

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

Algalita Marine Research & Education South Pacific Trust

**Reference no:** 5805

**Submitter Type:** NGO

**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**

SUPB are an unnecessary convenience item that contributes detrimentally both to our environment through pollution and to our society through encouraging a convenience based apathetic lifestyle

**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**

Other (please specify)

**Notes**

We prefer an outright ban on any petroleum based plastic and/mixed bag. In order to achieve a reduction of plastic waste both in landfills and polluting our environment and look to the governments aim to "redesign waste out of the system" we must look to full life-cycle design of products, and a product as simple as a carry bag has many alternatives that can be produced efficiently from re-useable, recycled and natural fiber materials whose end of life won't be filling up our land as waste. We can look to certified biodegradable natural fibers, boomerang bag like initiatives and what is already out there.

**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**

None should be exempt. Plastic is plastic and all plastic products such as single use items are proving far too detrimental to the environment. These items are excessive and unnecessary and we need immediate reduction where we can, with no exceptions until better infrastructure and management systems are in place and we are seeing a measured reduction in what is being lost or wasted.

**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**

SUPBs are SUPB no matter where they come from. There are already examples around the country of independent small retailers initiating their own voluntary phase out with supportive customer bases (See Plastic Bag Free Whaingaroa and Mangawhai)

**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**

N/A

**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**

The phase out period is important, however the constant flow of SUPB that will continue during any period needs to be considered as well as the most efficient and effective way to implement this ban. We would support a levy being put in place (effective immediately from when regulations are gazetted) during a longer phase-out period (one year), this levy would be to be directed into a social and environmental and R&D funds to look towards better alternatives, monitoring & clean up programs and supporting lower-income earners through the change /phase out.

**Clause**

7a. If no, what do you think would be a more appropriate phase-out period?

**Position**

Other (please specify)

**Notes**

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**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**

The short term monetary costs and perceived inconvenience of the ban by New Zealander's will long be out weighed by the social, environmental and cultural benefits to reducing SUPB lost to our environment as well as the opportunities presented by the change, such as community groups engaging to work towards solutions. It is a fantastic step in the right direction for Aotearoa and it is only just the beginning.

**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**

Absolutely, in particular the resources and initiative to create them. Initiatives like the Boomerang Bags and community Kete weaving could be facilitated nationwide, use of recycled clothing bins and cotton from industry to provide resources, and communities could have sewing bees for fundraisers (levy could fund), skill learning and entertainment. Boxes and other packaging already provided to all retailers for their goods can be offered as alternatives also. There needs to be awareness and support in particular for the smaller retailers to ensure they have something if not for everyone in particular, the elderly and impaired and mothers with children.

**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**

Other (please specify)

**Notes**

Both voluntary incentive schemes by individual retailers and a national information campaign and mobile phone app for shoppers, as well as affecting people where they will notice it the most, financially.

**Clause**

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

**Notes**

We have made the choice to have not used plastic bags for several years now, nor in our households and make the conscious effort to always say "no thanks". We see value in building awareness, educating people on how easy it is to adapt and change the habits, find alternatives and go without. A forced change by not having them is a great way to make it easier, as then they will just adapt. The main difficulties we get asked about and how we deal with them is, wet or dirty clothes, bin liners and picking up dog excrement, and there is always another way. Wet or dirty clothes can be transported in baskets/buckets or dry bags, bin liners we don't use and just wash our bin out if necessary however, there are some nifty newspaper ones you can fold and dog excrement we deal with by burying it immediately by carrying a small shovel and applying the Leave No Trace Principles.

**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**

The monitoring should be done through independent entity/ies, NOT INDUSTRY and should be reviewed by a an independent body. A long term monitoring programme would be most beneficial for providing a long term picture and scope to expand into other areas of pollution monitoring also. It should be facilitated in a way that encompasses a nationwide scope and the protocol looks to align to international reporting standards for sampling and analysis. It is imperative to understand quantities of use and where the loss is occurring at all levels. For this a thorough reporting scheme from industry to understand what is coming in and where it is going out to, large retailers to record their handling as well as land fill, waste management and recycling schemes also recording their handling data and to be accompanied by environmental monitoring looking to quantify what is in terrestrial, fresh and marine environments. There are such studies that have taken place internationally (please contact for further information if you require).

**Clause**

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

**Notes**

As production is increasing exponentially and the impact, in particular of marine plastic pollution is becoming more and more prevalent in our everyday lives, we are grateful for this step forward and hope that as the nation, who is responsible for the 4th largest exclusive economic zone we continue to progress towards a circular economy approach to plastics and a zero-waste nation!