

Subject: Survey answers

Recipient: proposed-mandatory-phase-out-of-single-use-plastic-shopping-bags@submissions.mfe.govt.nz

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Dear Minister,

The government's recent announcement of the mandatory phase-out of plastic bags is one that I welcome greatly.

The issue of single-use plastics is reaching crisis point, and now is the time to act. I am submitting this letter to make clear my stance on a number of the points raised in the government's consultation document.

1. Should the phase-out include bags under 50 microns or those under 70 microns?

I would like to see the mandatory phase-out include all plastic bags. Whilst thicker bags last longer and are, therefore, likely to be used more times, they too will eventually break. As with the thinner plastic bags, these bags aren't biodegradable, meaning we're still left with the problem of what to do with them.

If New Zealand is to commit to this phase-out, which it undoubtedly should, this commitment should be wholehearted. We shouldn't aim simply to emulate the countries who have done this before, but to go one better and become a world-leader when it comes to eliminating plastic waste.

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

No, all single-use plastic shopping bags should be mandatorily phased-out.

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

Smaller retailers shouldn't be exempt from the mandatory phase-out. This should be a nationwide commitment to put New Zealand at the forefront of tackling single-use plastic. There is also the question of what defines a smaller retailer. In the consultation document it's suggested that this be determined by the number of employees a business has, but giving any sort of exemption leaves the potential for lines to be blurred.

4. 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?

Whilst, of course, there is the need for retailers to adjust to this change, I believe six months is longer than necessary. Government statistics suggest that in this time, as a nation we will use a further 375 million single-use plastic bags. We believe the alternative suggestion of two months made in the consultation document is a better, and still achievable, target to aim for.

Yours sincerely

Wll Fletcher