



Milla, Kitty and Kipp signed up to be St Columba's Primary School Ballarat North's plastic warriors. They were on board the nationwide campaign to cut out plastic in July.

Pupils in grade five and six pledged to give up single use plastic bags and straws throughout the month of July and then will continue thinking creatively to live sustainably.

Milla created a strong reusable bag by fusing together single use bags, Kitty monitored rubbish in the yard and reports back to the school and Kip used reusable bamboo instead of plastic straws.

St Columba's Primary School sustainability leader Erica Hare said the entire school had embraced the reuse, reduce, recycle, respect concept. "Why use something once and then throw it away when it is going to last forever?," she said. "It can be as simple as buying a big pack of chips and putting them in containers for lunch rather than buying individually wrapped packets. We turned shirts into reusable shopping bags, plastic bags into pencil cases and icy pole sticks into bird feeders."

More than 20 million tonnes of waste is sent to Australian landfills every year. That's why No Waste Ballarat member Nicole Elliott, worked hard to get Ballarat businesses on board for the Plastic Free July campaign by ditching plastic straws. "Ballarat has potential to start driving the change. We are a big regional city, if we get everyone on board to reduce plastic it can push habits out into smaller communities and influence bigger cities like Melbourne," she said.

Ms Elliot said the first step for change could be daunting, but it was about creating sustainable habits. Plastic Free July recommended using eco-friendly coffee cups, avoid plastic packed products, bring re-useable bags to do your grocery shopping, bulk buy or get re-fills where possible and use beeswax wraps or a reusable container, instead of gladwrap. Sustainable habits can be done every day of every month, not just July, anytime is a good time to start.

*Article courtesy of the Ballarat Courier, text by Rochelle Kirkham and picture by Kate Healy.*