

BUSINESS

# Portuguese charter airline Hi Fly in push to cut back on plastic in planes

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Herald Business Traveller aboard Air New Zealand's Portuguese charter plane. Video / Grant Bradley



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Portuguese wet lease operator Hi Fly has pledged to completely eliminate the use of avoidable and single-use plastics on its aircraft before the end of 2019, and its founder says other airlines will be pressured to do the same if the move gains critical mass.

Founder and president Paulo Mirpuri said the goal would be difficult to achieve, but because airlines were big polluters, action needed to be taken.

The International Air Transport Association estimated the airline industry generated 5.2 million tonnes of inflight waste in 2016.



One of Hi Fly's planes is promoting the environmental message. Photo / Supplied

Mirpuri's environmental and social organisation the Mirpuri Foundation was fighting plastic pollution by backing a boat in the Volvo Ocean Race, Turn the Tide on Plastic, and using one of its planes as a flying billboard.

"With this campaign it would be very strange if we didn't do something about ourselves. Airlines are the main polluters as an industry," he said.

Plastic bottles could be replaced by bioplastics, and bamboo or other wood could be an alternative to plastic cutlery.

"This might look simple but it is not — we have been working for several months to make this happen."

He said giant budget carrier Ryanair had also committed to eliminating single-use plastic.

"We believe that once we have 20 to 25 per cent of the industry getting rid of the plastic on board aircraft, the remaining part of the industry will be forced to follow by public pressure."

Last year Air New Zealand announced Project Green, an initiative to recycle packaging aimed at saving 150 tonnes of waste going into landfills.