

# Your submission to Proposed mandatory phase out of single-use plastic shopping bags

**Reference no:** 621

**Submitter Type:** Individual

**Clause**

1. Do you agree with the proposed mandatory phase out of the sale or distribution of single-use plastic shopping bags in New Zealand, including those made of degradable (eg, oxo-degradable, biodegradable and compostable) plastic? Why / why not?

**Position**

Yes

**Notes**

Single use plastic bags, including those that are 'degradable' cause harm to our environment and ecosystem that is unnecessary. Simple alternatives can be substituted to rid of this burden.

**Clause**

2. We have proposed a mandatory phase out of single-use plastic shopping bags. This could include under 50 microns or under 70 microns in thickness. If you agree with a mandatory phase out, which option do you prefer, and why?

**Position**

less than 70 microns in thickness

**Notes**

Phase out of all plastic single use bags, as even those that are thicker (while intended to be reused) will be thrown out and end up in our environment causing the same problem. The only true, sustainable, alternative is to rid of all plastic use where possible. While in other countries bans of bags under a particular thickness has resulted in a reduction in use, it has not eliminated their use. Cotton bags are a good alternative that may be substituted and eliminate the need for plastics.

**Clause**

3. Are you aware of types of single-use plastic shopping bags that should be exempt from a mandatory phase out?

**Position**

No

**Notes**

**Clause**

4. Do you currently manufacture, sell, provide or import for sale or personal use these types of single-use plastic shopping bags:

**Position**

No

**Notes**

**Clause**

5. Should smaller retailers be exempted from a mandatory phase out of single-use plastic shopping bags? Why / why not?

**Position**

No

**Notes**

Giving such a loophole goes against the aim of this entire change, why would you provide such an out. While I recognise the increased immediate cost of phasing them out and changing to cloth/paper etc alternatives, in the end it needs to be absorbed by all businesses and retailers for future.

**Clause**

6. If smaller retailers are exempted from a mandatory phase out of single-use plastic shopping bags and they are defined by their number of full-time equivalent employees, what should that number be?

**Notes**

5 - a number that represents true start-up companies that would face the greatest trouble in this change financially.

**Clause**

7. The proposed mandatory phase-out period for single-use plastic shopping bags is at least six months from when regulations are Gazetted , subject to consultation. Do you agree with this timing?

**Position**

Yes

**Notes**

This gives retailers time to find a suitable alternative and also use current stock of their plastic bags to prevent large loss on the cost of these. It also gives consumers enough time to begin to change their behaviour and habits to accommodate the change.

**Clause**

8. Do you agree that the benefits expected from implementing a mandatory phase out of single-use plastic shopping bags exceed the costs expected from implementing the phase out? Why / why not? Please consider both monetary and non-monetary costs and benefits (those that can be measured by money as well as those that can't).

**Position**

Yes

**Notes**

While there would be an immediate cost due to the heavier bags being more expensive than their thinner alternatives, in the long term the demand for bags would decrease due to people reusing ones they already have. This would have a positive impact on the business as less money would be spent long term on bags. Non monetary benefits are for the better of the environment, waste management/recycling plants who will see less plastic to deal with, and New Zealand's international standing increasing with popular opinion leaning heavily towards waste minimisation. Non financial costs are to plastic bag manufacturers, largely overseas. This is because a reduced demand will see them with decreased turnover (with flow on effects such as possible job losses) and these companies developing a poorer opinion of New Zealand companies due to loss of sales, which may hamper business relationships.

**Clause**

9. Do you think that reasonably practicable alternatives to single-use plastic shopping bags exist in New Zealand? Why / why not?

**Position**

Yes

**Notes**

Yes, with most supermarkets having reusable alternatives (usually around \$1/bag, but sometimes as much as \$5/bag which is too expensive for many). However, true cloth (ie pure cotton, jute) alternatives are scarce at the moment. Other retailers rarely have alternatives which is poor, but may be changed.

**Clause**

10. How can people be encouraged to reuse multiple-use shopping bags enough times to offset the environmental impacts of producing them? (select one or more)

**Position**

voluntary incentive schemes by individual retailers

**Notes**

Humans generally respond well to incentive programmes, so this could be a successful endeavour if the incentive was good. I also believe that information campaigns are essential also, as unless people understand why they need to change (ie poor effects on environment) and what the benefits are they are largely unwilling to change and put effort in to change habits. Making it a part of the culture as much as possible is essential, so it becomes an unconscious act to minimise plastic use by reusing bags.

**Clause**

11. What would help you and your family adjust to life without single-use plastic shopping bags?

**Notes**

Cheap, widely available alternatives (not just in supermarkets). Wide campaigns to keep the message in our faces to remind us frequently, so at the point of sale we may remember and choose alternatives.

**Clause**

12. How can data on single-use plastic shopping bags and other single-use plastics entering the market and monitoring of reductions be improved?

**Notes**

Unsure of what the current monitoring is, so cannot comment.

**Clause**

13. Please provide any additional comments or suggestions about the proposed mandatory phase out of single-use plastic shopping bags.

**Notes**

I believe that pure cotton/jute/paper alternatives are the way to go, not the current plastic blends (or thick plastics) with high manufacture costs that do not really solve the problem, just delay it. Community programs need to be put in place much more widely and education around the harms around plastic (not just single use plastic bags, but plastics in product packaging and such) and the ease of making your own cotton bags from old clothes/sheets etc - as well as facilities to borrow sewing machines and such for a while to support making the change. For example, in Dunedin the Otago University Student Association has a number of free to use sewing machines that I have used to make my own bags cheaply from old material. Schools can also get their students to make cloth bags in their sewing/home-ec classes to provide for the whole family and more.

**You have elected to withhold your personal details from publication.**