

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

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Reference no: 5557

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

No

Notes

See attached notes.

Clause

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

Position

Yes

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

Yes

Notes

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

Perhaps 20 or so.

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

No

Notes

See below

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

No

Notes

See below

Clause

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

Position

No

Notes

Not for all uses.

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**Clause**

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

Notes

Single Use Plastic Bags The consultation document notes that "single use" shopping bags is not a good description for these bags as they are actually rarely single use items since many people use them more than once (eg. to line rubbish containers or repackage items). Banning single use bags will mean that many consumers will just have to purchase thicker ones for bin liners which will then be discarded thus defeating the whole process and producing more waste. It is worth nothing that biodegradable plastic bags are actually a worse option as their tendency to turn to small fragments and dust discourages people from reusing them (eg. Farmers shopping bags). In store recycling clearly does not work, probably largely because consumers do not want to save and eventually return dirty and or/smelly bags to a shop. Cleaning these out is time and energy intensive and most consumers will not bother. A Temporary Solution In the short term a minimum charge levy system similar to the Irish system is favoured. This will quickly encourage reuse of the bags and the levy can be increased over time depending on the results obtained. Small retailers (eg. fast food retailers) should probably be exempt. This system will have an immediate beneficial effect and give the government time to work out a more sustainable solution for the future (eg. construction of incineration facilities). A 9-12 month phase in system for this levy is favoured. While single use plastic bags are highly visible they do actually form a relatively small proportion of total plastic waste in the ocean or general landfill waste (0.01%). As mentioned in the consultation document only 10% of plastic waste is recycled globally. It is therefore clear that the much bigger problem is that of the total plastic waste stream and it is this that the government should be concentrating on, not a relatively minor item. A Sensible Long Term Solution Plastic items should actually be considered not as a waste but as a resource. These energy rich items are made from hydrocarbons (usually natural gas) and can be very effectively disposed of by high temperature incineration. This process is widely used overseas and turns a problem into a resource. Both hot water and useful quantities of electricity can be generated from incineration plants and the newer designs effectively remove all pollutants from the flue gases to comply with exacting environmental regulations (eg. in the EU). A good example I visited in August 2018 as background to this consultation process is the facility in the Swiss capital Bern which incinerates all household waste cleanly in the city centre: <https://www.ewb.ch/nachhaltigkeit/produktionsportfolio/energiezentrale-forsthaus> Singapore has just opened its fifth such facility: http://www.keppelseghers.com/en/news_item.aspx?sid=3039&aid=2328 and others work very well in Japan: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-05-21/the-japanese-waste-incinerator-that-has-its-own-tripadvisor-page/9780872> and elsewhere such as Finland: <https://www.vantaanenergia.fi/en/waste-to-energy-gives-a-new-life-for-rubbish/> and various sites in North America. Some more recent designs can even accept old tyres and wet sewerage sludge further reducing landfill disposal of this otherwise problematic waste. A suitable site for such a facility in NZ could be the old Meremere power station in the Waikato. This is strategically located between Auckland and Hamilton (two significant waste producers) and has the appropriate zoning and excellent access by road or rail. Power produced by the plant can be easily fed into the national grid with much of the required infrastructure already onsite. I would be interested in being consulted in any further deliberations by the government on this important problem.

Supporting documents from your Submission

Shopping_bag_consultation.pdf

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Single Use Plastic Bags

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It is worth noting that biodegradable plastic bags are actually a worse option as their tendency to turn to small fragments and dust discourages people from reusing them (eg. Farmers shopping bags).

In store recycling clearly does not work, probably largely because consumers do not want to save and eventually return dirty and or/smelly bags to a shop. Cleaning these out is time and energy intensive and most consumers will not bother.

A Temporary Solution

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A Sensible Long Term Solution

Plastic items should actually be considered not as a waste but as a resource. These energy rich items are made from hydrocarbons (usually natural gas) and can be very effectively disposed of by high temperature incineration. This process is widely used overseas and turns a problem into a resource. Both hot water and useful quantities of electricity can be generated from incineration plants and the newer designs effectively remove all pollutants from the flue gases to comply with exacting environmental regulations (eg. in the EU). A good example I visited in August 2018 as background to this consultation process is the facility in the Swiss capital Bern which incinerates all household waste cleanly in the city centre:

<https://www.ewb.ch/nachhaltigkeit/produktionsportfolio/energiezentrale-forsthaus>

Singapore has just opened its fifth such facility:

http://www.keppelseghers.com/en/news_item.aspx?sid=3039&aid=2328

and others work very well in Japan:

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-05-21/the-japanese-waste-incinerator-that-has-its-own-tripadvisor-page/9780872>

and elsewhere such as Finland:

<https://www.vantaanenergia.fi/en/waste-to-energy-gives-a-new-life-for-rubbish/>

and various sites in North America.

Some more recent designs can even accept old tyres and wet sewerage sludge further reducing landfill disposal of this otherwise problematic waste.

A suitable site for such a facility in NZ could be the old Meremere power station in the Waikato. This is strategically located between Auckland and Hamilton (two significant waste producers) and has the appropriate zoning and excellent access by road or rail. Power produced by the plant can be easily fed into the national grid with much of the required infrastructure already onsite.

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