REUSABLY

From this

To this

Switching from single-use takeaway containers to reusable

A case study for using procurement practices to transition to a circular economy.

Reusably is an Adelaide-based start-up founded in 2019 committed to eliminating single-use packaging. It works closely with communities and is creating networks of reusable containers for takeaway food and drinks. It aims to provide customers and cafes, restaurants, and other hospitality venues with reusable alternatives without sacrificing convenience and affordability.

The transition

Reusably's initiative, first piloted on Kangaroo Island, SA in March 2022, replaces single-use takeaway containers with food-grade, stainless-steel containers that can be reused thousands of times. Customers order takeaway meals or drinks from partner venues in reusable containers. After use, they simply rinse and return the containers to any participating venue. The venue handles the cleaning, making the process seamless and hygienic.

Benefits and outcomes

The Reusably system allows venues and customers to reduce waste generation related to takeaway habits, and track their environmental impact savings.

For customers:

- no cleaning or washing is required – just rinsing
- forgetting to bring a reusable cup or container is no longer an issue.

For partner venues:

- the cost of providing food and beverages in reusable containers through Reusably is on par with single-use containers
- online stock management, usage and impact statistics can be managed within Reusably's web portal.
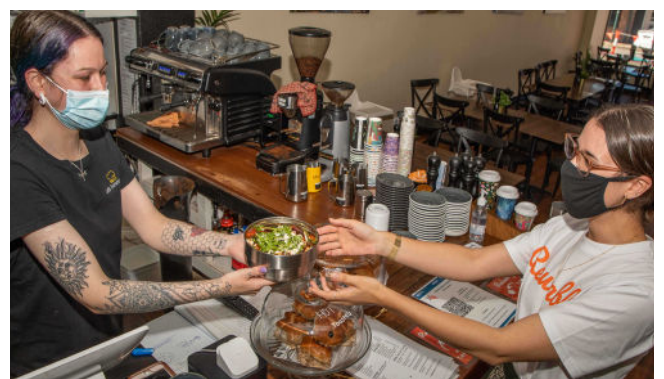
How it works for customers

Customers subscribe to the service for $3.99 a month ($43 a year) using the Reusably app, which provides access to reusable containers at all partner venues. Reusably also offers business subscriptions which employers can pay for on behalf of their employees. Business subscriptions have benefits including:

- discounted rates for larger teams (basic subscription)
- combined positive impact at an organisational level (premium subscription).

Once subscribed, customers order and pay for takeaway as they normally would, but use the Reusably app to tap a "Takeaway" NFC tag located at the point of sale, select which container(s) they're taking away, and show the confirmation message.

Customers return the rinsed containers to any partner venue, by simply tapping the "Return" tag with the app and leaving them at the drop station. Customers can have up to 2 cups and 2 bowls checked out at a time, and must return them within 21 days.
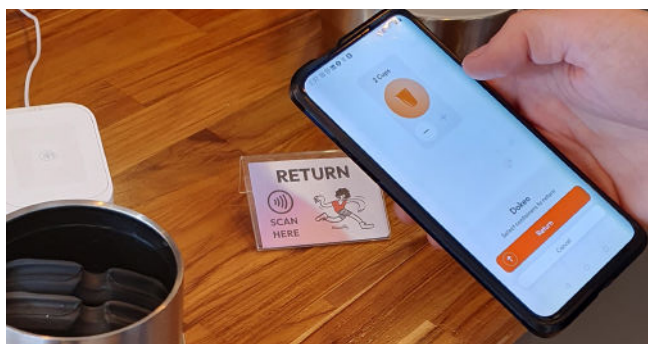
How it works for venues

There are no set-up fees for partner venues. Instead, venues are invoiced quarterly based on usage. Invoices are calculated based on a fixed service fee of 15 cents multiplied by the number of takeaways, minus a cleaning credit (calculated at a rate of 5 cents multiplied by the number of containers returned). The net cost is on par with the cost of single-use containers. Reusably redistributes stock as needed to ensure there are never too many or too few reusable containers on hand.

Next steps for Reusably

Reusably's successful pilot and growing network of partnered venues has resulted in nearly 600 single-use containers saved from use to date (August 2023). The company will continue to enhance user experience as more partner venues and customers subscribe to the service. Its software can also be applied to tracking check-out and return of almost any reusable product, paving the way for new products and services.

Reusably's reuse and return model also complements SA's single-use plastic bans, with single-use plastic beverage containers and takeaway containers being phased out in 2024. Visit replacethewaste.sa.gov.au for details.

Conclusion

Reusably offers a practical and eco-friendly alternative to single-use takeaway container procurement and management. Its innovative system empowers venues and customers to make environmentally conscious choices while maintaining convenience and affordability. The service is an exemplary model for organisations seeking to adopt more sustainable and circular practices.

About this case study

This case study was prepared by Rawtec for Green Industries SA. It is part of a series of case studies aimed at empowering businesses and organisations to make changes to their procurement practices to transition to a circular economy.

Acknowledgements

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