

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

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## Reference no: 5952

**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

Globally, we produce 300 million tonnes of plastic each year. Half of that is for disposable products - 150 million tonnes of plastic produced to make items that we use for moments and then throw away. The pollution resulting from the drilling of oil and the manufacture, transportation and disposal of these products is of huge concern. As you know, 8 million tonnes of plastic ends up in our oceans every year. It is absurd that we are creating all this waste and that it will outlive our great great grandkids. Single-use plastic shopping bags are low-hanging fruit. Reusable alternatives are readily available and it's a very simple switch to make. Oxo-degradable plastic bags should be included in the ban as they contribute to microplastic pollution. Biodegradable plastic bags are an environmental hazard and should also be included. NZ does not currently have enough composting facilities to process compostable bags, so these should also be included in the ban. I would like to see the phase-out extended to all types of single-use plastic bags, including rubbish liners and pet waste bags.

### 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

To encourage retailers to choose bags which are genuinely reusable, the minimum micron level should be 70 microns. We do not want to be in a situation where the lightweight plastic bags have been phased out and replaced with a thicker plastic substitute which is just as damaging to our environment.

### 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

I see no reason why smaller retailers should be exempt from the ban. Affordable alternatives to single-use plastic bags are readily available. It's important that you send a strong message to industry and to the public that disposable plastic is undesirable. If you exempt smaller retailers, your message becomes diluted.

### 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**

There should be no exemption.

**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**

Reusable alternatives are currently readily available. This timeframe is sufficient.

**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**

It's absurd to describe our environment (the thing that sustains our existence) in monetary terms.

**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**

We have a wide range of reusable bag options available in New Zealand - from high quality jute, cotton and kete to cheaper options. The Boomerang Bags initiative is available in many locations across the country. It's also very simple and cost-effective to make your own bags (no-sew t-shirt bags etc). I would like to see an education campaign focusing on the issues around plastic waste and the pros and cons of different bag alternatives, so that people are informed, for example, that many of the reusable bags currently available at supermarkets are polypropylene (so, not the best option from a sustainability perspective).

**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**

national information campaign and mobile phone app for shoppers

**Notes**

Education, education...and then some more education. I'm confident that, when informed about the issues and shown the solutions, people will change their behaviour to that which is more sustainable.

**Clause**

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

**Notes**

We stopped using single-use plastic bags many years ago. But, I think, for others, it would be helpful to know what reusable alternatives are available and to have strategies for remembering to BYO bags. I understand that some people are concerned that, after the ban is in place, they will not be able to line their rubbish bins or pick up after their dogs. Most people have little idea of how landfills work - they think that their waste goes to landfill and breaks down, without any further issues - which we know isn't the case. I would like to see an educational campaign that explains how landfills work and why we should not be sending biodegradable waste to landfill. Once you eliminate food waste from your rubbish bin, there's no need for a liner. Info about how to responsibly dispose of pet waste should also be widely available. I wrote a blog post on this topic recently, covering these issues:

<https://www.earthsavvy.co.nz/blogs/earthsavvy-blog/but-how-will-i-line-my-bin-and-pick-up-dog-poo> . More education and support is needed around home-composting, as well as council composting collection services.

**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**

I'm presuming that, if you plan to phase out single-use plastic bags, then there will be no data to collect. In regards to other single-use plastics, I don't know what your current data monitoring system is, so can't offer ideas for improvement. However, we already know that we have an issue with plastic pollution and I would like to see government incentivising businesses to move away from disposable plastics, whether that be placing a tax on the import of any (non-medical) single-use plastic product (packaging included) or a subsidy for home-compostable packaging.

**Clause**

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

**Notes**

I just want to say how happy I am that we finally have a government that seems educated and genuinely concerned about the issue of waste. Please do not let people who profit from the plastics industry sway you to dilute this important legislation. We cannot continue to plunder the earth, fuel climate change and leave a trail of waste behind for future generations to deal with. I hope that this is just the first step on the path to a zero waste New Zealand.