses - Take-away food, donated food and food delivery, August 2020.

<https://www.foodstandards.gov.au/industry/Pages/COVID-19%20advice-for-food-businesses-%E2%80%93-Take-away-food,-donated-food-and-food-delivery-.aspx>

Glossary :

As some definitions may vary according to jurisdiction and others are yet to be legislated or formalised, the following definitions are included for the purpose of assisting in the understanding of this document only.

Biodegradable - Items that will break down into base elements and disintegrate with the passage of time and presence of microorganisms.

Carbon emissions- Greenhouse gases that are the primary cause of human driven climate change. Gases include carbon dioxide and carbon monoxide which are produced from activities including burning fossil fuels for energy, transport and industrial processes. These act as pollutants in the atmosphere and accelerate global warming.

Compost - The result of organic waste that decomposes through natural processes with oxygen and microbes into nutrient rich soil or fertiliser.

FSC Certification - A form of forest certification to demonstrate the implementation of sustainable forest management practices for paper and timber products.

Landfill - A waste disposal method where dumped materials are generally compacted and covered to be buried. As the waste is sealed and no oxygen or water can enter, most trash will not decompose apart from organic waste, which rots and creates methane emissions as a byproduct²¹.

Organic Waste - Component of the waste stream derived from natural materials (including wood, garden, food, animal, vegetation and biosolids). This excludes petroleum-based materials.

PEFC Certification - a form of forest certification to demonstrate the implementation of sustainable forest management practices for paper and timber products

PLA plastic - Bioplastics made from plant starch or sugars instead of fossil fuels. PLA's can be problematic to compost and are generally only compostable in commercial composting facilities. They can also contaminate recycling systems if disposed of with standard plastic.

Post-consumer Recycled - Items and materials that are created from waste disposed of by the end user (consumer) to be turned back into useful items. Recycled copy paper and aluminium cans are examples of products that can be made from post-consumer content.

Recycling - Converting materials that would have otherwise been disposed of into new materials.

Created by Tanzy Owen and Anna Kaplan on behalf of Sustainable Screens Australia, supported by Screen Australia. You can connect with Sustainable Screens Australia via the [Facebook page](#).

Other helpful resources include:

- [We Are Albert](#)²²
- the [Green Production Guide](#)²³
- the Centre for Media & Social Impact's [Code of Best Practices in Sustainable Filmmaking](#)²⁴
- Creative BC Reel Green [Best Practices](#)²⁵
- Screen Queensland [Eco-Screen](#)²⁶ Tips

²¹ National Organic Waste Profile, Australian Government, 2013. <https://www.environment.gov.au/protection/waste/publications/national-waste-reports/2013/organic-waste>

²² We Are Albert, 2021. <https://wearealbert.org/>

²³ Green Production Guide, 2021. <https://www.greenproductionguide.com/>

²⁴ Centre for Social Media, 2009, 'Code of Best Practices in Sustainable Filmmaking.' http://archive.cmsimpact.org/sites/default/files/final_code.pdf

²⁵ Reel Green Best Practices, Creative BC, 2021. <https://www.creativebc.com/industry-sectors/motion-picture/reel-green/best-practices#all-departments>

²⁶Eco-screen, Screen Queensland, 2021. <https://screenqueensland.com.au/make-it-in-qld/eco-screen/>