

Can W'bool break its coffee cup habit?



The environmental message is clear: we need to ditch paper cups, even recyclable ones. Image: Responsible Cafes.

By Shane Wilson*

Walk down Liebig Street from 8.30am on every weekday, and come to think of it weekends, and you will see the hastened step of the army of coffee addicts. Head down, almost caressing the plastic lid of their disposable coffee cup, infused by caffeine.

I will be clear, this piece is not about bagging out coffee lovers. That would be hypocritical, as I love my morning and lunch time coffee from my favourite café. There's plenty of vices out there and if yours happens to be coffee, then there is no argument from this corner.

But, and I think this a big BUT, coffee drinkers are becoming an environmental scourge, the equivalent of those despicable nicotine addicts who think it is their right to flick butts on

to the footpath and by stubbing it out with their foot, it will disappear.

Former Chaser rascal Craig Reucassel reports in his recent ABC documentary *War on Waste* that it takes 50,000 coffee cups to fill a Melbourne tram. An interesting stat, but even more so when he makes the point that this is the number of coffee cups Aussies dispose of each *half hour*.

The cups are typically plastic lined and not bio-degradable: 50,000 every 30 minutes, one billion a year, destined for landfill.



Activist and comedian Craig Reucassel made a strong visual point by filling a Melbourne tram with the number of coffee cups thrown away every half hour in Australia. Image @craigreucassel, Twitter.

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[/dropcap]his coffee-sipping generation has been hammered in one ear about global warming and in the other about living and eating clean and green.

It's not as if the environmental message is not being delivered. It's just that it is not being heard. Or perhaps, Generation Now would rather promote their own immediate needs – a craving for caffeine – over a little bit of social responsibility.

But does it have to be this way.

Our town with a little good fortune (a regular, cleansing sea breeze and frequent rains) presents as a clean tidy green village.

We can build on this.

So let's *all* support the push by the Leadership Great South Coast (LGSC) to completely phase out non-reusable coffee cups.

The LGSC has been urging local cafes to join the national [Responsible Cafes campaign](#) that goes further than recycling cups.

The campaign suggests, and I agree, that single-use cups be banned altogether and we bring our own, reusable cup.

If this sounds unachievable, just think for a moment on how we now all carry our own shopping bags (unless I leave them in the car!) to reduce the use of plastic bags.

As a city, we can all get behind the byo coffee cup campaign: promote it on the banners at roundabouts in the town. Bang the message out on Facebook. Talk to the schoolkids and let them know why the adults are doing this. For once, our generation can lead by example!

In our town, with leadership and meaningful discussion with our cafes, I am sure we can succeed.



The war on one-use coffee cups is going global – and Warrnambool could lead the way. Image: Beevoz

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ome Warrnambool cafes, including [Country Life](#) cafe, [Brightbird Espresso](#) and [Piccolo Coffee Roasters](#), are already taking on the environmental message by offering bio-degradable cups, selling re-usable cups and offering discounts to those who remember to bring their cup.

Warrnambool City Council is also one of the few councils which recycle coffee cups.

But recycling is not the only answer.

Unless coffee cups are disposed into recycle bins and are then appropriately recycled, it all counts for nought.

Bio-pak, which makes bio-degradable cups, state that if their cups go into landfill, they do not break down. Oxygen is required and unless the cups go into the right bins and the council ensures that the cups are correctly recycled, it's all just more landfill.

In this day and age, with issues such as Adani's Carmichael coal mine, the degradation of the Great Barrier Reef, and the

enormity of climate change generally, people tune out.

It's all too hard and such issues are typically outside an individual's field of influence. On this issue, however, Warrnambool can make a difference and be an example for other towns to aspire to and in the process do good.

Yes, it's difficult, but let's cut to the nub of this challenge: no more single-use coffee cups in Warrnambool.

Next time you buy a coffee at your local café, take it with a teaspoon of social responsibility and I bet it will taste even better.

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timthumb='on']<http://www.the-terrier.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/wilson.jpg>[/author_image] [author_info]Shane Wilson is a Warrnambool solicitor, a cyclist, an activist and a coffee nut. He will write occasionally on local issues that stir discussion.[/author_info] [/author]